ELDERS-LED SPIRITUAL MEDIATION AS AN ALTERNATIVE DISPUTE RESOLUTION MECHANISM (ADR) IN CONFLICTS BETWEEN SAMBURU EAST SUB-COUNTY AND TURKANA COMMUNITY IN ISIOLO COUNTY, KENYA.

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DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is my original work and has not been presented in any other inst for a degree award or other qualification.

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This Thesis has been submitted with our approval as the university supervisors

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated first and foremost to Almighty God, whose grace, wisdom, strength, and guidance sustained me throughout this academic journey.

I dedicate this work with profound love and gratitude to my dear wife, Mary Kananu Gitonga, whose unwavering love, patience, encouragement and support have been a constant source of strength throughout the years of study and research.

I also dedicate this achievement to my beloved children, James Mwirigi Gitonga, Linda Nthamari Gitonga, Miriam Makena Gitonga, and Baraka Mutethia Gitonga. Your love, understanding, encouragement, and presence have given me inspiration and purpose throughout this journey. This achievement is a reflection of the support and sacrifices we have shared as a family.

Finally, I dedicate this work to all those who have encouraged and supported me throughout my academic journey. May this work serve as a lasting contribution to the pursuit of knowledge, reconciliation and sustainable peace.

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ABSTRACT

In Kenya's arid and semi-arid lands, 85% of pastoral household experience resource-related violence annually. Despite government interventions, inter-communal land conflicts between Samburu East Sub-County and the Turkana community in Isiolo County persist, driven by competition over pasture, water, livestock theft and boundary disputes. Formal legal systems have proven inadequate due to procedural delays, high costs and limited cultural sensitivity. This study examined elder-led spiritual mediation as an Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) mechanism in these conflicts. The objectives were to: examine the nature of inter-communal land conflicts, identify and analyse existing mediation approaches, evaluate the contribution of elders-led spiritual mediation on conflict resolution, and propose integration strategies into ADR frameworks. The study was anchored in Peacebuilding Theory, Transformative Mediation Theory and the Natural Resource Conflict Triangle (NRCT) Theory. A descriptive mixed-methods design was adopted. The target population was 286 respondents; a sample of 146 was selected using Yamane's formula and stratified random sampling. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics, exploratory factor analysis, one-sample t-tests, chi-square, Pearson correlation and multiple regression. Qualitative data from 18 key informant interviews and 6 Focus Group Discussions (FDGs) were analysed thematically. Descriptive results showed that indigenous mechanisms (elder-led mediation, $M=4.36$) were rated higher than government-led approaches ($M=3.92$). Inferential analysis revealed that elders-led spiritual mediation significantly predicted conflict resolution ($R^2=0.714$, $F=244.316$, $p<0.001$), with elders' authority as the strongest predictor ($\beta=0.384$). Integration strategies explained 76.0% of sustainable peacebuilding ($R^2=0.760$), with inclusive participation most influential ($\beta=0.336$). Qualitative accounts confirmed that dialogue, reconciliation ceremonies and early elder intervention restore trust and prevent violence. The study concludes that elders-led spiritual mediation is effective and culturally legitimate but requires hybrid integration with formal ADR systems. Recommendations include policy recognition, capacity building for elders and inclusive participation of youth and women. The proposed integrated model offers a replicable framework for sustainable peacebuilding in pastoralist settings.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ADR: Alternative Dispute Resolution

ANOVA: Analysis of Variance

ASALs: Arid and Semi-Arid Lands

AU: African Union

CSOs: Civil Society Organizations

CUEA: Catholic University of Eastern Africa

EFA: Exploratory Factor Analysis

FAO: Food and Agriculture Organization

FARC: Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia

FGDs: Focus Group Discussions

IRB: Institutional Review Board

KIIs: Key Informant Interviews

KMO: Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin

KNBS: Kenya National Bureau of Statistics

LMD: Livestock Marketing Division (Livestock Holding Area)

NACOSTI: National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation

NGAOs: National Government Administration Officers

NRCT: Natural Resource Conflict Triangle

OLS: Ordinary Least Squares

PAF: Principal Axis Factoring

SPSS: Statistical Package for the Social Sciences

TDR: Traditional Dispute Resolution

UNDP: United Nations Development Programme

UNECA: United Nations Economic Commission for Africa

UNHCR: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

USAID: United States Agency for International Development

VIF: Variance Inflation Factor

CHAPTER ONE

1.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the background and context of the study on inter-communal conflict and its resolution among the pastoralist communities of Samburu and Turkana in Kenya, with particular focus on Samburu East Sub-County and Turkana Community in Isiolo County. It situates land-related disputes within global and regional dynamics, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa, where competition over natural resources is shaped by historical injustices, environmental pressures, population mobility and governance challenges. The chapter further outlines the study focus, on elders-led spiritual mediation as an alternative dispute mediation (ADR) mechanism, statement of problem, purpose of study, objectives, research question, significance of study, scope and delimitations limitations, assumptions, theoretical and conceptual frameworks, operational definition of key terms, and the general direction of the research.

Land remains a central source of livelihood and identity among pastoralist societies (Mwangangi, 2022). However, increasing scarcity of grazing land and water resources has intensified competition, often resulting in recurring cycles of conflict, displacement and weakened inter-community relations (Elliott & Dunning, 2020). Despite the existence of formal legal and administrative systems for conflict resolution, their effectiveness has been limited by procedural delays, limited cultural sensitivity and inadequate incorporation of indigenous dispute settlement practices (Muigua, 2022).

In response to these limitations, this study focuses on elders-led spiritual mediation as an Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) approach. This approach is grounded in indigenous authority structures and spiritual values that emphasize reconciliation, moral restoration, forgiveness, and communal healing. These dimensions are often absent in formal judicial

processes, yet they remain central to the social fabric and peacebuilding traditions of pastoralist communities.

The study is anchored in an integrated framework drawing from the peacebuilding theory, Transformative conflict theory, and Natural Resource Conflict Triangle (NRCT) theory, which provides a conceptual framework for understanding the interaction between resource scarcity, identity dynamics, and governance structures in shaping conflict patterns. Through these lenses, the research sought to deepen understanding of how spiritual and culturally embedded mediation practices can contribute to sustainable peacebuilding.

By examining elders-led spiritual mediation, the study aimed at generating empirical insights into its effectiveness as an alternative dispute resolution mechanism. It further explored its potential contribution to rebuilding trust, strengthening social cohesion and promoting long-term coexistence among the Samburu and Turkana communities.

1.2 Background of the Study

Land-related conflicts are a Global Phenomenon and remains among the persistent challenges to peace, human security and sustainable development. Competition over land and natural resources is intensified by population growth, environmental degradation, climate variability, historical injustices, weak governance and unequal access to resources (Dietz & Engels, 2020). Since land provides livelihoods, identity, cultural belonging and social security, disputes over its ownership and use often extend beyond material interests to encompass political, social and cultural grievances. Consequently, contemporary conflict-resolution approaches increasingly recognize the importance of complementing formal legal mechanisms with participatory, culturally grounded and restorative approaches.

Globally, land conflicts vary according to historical and socio-economic circumstances. In developing countries, urbanization, population pressure, agricultural expansion and

contested land ownership have generated disputes among communities, governments, farmers and commercial interests. In Colombia, land dispossession and competing claims have been associated with prolonged political violence and displacement (Maher & Thomson, 2018), while rapid urban expansion in India has intensified disputes involving rural communities, developers and state authorities over compensation and displacement (Sharma, 2024). In Australia, recognition of Aboriginal land rights following the Mabo decision demonstrates the importance of indigenous peoples' cultural and spiritual relationships with land (Wright et al., 2021). Similarly, Indonesia has employed customary knowledge and local cultural values in resolving disputes involving indigenous communities and commercial agricultural interests (Budisetyowati *et al.*, 2023; Rachmanto, 2025). These experiences demonstrate that land conflicts may involve identity, collective memory, cultural values and inter-community relationships in addition to legal claims.

Across Africa, land and natural-resource conflicts are shaped by historical injustices, colonial legacies, weak governance, environmental pressures and competition over scarce resources. The African Union (2021) identifies land and resource competition as important contributors to communal and violent conflicts. These pressures are particularly pronounced in arid and semi-arid areas, where pastoral livelihoods depend on mobility and shared access to pasture and water. Climate variability, drought, population pressure, livestock concentration and small arms can transform resource competition into recurrent violence (Mlambo & Gumede, 2022). African pastoral conflicts are therefore simultaneously environmental, economic, political, cultural and social. Nevertheless, African societies have developed indigenous institutions for managing such conflicts. The Gadaa system integrates social regulation, moral authority and reconciliation (Abdi & Nemomsa, 2023), while Gacaca incorporates community participation and restorative principles (Nduwayezu *et al.*, 2021).

Elders and religious leaders have likewise participated in community mediation and reconciliation in South Sudan and other conflict-affected contexts (Justin, 2020; UNDP, 2023). These experiences demonstrate the potential of indigenous and spiritual institutions to complement formal mechanisms by addressing relationships, trust, reconciliation and social healing.

In Kenya, land remains highly sensitive because of its economic, political, cultural and symbolic significance. The challenge is particularly pronounced in the arid and semi-arid lands (ASALs), where pastoral livelihoods depend on grazing areas, water and livestock routes. Historical injustices, colonial administrative arrangements, changing land-tenure systems and inadequate recognition of customary interests have contributed to continuing tensions (PRAGYA, 2019). Formal dispute-resolution mechanisms may also be difficult for pastoral communities to access because of costs, delays, procedural requirements and geographical distance (Kinyua, 2023; Nyathore *et al.*, 2024). Consequently, customary institutions continue to play an important role in managing disputes within and between pastoral communities.

Locally, Samburu–Turkana conflict in northern Kenya is rooted in a complex socio-historical and ecological context characterised by pastoral mobility, competition over pasture and water, migration, settlement and changing land-governance systems. Pastoral communities have historically relied on mobility to cope with variations in water and pasture availability, with access to resources regulated through customary institutions, negotiated arrangements and social relationships. However, climate variability, recurrent drought, population growth, settlement expansion and changing land-use systems have increasingly placed pressure on pastoral livelihoods and intensified competition over natural resources (International Organization for Migration [IOM], 2022; United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2023).

Before modern administrative boundaries were established, pastoral communities moved seasonally in search of pasture and water, with access regulated through customary institutions, social relationships and negotiated arrangements. Isiolo subsequently became a multi-ethnic area in which Borana, Samburu, Somali, Turkana and Meru communities developed different relationships with land and natural resources (Boye & Kaarhus, 2011). These communities continue to interact through pastoralism, trade, migration and shared access to resources, and historical settlement patterns have produced overlapping perceptions of territorial belonging and resource rights. Consequently, contemporary disputes should not be interpreted simply as ethnic conflicts; rather, they reflect the interaction of resource competition, historical narratives, livelihood insecurity, governance challenges and changing patterns of pastoral mobility (Interpeace, 2022; UNDP, 2023).

The Samburu have a long-standing association with the wider Ewaso Nyiro landscape and areas now forming part of Samburu and neighbouring Isiolo County. Oral accounts documented by Boye and Kaarhus (2011) include Samburu narratives associating their presence with areas around present-day Isiolo, Ngare Mara and the Ewaso Nyiro River. These accounts represent competing community narratives rather than uncontested evidence of exclusive ownership, since different communities have developed distinct understandings of belonging and land rights. Claims concerning historical occupation should therefore be treated as contested assertions requiring triangulation rather than as settled matters of fact.

Over successive generations, the Ewaso Nyiro River has remained central to pastoral livelihoods by providing water within an otherwise dry environment. Its availability has influenced settlement, livestock movement, grazing and inter-community interaction. Areas around Archer's Post and the wider Samburu–Isiolo interface consequently became important for pasture, water and livestock movement. The establishment of wildlife-conservation areas,

including the Samburu National Reserve and, more recently, community conservancies across both counties, introduced an additional land-use dimension by placing conservation interests alongside pastoral livelihoods and resource access. Okwany and Owino (2024) demonstrate that conservancy arrangements in Samburu and Isiolo have reshaped land tenure and resource governance in ways that can compound rather than relieve local contestation.

During the colonial period, administrative boundaries and restrictions on pastoral movement altered customary patterns of mobility and resource use. Samburu oral narratives associate this period with restrictions on movement and changes in access to areas around the Ewaso Nyiro River. At the same time, Turkana settlement in Isiolo developed progressively. Boye and Kaarhus (2011) document accounts indicating that some Turkana arrived in Isiolo during the 1940s as workers and servants, followed by further migration and settlement. The contemporary Turkana presence in Isiolo can therefore be understood as part of a longer process of migration, pastoral mobility, labour and settlement rather than as recent arrival.

Following independence, changes in land administration and settlement patterns generated new claims and counter-claims. Boye and Kaarhus (2011) show that land claims in Isiolo have been justified through historical occupation, first-comer narratives, government decisions, citizenship and group rights. The Livestock Marketing Division (LMD) area illustrates this complexity. Originally associated with livestock marketing and later abandoned as a holding ground, LMD subsequently attracted both Samburu and Turkana pastoralists, who developed competing claims regarding its use and ownership. The case demonstrates how colonial and post-colonial administration, pastoral settlement and customary claims can intersect to produce contemporary land contestation. Comparable dynamics have been documented elsewhere in northern Kenya, where Turkana settlement histories are set against Samburu assertions of ancestral precedence over the same rangelands (Lind & Rogei, 2025).

The long-standing Samburu–Turkana relationship is therefore not reducible to ethnicity. Contemporary tensions are influenced by competition over grazing land and water, livestock theft, drought, population pressure, restricted mobility and competing perceptions of territorial belonging. During severe drought, reduced availability of pasture and water may compel livestock keepers to move towards areas perceived by neighbouring communities as their customary territories. Such movements do not inevitably result in violence, but where resource-access arrangements are weak or contested they may contribute to cattle raiding, retaliation, displacement and deteriorating relationships (African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes [ACCORD], 2023; IOM, 2022). The availability of small arms and the commercialisation of livestock raiding may further increase the intensity of these confrontations (Wepundi & Wairagu, 2023).

Within the study area, Ngaremara, Daaba, LMD and Mlango, together with the Ewaso Nyiro River, grazing areas, livestock routes, Archer's Post and markets in Archer's Post and Isiolo, feature prominently in local narratives concerning settlement, land, pastoral mobility and resource access. Ngaremara forms part of the wider Samburu–Turkana conflict interface. In Daaba, local accounts include competing claims concerning earlier Samburu occupation and subsequent Turkana settlement, as well as disputes around Sava Mountain associated with livestock movement and raiding. Mlango similarly presents overlapping claims involving Turkana and Somali settlement and Samburu assertions of historical belonging. These localities should therefore be understood as contested social and livelihood spaces rather than as areas conclusively belonging to one community. Such an interpretation accords with Boye and Kaarhus (2011), who demonstrate that land claims in Isiolo are based on overlapping and sometimes contradictory narratives.

Within Samburu East Sub-County, Archer's Post, Marti, Serolipi and Wamba constitute important locations in the study context. Archer's Post is particularly significant because of its relationship with the Ewaso Nyiro landscape and its role in pastoral interaction and trade. The Archer's Post market and Isiolo market provide shared commercial spaces where Samburu, Turkana, Somali, Borana, Meru and other communities interact. These markets demonstrate that relations between the communities involve not only competition and conflict but also economic interdependence and everyday cooperation.

Traditionally, elders have played an important role in managing relationships and disputes within pastoral communities. Their authority derives from cultural legitimacy, social standing, accumulated knowledge and spiritual influence. Traditional mediation may involve dialogue, negotiation, compensation, oath-taking, blessings, prayers and reconciliation ceremonies aimed at restoring relationships and social harmony. Recent peacebuilding literature continues to recognise customary institutions as significant actors in local conflict management, particularly where they possess community legitimacy and social authority (Interpeace, 2022; UNDP, 2023). However, changing governance systems, weakening customary institutions, resource pressure, commercialisation of cattle raiding and the proliferation of firearms have challenged some traditional mechanisms of conflict management, and their continued effectiveness cannot be assumed (Mkutu, 2022; Wepundi & Wairagu, 2023).

An important dimension of the conflict concerns young warriors. Among the Samburu, young warriors are commonly referred to as Ilmuran, while among the Turkana the warrior institution includes the Ngikiliok. These youths have traditionally played roles in protecting livestock and community interests, but their mobilisation has also been associated with cattle raiding and retaliatory attacks. Youth involvement is shaped by the interaction of cultural

expectations with socioeconomic marginalisation, access to firearms, peer influence and memories of previous violence (Mkutu, 2022; Wepundi & Wairagu, 2023). Recurrent raids and retaliation have generated mistrust and memories of violence that can be transmitted across generations. At the same time, elders have remained important actors in dialogue, prevention and reconciliation.

Within this broader socio-historical context, elders-led spiritual mediation provides an important area for scholarly investigation. Unlike adversarial approaches that primarily determine legal rights or responsibility, spiritually and culturally grounded mediation addresses relational, moral and communal dimensions of conflict through dialogue, reconciliation, forgiveness, prayers, blessings, oath-taking and other culturally meaningful practices. Its potential value is particularly relevant in pastoral communities where social relationships, collective responsibility and cultural authority remain important to conflict management, and such processes may strengthen community ownership and legitimacy in conflict resolution.

Nevertheless, the continued existence of indigenous mediation does not establish its effectiveness or demonstrate that it can replace formal legal institutions. Its contribution to conflict prevention, reconciliation, compliance with agreements and sustainable peace requires empirical assessment. There is therefore a need to examine its contribution, limitations and potential integration within contemporary alternative dispute resolution (ADR) and land-governance frameworks. Existing literature suggests that hybrid approaches combining customary institutions with formal governance can strengthen legitimacy, local ownership and sustainability in peacebuilding, while also emphasising the need to address questions of accountability, inclusivity, gender participation, human rights and enforceability (Interpeace, 2022; UNDP, 2023). Despite this growing recognition, systematic empirical evidence on

elders-led spiritual mediation in Samburu East–Turkana conflicts within Isiolo County remains limited.

It is against this broader socio-historical and contemporary context that the present study examines elders-led spiritual mediation as an alternative dispute-resolution mechanism in conflicts between Samburu East Sub-County and the Turkana community in Isiolo County, Kenya. The study recognises that contemporary conflict cannot be adequately understood without considering its historical roots, resource pressures, competing community narratives, cultural institutions, youth involvement, shared economic spaces and spiritual dimensions. It therefore seeks to generate empirical evidence on the practices, contribution, effectiveness, limitations and sustainability of elders-led spiritual mediation and its potential to complement contemporary ADR approaches to inter-community conflict and peacebuilding.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Despite numerous government and non-governmental interventions aimed at addressing pastoral conflicts in northern Kenya, conflicts between Samburu East Sub-County and the Turkana community in Isiolo County continue to persist, often escalating into recurrent cycles of violence that disrupt livelihoods, threaten human security, and undermine social cohesion. Existing interventions have largely emphasized security responses, disarmament operations, and formal peacebuilding frameworks. Although these approaches have contributed to short-term stability in some instances, they have not adequately addressed the underlying socio-cultural dynamics that sustain inter-community conflicts, particularly the weakening and erosion of indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms (USAID, 2022; Interpeace, 2022). Consequently, disputes over natural resources, particularly land, grazing areas, and water, continue to recur and are further intensified by climate change, resource scarcity, and increased mobility among pastoral communities.

The situation is further complicated by the increasing involvement of pastoral youth in armed conflict, the proliferation of small arms, and the weakening authority of traditional institutions (Mkutu, 2022; Wepundi & Wairagu, 2023). Historically, elders have played a central role in maintaining social order, mediating disputes, promoting reconciliation, and restoring relationships through culturally embedded processes that may include spiritual practices and communal rituals. However, the influence and authority of elders have gradually diminished as a result of modernization, external peacebuilding interventions, changing governance structures, and transformations in traditional community institutions. The declining influence of these institutions has contributed to a gap in locally legitimate, culturally acceptable, and community-owned mechanisms for conflict resolution, thereby limiting the sustainability of externally driven peacebuilding initiatives (Adan & Pkalya, 2021; Opiyo *et al*., 2021).

Recent studies have increasingly recognized the importance of community-led and culturally grounded approaches to peacebuilding, particularly those that draw upon indigenous institutions and elders-led mediation in pastoral communities (SND Africa, 2025). Nevertheless, there remains limited empirical evidence on the specific contribution of elders-led spiritual mediation as an alternative dispute resolution mechanism in addressing conflicts involving the Samburu East Sub-County and the Turkana community in Isiolo County. Existing literature has given considerable attention to security-based interventions, resource-based conflicts, formal peacebuilding institutions, and general traditional conflict resolution mechanisms, but comparatively limited attention has been given to the spiritual dimensions of elders-led mediation and their potential contribution to reconciliation, restoration of relationships, and sustainable peace within this specific context.

This knowledge and practice gap presents a significant challenge because the absence of adequate empirical understanding of elders-led spiritual mediation limits the development of conflict resolution approaches that are locally legitimate, culturally responsive, and sustainable. There is therefore a need to systematically examine the nature of conflicts affecting the communities, assess existing conflict resolution approaches, evaluate the contribution of elders-led spiritual mediation, and identify strategies for integrating appropriate elements of this indigenous mechanism into broader alternative dispute resolution and peacebuilding frameworks.

1.4 Research Objectives

The study was guided by the following research objectives:

i. To examine the nature of inter-communal land conflicts between the Samburu East Sub-County and Turkana community in Isiolo County.
ii. To identify and analyse existing mediation and conflict resolution approaches used in addressing land conflicts among the Samburu East Sub-County and Turkana community in Isiolo County.
iii. To examine the contribution of elders-led spiritual mediation in resolving inter-communal land conflicts among the Samburu East Sub-County and Turkana community in Isiolo County.
iv. To propose strategies for integrating elders-led spiritual mediation into alternative dispute resolution frameworks for sustainable peacebuilding among the Samburu East Sub-County and Turkana community in Isiolo County.

1.5 Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

i. What is the nature of inter-communal land conflicts between the Samburu East Sub-County and the Turkana community in Isiolo County?
ii. What conflict resolution approaches are currently used in addressing land disputes among the Samburu East Sub-County and Turkana community in Isiolo County?
iii. What contribution does Elders-led spiritual mediation make to conflict resolution between Samburu East Sub-County and the Turkana community in Isiolo County?
iv. What strategies can enhance the integration of elders-led spiritual mediation into formal ADR frameworks for sustainable peacebuilding among the Samburu East Sub-County and Turkana community in Isiolo County?

1.6 Justification of the Study

This study is justified by the growing need for culturally grounded and socially responsive approaches to resolving inter-communal land conflicts in Kenya's pastoralist regions. Existing formal dispute resolution mechanisms have demonstrated limited effectiveness in addressing the deep-rooted, relational, and identity-based dimensions of conflict affecting the Samburu East Sub-County and Turkana community in Isiolo County. In this context, elders-led spiritual mediation, anchored in indigenous authority systems and spiritual values of reconciliation, forgiveness (Ephesians 4:32) and peace making (Matthew 5:9), offers a potentially significant complementary approach to conflict transformation.

At the policy level, the findings are expected to generate evidence-based insights for national and county governments in strengthening Alternative Dispute Resolution frameworks. This will support the formulation of more inclusive land governance policies that reflect the

lived realities of pastoralist societies and respond more effectively to the structural and cultural drivers of conflict.

At the county and institutional level, the study informed improvements in local governance and conflict management systems within Samburu and Isiolo counties. By demonstrating the relevance of elders-led spiritual mediation, the study contributes to strengthening community-based dispute resolution structures that are timely, accessible, cost-effective, and culturally legitimate.

At the community level, the study underscores the importance of integrating faith-based and traditional mechanisms in promoting dialogue, reconciliation, and equitable resource sharing. Such integration is expected to enhance social cohesion, rebuild trust between conflicting groups, and strengthen participation in local peacebuilding processes.

At the academic level, the study contributes to the growing body of knowledge in conflict resolution, pastoralist studies, and peacebuilding by bridging socio-cultural, psychological, and spiritual dimensions of land conflict. It addresses a notable gap in empirical research on the effectiveness of elders-led spiritual mediation as an alternative dispute resolution approach in pastoral contexts.

Overall, the study positions elders-led spiritual mediation as a potentially replicable and context-sensitive model for promoting sustainable peace, social stability, and relational healing in conflict-prone pastoral environments in Kenya and similar settings.

1.7 Scope of the Study

The study focused on elders-led spiritual mediation as an alternative dispute resolution mechanism in conflicts between Samburu East Sub-County and the Turkana community in Isiolo County, Kenya. The geographical scope of the study covered selected areas in Samburu East Sub-County, namely Archers Post, Wamba, Serolipi and Marti, and selected areas

inhabited by the Turkana community in Isiolo County, namely Ngaremara, Daaba, LMD and Mlango. These areas were selected because they provided a relevant context for examining the nature of inter-community conflicts and the role of elders-led spiritual mediation in addressing such conflicts.

Thematically, the study was guided by four objectives. First, it examined the nature of inter-community land conflicts between the Samburu and Turkana communities. Second, it assessed existing conflict resolution approaches employed in addressing the conflicts. Third, it evaluated the contribution of elders-led spiritual mediation as an alternative dispute resolution mechanism. Fourth, it proposed strategies for integrating elders-led spiritual mediation into alternative dispute resolution and broader peacebuilding frameworks. The study therefore concentrated on the relationship between indigenous conflict resolution practices, elders' authority, spiritual mediation, reconciliation and sustainable peace.

The study population comprised elders, religious leaders, government officials, women representatives, youth representatives and affected landowners. These categories were considered relevant because they provided diverse perspectives concerning the causes and manifestations of inter-community conflicts, existing approaches to conflict resolution, and the contribution of elders-led spiritual mediation. The study employed a mixed-methods approach to facilitate the collection and triangulation of quantitative and qualitative evidence. The quantitative component provided measurable patterns and perceptions, while the qualitative component provided contextual explanations of the experiences, meanings and practices associated with elders-led spiritual mediation.

The study was also temporally bounded by the period within which the research was undertaken and field data were collected in 2026. The scope was therefore sufficiently defined to permit an in-depth investigation of elders-led spiritual mediation within the specific

Samburu-Turkana conflict context rather than attempting to generalize the findings to all pastoral conflicts in Kenya.

1.7.1 Delimitations of the Study

The study was deliberately delimited to Samburu East Sub-County and the Turkana community in Isiolo County. Although pastoral conflicts occur in various parts of northern Kenya, the study did not seek to investigate all pastoral communities or all forms of inter-community conflict in the region. This geographical delimitation enabled the researcher to undertake an in-depth examination of a specific conflict context and to generate contextually grounded evidence concerning elders-led spiritual mediation.

The study was further delimited to selected locations within Samburu East Sub-County and selected areas inhabited by the Turkana community in Isiolo County. The selection of these locations was guided by their relevance to the conflict under investigation and the availability of participants with direct knowledge or experience of the conflict and its resolution. Consequently, the findings were intended primarily to illuminate the study context rather than to represent every pastoral community or conflict-prone area in northern Kenya.

In terms of content, the study was deliberately delimited to four major areas corresponding to its objectives: the nature of inter-community land conflicts, existing conflict resolution approaches, the contribution of elders-led spiritual mediation, and strategies for integrating elders-led spiritual mediation into alternative dispute resolution frameworks. The study therefore did not attempt to provide a comprehensive assessment of every indigenous conflict resolution practice or every government and non-governmental peacebuilding intervention in northern Kenya. This delimitation enabled the researcher to maintain a clear analytical focus on elders-led spiritual mediation as the central phenomenon under investigation.

The study population was also deliberately delimited to elders, religious leaders, government officials, women representatives, youth representatives and affected landowners. These categories were selected because of their anticipated relevance to understanding conflict dynamics, community-based conflict resolution and elders-led spiritual mediation. The delimitation of the population was therefore intended to ensure that the study remained aligned with its research objectives while maintaining methodological feasibility.

1.8 Limitations of the Study

The study encountered several limitations that were beyond the full control of the researcher. First, the sensitive nature of inter-community conflict, particularly issues relating to land disputes, livestock theft, resource competition, violence and community relations, may have influenced the willingness of some respondents to disclose detailed information. This limitation was addressed by assuring participants of confidentiality, obtaining informed consent, and explaining that the information collected would be used strictly for academic purposes.

Second, the geographical characteristics of the study area and the mobility of pastoral communities presented challenges in accessing some respondents and locations. Some participants were not always available at the time of the researcher's visits, while others moved between locations in search of pasture and water. The researcher mitigated this challenge through advance coordination with local administrators, community leaders and research assistants and by scheduling interviews and other data-collection activities at times convenient to participants.

Third, the conflict-prone nature of some areas presented potential security challenges for the researcher and research team. Security considerations sometimes affected the timing and movement of the research team. The researcher therefore consulted local administrators

and community leaders before visiting particular areas and took appropriate precautions to safeguard both the research team and participants.

Fourth, the study relied partly on participants' recollections of previous conflict experiences and mediation processes. Such retrospective accounts may be affected by recall bias, particularly where events occurred several years before the study. The researcher sought to minimize this limitation through triangulation of data obtained from questionnaires, key informant interviews and focus group discussions and by comparing information obtained from different categories of respondents.

Finally, differences in language, cultural interpretations and understandings of spiritual mediation presented potential communication challenges. Since elders-led spiritual mediation is embedded in the cultural traditions of the communities under study, some concepts could not always be communicated through direct literal translation. The researcher addressed this challenge through the use of appropriately selected and trained research assistants and by clarifying concepts during interviews and discussions to ensure that participants' meanings and experiences were accurately captured.

Despite these limitations, the researcher employed appropriate methodological and ethical measures to minimize their potential influence on the quality, credibility and interpretation of the findings. The use of mixed methods and triangulation further strengthened the credibility of the evidence generated by the study.

1.9 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework guiding this study was based on the understanding that conflict resolution is shaped by the interaction between culturally embedded practices, institutional arrangements, and contextual community dynamics. According to Kumar and

Kothari (2022), a conceptual framework illustrated the relationship between independent and dependent variables, providing a structured basis for empirical investigation.

This study examined elders-led spiritual mediation as an alternative dispute resolution approach in addressing inter-communal conflict between the Samburu East Sub-County and Turkana communities. It also acknowledged that the effectiveness of this approach was shaped by contextual factors such as policy and institutional frameworks, historical grievances, resource scarcity, population mobility, and cultural identity dynamics, as depicted in Figure 1.1.

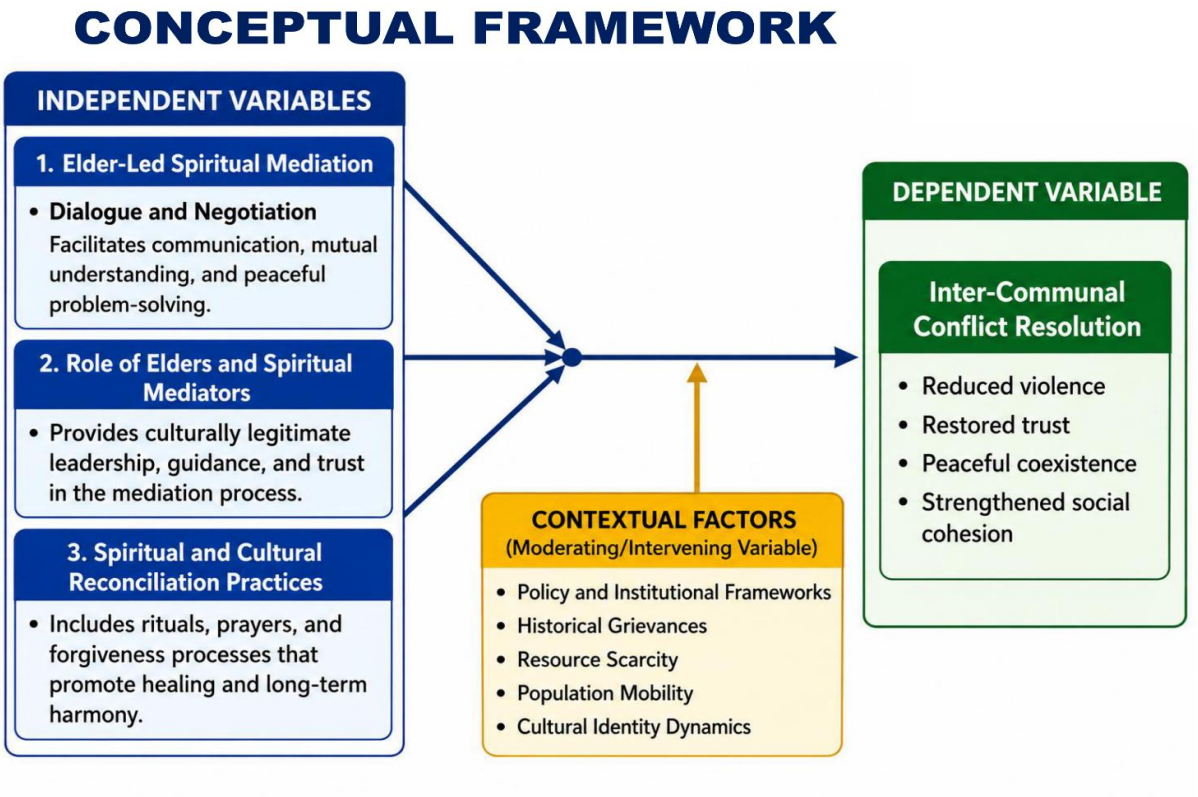


Figure 1. 1: Conceptual Framework

The study examined how structured spiritual mediation processes contribute to reducing land-related conflicts and promoting peaceful coexistence in pastoralist settings. The

effectiveness of this relationship is further influenced by contextual conditions within the policy, social, and cultural environment.

Independent Variable: Elders-led Spiritual Mediation

Elders-led spiritual mediation was conceptualized as a culturally grounded and spiritually informed approach to conflict resolution facilitated by community elders. It operated through three key components:

Dialogue and Negotiation

Dialogue provided a structured platform where conflicting parties express grievances, clarify misunderstandings, and rebuild communication. It encouraged mutual understanding, reduces hostility, and promotes collective problem-solving (Folger *et al*., 2021).

Role of Elders and Spiritual Mediators

Elders and spiritual mediators acted as trusted intermediaries who guide negotiations, interpret cultural norms, and ensure fairness in the mediation process. Their authority was based on cultural legitimacy, moral standing, and spiritual responsibility, which enables them to manage emotions and support constructive engagement (Amsler *et al.*, 2020).

Spiritual and Cultural Reconciliation Practices

This component included rituals, prayers, forgiveness ceremonies, and symbolic reconciliation practices. These practices reinforce values of forgiveness, peace, and restoration of relationships, thereby strengthening long-term social harmony (Kwuelum, 2024; Baihuzhakava, 2023).

Dependent Variable: Inter-Communal Conflict Resolution

The dependent variable was reflected in reduced violence, improved coexistence, restored trust, and strengthened social cohesion between Samburu East Sub-County and

Turkana community in Isiolo county. Effective conflict resolution is expected to result in sustainable peace, reduced competition over resources and stable inter-community relations.

Contextual Factors (Policy, Social and Cultural Environment)

The relationship between elders-led spiritual mediation and conflict resolution was influenced by contextual factors, including policy frameworks, institutional support systems, historical grievances, resource scarcity, population mobility and cultural identity dynamics.

Policy and institutional arrangements such as land governance structures, county administrative systems, and recognition of alternative dispute resolution mechanisms play a critical role in determining the legitimacy and sustainability of mediation outcomes. Where supportive policies exist, elders-led spiritual mediation is strengthened through institutional recognition, procedural backing and wider acceptance (Odey & Ugar, 2023). Where policy support is weak, enforcement of mediated agreements becomes limited.

Social and environmental conditions such as competition over scarce resources, climate variability, population movement and historical grievances also shape the intensity of conflict and influence willingness to engage in reconciliation processes. These conditions may either support or constrain the effectiveness of mediation depending on their severity. Evidence shows that where culturally grounded dialogue and mediation practices are embraced, communities experience reduced levels of violence and stronger social cohesion (Langer & Brown, 2016).

Summary of Relationships

The framework proposed that elders-led spiritual mediation through dialogue, elder facilitation, and spiritual reconciliation practices contributes positively to inter-communal conflict resolution between the Samburu and Turkana communities. This relationship is

strengthened by supportive policy structures and influenced by prevailing socio-cultural and environmental conditions.

The conceptual framework illustrates the interaction between these variables, showing how culturally grounded mediation practices, when supported by enabling governance systems and favourable contextual conditions, promote sustainable peacebuilding and long-term coexistence in pastoralist communities.

1.10 Operational Definition of Terms

Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR): Informal methods of resolving conflicts, such as mediation and negotiation, aimed at settling disputes outside of formal legal systems.

Cognitive Factors: Mental processes, including perceptions and emotions that influence decision-making and willingness to engage in conflict resolution.

Community Policies: Local customs and regulations that govern land use and resources, designed to maintain peace and prevent disputes.

Conflict Resolution: The process of managing and resolving disputes through communication and mediation to achieve peaceful and sustainable solutions.

Constitutionalism: The application of constitutional principles in land governance to protect property rights and enforce laws to prevent land conflicts.

Dialogue (Issues and Solutions): A communication process where conflicting parties discuss their issues openly and work towards mutually agreeable solutions.

Land Conflict: Disputes over land ownership, access or use, often arising from economic, political, or historical factors, especially in resource-scarce areas.

Land Policy Regulations: Legal frameworks that define land ownership and resolve disputes, ensuring fair resource distribution.

Land Tenure Security: Assurance that individuals or communities have legal rights to land, protecting them from eviction and ensuring stable land use.

Mediation: A conflict resolution process where a neutral third party helps disputing parties reach a mutually acceptable solution.

Mediators: Neutral individuals who guide parties through dialogue to reach fair and voluntary agreements, often from spiritual or traditional backgrounds.

Policy Regulations: Laws and frameworks that govern land access and ownership, aimed at promoting fair and sustainable land use.

Restorative Justice: A justice approach that focuses on reconciliation and community healing rather than punishment, emphasizing repairing harm.

Settlement of Agreement: A resolution reached through mediation, where parties agree on terms for land use or resource sharing, ensuring peace and compliance.

Spiritual Mediation: A conflict resolution method that incorporates moral and religious principles to promote reconciliation, emotional healing, and harmony.

Traditional Dispute Resolution (TDR): Customary methods of resolving disputes using communal decision-making and spiritual guidance to maintain social order.

Livestock Marketing Division- (**LMD**)- It was originally a government livestock holding market area.

Ngikiliok- a term used among the Turkana referring to young men/warriors group often associated with livestock defence, raiding, traditions, and protection of community herds in pastoral setting

Ilmurrans- A Maa language term (also spelled Moran/Lmurran) used among the Samburu and Maasai community for young initiated men in the warriors' stage of life. They

traditionally protect livestock, provide community security, herd animals, and undergo disciplined training and cultural responsibility.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a critical and systematic review of literature on elders-led spiritual mediation as an Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) mechanism in addressing inter-communal conflicts, with particular focus on the Samburu East Sub-County and Turkana community in Isiolo County, Kenya. The review situates the study within broader scholarly debates on conflict resolution, peace-building, and indigenous mediation practices, with emphasis on culturally grounded and spiritually informed approaches to managing and transforming conflicts in pastoralist settings.

Unlike conventional studies that predominantly frame conflicts in terms of resource competition or institutional weaknesses, this review adopts a more holistic perspective by examining how elders-led spiritual mediation integrates dialogue, cultural authority and reconciliation practices to address both the structural and relational dimensions of conflict. In doing so, the chapter engages with literature on the role of elders, the significance of spiritual and cultural practices and the effectiveness of community-based mediation mechanisms in fostering sustainable peace.

The review is organized thematically to align with the study objectives and variables. It explores key dimensions of elders-led spiritual mediation, including dialogue and negotiation processes, the role of elders and spiritual mediators, and the use of spiritual and cultural reconciliation practices. It further examines the outcomes of such mediation in terms of reduced violence, restored trust, and improved inter-community relations. In addition, the chapter considers the influence of contextual factors such as governance structures, historical

grievances, resource scarcity and cultural identity dynamics on the effectiveness of mediation processes.

To ensure analytical depth, the literature is examined across global, regional, national, and local contexts. This approach enables the identification of patterns, divergences, and gaps in existing knowledge, particularly regarding the integration of spiritual and cultural dimensions within mainstream conflict resolution frameworks. These gaps provide a strong justification for the present study, which seeks to contribute to both academic discourse and practical policy interventions by foregrounding indigenous mediation practices.

An outline of the theoretical frameworks, including the Natural Resource Conflict Triangle (NRCT), Peace-Building Theory and Transformative Mediation Theory, is provided at the beginning of the chapter. How conflicts arise, how to manage and change them, and how culturally rooted mediation practices like those led by elders can aid in both short-term conflict resolution and long-term peace-building are all questions that these theories help to answer. Put together, they provide a framework for analysing the significance and efficacy of spiritual mediation conducted by elders in settling disputes between the Turkana and Samburu groups.

2.2 Theoretical Literature

The Natural Resource Conflict Triangle (NRCT), Peace-Building Theory, and Transformative Mediation Theory provided the theoretical foundation for this research. We chose these theories because they shed light on the relational and structural aspects of conflict and may be used in culturally grounded methods of resolving conflicts, such spiritual mediation conducted by elders.

The decision to focus on these three theories reflects a deliberate effort to align the theoretical framework with the central premise of this study that sustainable conflict resolution among pastoralist communities requires not only structural transformation but also relational

healing grounded in cultural and spiritual practices. While numerous theories explain conflict dynamics, Peace-Building Theory and Transformative Mediation Theory are particularly suited to this study because they jointly address the broader systemic causes of conflict and the interpersonal processes through which conflicts are resolved.

In the context of the Samburu and Turkana communities, conflicts are not merely disputes over resources but are deeply embedded in historical grievances, identity dynamics, and social relationships. Therefore, a theoretical framework that integrates both structural and relational perspectives is necessary to adequately explain the role of elders-led spiritual mediation in resolving these conflicts.

2.2.1 Peace-Building Theory

Peace-Building Theory, originally conceptualized by Johan Galtung (1975), provides a foundational framework for understanding the processes required to achieve sustainable peace. According to Galtung, there is a difference between negative peace, which is characterized by the lack of violent conflict, and positive peace, which includes the existence of fairness, equality, and harmonious social interactions. In areas prone to conflicts, where a halt to violence does not always result in permanent peace, this differentiation takes on further significance.

Efforts to address inequality, marginalization, and structural injustices the core causes of conflict are an integral part of peace-building, which goes beyond merely resolving conflicts. It stresses the need of plans with a longer time horizon to change the political, economic, and social factors that cause conflicts. Therefore, this perspective, peace-building encompasses actions taken on a local, national, and worldwide scale, and it is both a means to an end.

In pastoralist communities such as the Samburu East Sub-County and Turkana community in Isiolo County, the relevance of Peace-Building Theory is evident in the structural

factors that underpin inter-communal conflicts. These include competition over scarce resources such as water and grazing land, historical marginalization, weak governance structures and socio-economic inequalities. These factors create conditions of structural violence, where certain groups are systematically disadvantaged in access to resources and opportunities.

Peace-Building Theory suggests that addressing these structural issues is essential for achieving sustainable peace. However, in practice, peace-building interventions often face significant challenges. Structural reforms, such as policy changes and institutional strengthening, require time, resources and political will, which may not always be readily available. Moreover, top-down peace-building approaches may fail to resonate with local communities if they do not incorporate indigenous knowledge systems and cultural practices.

This limitation highlights the importance of integrating locally grounded approaches, such as elders-led spiritual mediation, into peace-building processes. In many African societies, elders play a central role in maintaining social order and resolving disputes. Their authority is derived from cultural legitimacy, moral standing and accumulated wisdom. Spiritual mediation, in particular, incorporates rituals, prayers, and symbolic acts that reinforce communal values and promote reconciliation.

Within the framework of Peace-Building Theory, elders-led spiritual mediation can be understood as a grassroots peace-building mechanism that complements formal institutional approaches. It contributes to peace-building in several ways:

First, it facilitates inclusive dialogue by bringing together conflicting parties in a culturally acceptable setting. Unlike formal legal processes, which may be adversarial and exclusionary, spiritual mediation emphasizes consensus-building and collective decision-making.

Second, it promotes social cohesion by reinforcing shared values and cultural norms. Rituals and ceremonies associated with spiritual mediation serve as powerful tools for restoring relationships and fostering a sense of community.

Third, it addresses psychological and emotional dimensions of conflict, which are often overlooked in conventional peace-building approaches. By incorporating elements of forgiveness, healing, and reconciliation, spiritual mediation helps to transform attitudes and rebuild trust.

Despite its strengths, Peace-Building Theory has been critiqued for its tendency to prioritise long-term structural change at the expense of immediate conflict resolution. In contexts where conflicts are recurrent and urgent, communities require mechanisms that can provide timely and effective solutions. This study addresses this limitation by examining how elders-led spiritual mediation serves as an immediate intervention that also contributes to long-term peace building.

In this way, Peacebuilding Theory provided the broader structural context within which elders-led spiritual mediation operated, foregrounding the importance of addressing the root causes of conflict while recognising the role of culturally embedded practices in achieving sustainable peace.

2.2.2 Transformative Mediation Theory

Transformative Mediation Theory, developed by Bush and Folger (1994), offers a relational perspective on conflict resolution. Unlike traditional mediation approaches that focus on reaching agreements, transformative mediation emphasizes the transformation of relationships between conflicting parties. It is grounded in two key principles: empowerment and recognition.

Empowerment refers to the process through which individuals gain clarity about their own needs, interests, and values, enabling them to make informed decisions during the mediation process. Recognition, on the other hand, involves acknowledging and validating the perspectives and experiences of others. Together, these principles facilitate a shift from adversarial interactions to constructive engagement.

In the context of the Samburu East sub-county and Turkana community, Transformative Mediation Theory is highly relevant due to the relational nature of conflicts. These conflicts are not only about resources but also about identity, historical grievances and social relationships. Therefore, resolving such conflicts requires more than negotiated settlements; it requires rebuilding trust and restoring relationships.

Elders-led spiritual mediation aligns closely with the principles of transformative mediation. Elders and spiritual leaders act as facilitators who guide dialogue, encourage mutual understanding, and promote reconciliation. Their role goes beyond resolving disputes to fostering a sense of unity and shared identity among community members.

The process of spiritual mediation often involves rituals and symbolic acts that reinforce the principles of empowerment and recognition. For example, forgiveness ceremonies and reconciliation rituals create opportunities for individuals to express their grievances, acknowledge wrongdoing and commit to peaceful coexistence. These practices not only address the immediate conflict but also contribute to long-term relationship transformation.

One of the key strengths of Transformative Mediation Theory is its focus on process rather than outcome. By prioritizing the quality of interaction between parties, it ensures that the resolution is meaningful and sustainable. This approach is particularly important in communal societies, where relationships are central to social organization.

However, the theory also has limitations. Its reliance on voluntary participation means that it may be less effective in situations where parties are unwilling to engage in dialogue. Additionally, the emphasis on deep relational transformation can make the process time-consuming, which may not be practical in urgent conflict situations.

This study addresses these limitations by examining the role of elders as culturally legitimate authorities who can facilitate participation and guide the mediation process. Their influence and respect within the community enable them to encourage engagement even in challenging circumstances. Furthermore, the integration of spiritual elements enhances the effectiveness of transformative mediation by appealing to shared beliefs and values.

2.2.3 The Natural Resource Conflict Triangle (NRCT) Theory

The Natural Resource Conflict Triangle (NRCT) Theory, developed by David Downing in 1992, offers a foundational lens for understanding conflicts that emerge around access to and control over natural resources. The theory conceptualizes conflict as arising from the interaction of three interdependent elements: natural resources, human needs and governance structures. According to Downing (1992), tensions emerge not simply because resources are scarce, but because of how they are distributed, perceived and governed. Where access to resources such as land and water is constrained or unequally allocated, and where institutions fail to manage these pressures effectively, conflict becomes highly likely, particularly in fragile socio-ecological systems (Bach, 2021; Elliott & Dunning, 2020).

What makes the NRCT particularly compelling is its departure from reductionist explanations of conflict. Rather than attributing violence solely to environmental scarcity, the theory foregrounds the role of socio-economic inequalities, political marginalization and institutional weaknesses. Contemporary scholarship has reinforced this position, showing that in many resource-dependent regions, conflict is less about absolute scarcity and more about

perceived injustice, exclusion and governance deficits (Osman *et al*., 2021; Alhaji, 2021). This insight is especially relevant in pastoralist settings, where access to land and water is not only an economic necessity but also a marker of identity, survival and dignity (Mwakilishi, 2020).

Over time, the NRCT theory has evolved beyond its original structural orientation to incorporate social and psychological dimensions of conflict. While Downing's initial formulation focused largely on material and institutional factors, more recent studies have expanded the framework to include issues such as identity, historical grievance and collective trauma. Adu (2022) highlights how perceptions of exclusion and identity-based tensions can intensify competition over resources, while Mutonyi *et al*. (2022) underscore the role of emotional healing and reconciliation in resolving such conflicts. This evolution reflects a broader shift in conflict studies toward more holistic and context-sensitive approaches that recognize the importance of both material and non-material drivers (Ndaruhutse *et al*., 2023).

Empirical applications of the NRCT theory further illustrate its analytical strength. Mwakilishi (2020), in a study of pastoral conflicts in Kenya, found that unequal access to grazing land and water resources significantly contributed to recurring inter-community clashes. Similarly, Ndaruhutse *et al*. (2023) observed that policy interventions such as disarmament and administrative controls often fall short when they do not address deeper socio-cultural and psychological grievances. Additional studies have shown that sustainable conflict resolution requires integrating resource governance with social cohesion mechanisms and inclusive institutional frameworks (Mwangangi, 2022; Osman *et al*., 2021).

In this research, the NRCT theory is crucial because it gives a framework for analyzing the root reasons of the conflict between the Turkana population in Isiolo County and the Samburu East Sub-County. Based on the study's premise, land and water resource rivalry in Samburu East Sub-County is a major cause of conflict, with a complex web of socio-economic,

political, and cultural issues mediating this competition. Accordingly, the theory provides a more comprehensive analytical framework for the research by tying together resource dynamics with concerns of governance, identity, and livelihood insecurity (Adu, 2022; Mwangangi, 2022).

More importantly, the theory offers a useful entry point for examining conflict resolution through elders-led spiritual mediation. Although the original NRCT framework did not explicitly foreground spirituality, its emphasis on human needs creates space for incorporating non-material dimensions such as psychological healing, reconciliation and social harmony. Elders-led spiritual mediation directly engages with these dimensions by addressing not only the visible manifestations of conflict but also the underlying emotional and relational fractures. Practices such as communal rituals, prayer and traditional reconciliation ceremonies play a critical role in restoring trust, fostering forgiveness, and rebuilding relationships (Mutonyi *et al*., 2022; Alhaji, 2021). In this sense, spiritual mediation complements the structural insights of the NRCT by addressing aspects of conflict that formal governance mechanisms often overlook (Ndaruhutse *et al*., 2023).

The NRCT theory is further enhanced when considered alongside Peacebuilding Theory and Transformative Conflict Theory, which also underpin this study. While Peacebuilding Theory focuses on establishing sustainable systems and institutions that support long-term peace and Transformative Conflict Theory emphasizes the transformation of relationships and perceptions, the NRCT provides the contextual grounding by explaining the structural and resource-based origins of conflict. The three theories therefore operate in a complementary manner, with NRCT diagnosing the root causes while the other theories guide the processes of transformation and sustainable peacebuilding (Osman *et al*., 2021; Elliott & Dunning, 2020).

The policy implications embedded within the NRCT framework are equally significant. The theory underscores the importance of equitable resource distribution, inclusive governance and the recognition of local conflict resolution mechanisms. In many pastoralist contexts, formal state institutions often lack legitimacy or cultural resonance, whereas traditional structures such as councils of elders command trust and authority. By incorporating elders-led spiritual mediation into the analysis, this study highlights the potential of hybrid governance approaches that combine formal policy frameworks with indigenous knowledge systems, which have been shown to enhance conflict resolution outcomes in similar contexts (Mwangangi, 2022; Alhaji, 2021).

Despite its strengths, the NRCT theory is not without limitations. Critics have pointed out that it can overemphasize resource-related explanations at the expense of other factors, and that it offers limited predictive capacity in highly complex conflict environments. However, this study addresses these limitations by integrating additional variables, particularly those related to spirituality, culture and community agency. In doing so, it extends the explanatory power of the theory and demonstrates its continued relevance in contemporary conflict settings (Bach, 2021; Adu, 2022).

Overall, the Natural Resource Conflict Triangle Theory provides a robust and flexible framework that anchors this study, enabling a nuanced understanding of resource-based conflict while accommodating the cultural and spiritual dimensions that are central to elders-led mediation. Its integration with Peacebuilding Theory and Transformative Conflict Theory ensures that both the causes and solutions to conflict are comprehensively addressed, thereby strengthening the study's theoretical and practical contributions (Osman *et al*., 2021; Mutonyi et] al., 2022).

2.2.4 Complementarity of the Theories

The integration of Peace-Building Theory, Transformative Mediation Theory, and the Natural Resource Conflict Triangle (NRCT) Theory offers a coherent and multidimensional framework for understanding elders-led spiritual mediation as an effective alternative dispute resolution mechanism. Each theory contributes a distinct but interrelated perspective and when considered together, they provide a more complete explanation of how conflicts emerge, are managed and can ultimately be transformed within pastoralist communities. While Peace-Building and Transformative Mediation theories focus on resolution and transformation processes, the NRCT theory, developed by David Downing, explains the structural and resource-based origins of such conflicts (Downing, 1992; Osman *et al*., 2021).

Peace-Building Theory operates at a broader, structural level by emphasizing the need to address the underlying causes of conflict, including inequality, marginalization, and weak governance systems. It is concerned with creating conditions that sustain long-term peace by transforming the social, economic and political environment within which conflicts arise. In contrast, Transformative Mediation Theory is more concerned with the relational dynamics of conflict, focusing on how individuals and groups engage with one another and how processes such as dialogue, recognition and empowerment reshape relationships and perceptions. Complementing these, the NRCT theory situates conflict within the context of competition over natural resources, highlighting how land, water and pasture intersect with human needs and governance failures to generate tensions (Elliott & Dunning, 2020; Adu, 2022).

The strength of integrating the three theories lies in their ability to bridge structural causation, relational dynamics, and environmental triggers of conflict. In contexts such as the Samburu East sub-county and Turkana community in Isiolo County, conflicts are not only rooted in material issues like access to land and water but are also shaped by historical

grievances, identity and mistrust. The NRCT theory explains the resource-based pressures that initiate conflict, Peace-Building Theory addresses the structural inequalities that sustain it, while Transformative Mediation Theory focuses on repairing the damaged relationships that perpetuate cycles of hostility (Mwakilishi, 2020; Ndaruhutse *et al*., 2023).

Elders-led spiritual mediation operates precisely at the intersection of these theoretical perspectives. It provides a culturally grounded mechanism through which resource-based tensions, structural inequalities, and relational breakdowns can be addressed simultaneously. Through dialogue facilitated by elders, immediate disputes over resources are managed, while spiritual practices such as rituals and reconciliation ceremonies address emotional wounds and restore social cohesion. In doing so, this approach responds directly to the human needs dimension emphasized in the NRCT framework while advancing the relational transformation central to Transformative Mediation Theory and the long-term stability envisioned in Peace-Building Theory (Mutonyi *et al*., 2022; Alhaji, 2021).

Moreover, the integration of these theories allows for the reconciliation of short-term and long-term approaches to conflict resolution. Transformative mediation enables communities to respond to immediate conflicts through dialogue and reconciliation, while Peace-Building Theory ensures that such efforts are embedded within broader structural reforms. The NRCT theory reinforces this by highlighting the need for sustainable and equitable resource management as a foundation for lasting peace. This combined approach is particularly important in pastoralist settings, where conflicts are recurrent and driven by both environmental and socio-political factors (Osman *et al*., 2021; Mwangangi, 2022).

Another important dimension of this complementarity lies in the relationship between formal and informal mechanisms of conflict resolution. Peace-building initiatives are often implemented through formal institutions and policy frameworks, which may lack cultural

relevance or local legitimacy. In contrast, elders-led spiritual mediation, as understood through Transformative Mediation Theory and supported by the human needs dimension of the NRCT, is rooted in informal, community-based systems that command trust and authority. By integrating these approaches, the study demonstrates how indigenous practices can complement formal governance structures, particularly in addressing resource-based conflicts that formal systems often struggle to resolve effectively (Adu, 2022; Ndaruhutse *et al*., 2023).

Furthermore, the three theories collectively address the environmental, emotional, and institutional dimensions of conflict. The NRCT theory explains how environmental pressures and resource competition create conflict conditions, Transformative Mediation Theory addresses emotional healing and relationship repair, while Peace-Building Theory focuses on institutional reforms and systemic change. In combination, they provide a holistic framework that recognizes conflict as a complex phenomenon requiring multi-layered interventions (Elliott & Dunning, 2020; Mutonyi *et al*., 2022).

Within the context of this study, the complementarity of Peace-Building Theory, Transformative Mediation Theory, and the NRCT theory underscores the importance of adopting an approach to conflict resolution that is both comprehensive and context-sensitive. Elders-led spiritual mediation emerges not merely as a traditional or cultural practice, but as a dynamic and integrative mechanism capable of addressing resource-based triggers, structural inequalities, and relational breakdowns. It embodies the convergence of environmental understanding, structural transformation, and relational healing, making it particularly well-suited to resolving inter-communal conflicts among the Samburu and Turkana communities (Osman *et al*., 2021; Mutonyi *et al*., 2022).

2.2.5 Application to the Study

The application of Peace-Building Theory, Transformative Mediation Theory, and the Natural Resource Conflict Triangle (NRCT) Theory provides a strong conceptual foundation for analyzing the role of elders-led spiritual mediation in resolving conflicts between the Samburu and Turkana communities in Isiolo County. Collectively, these theories enable the study to move beyond single-dimensional explanations of conflict by integrating structural, relational and environmental perspectives, thereby offering a more comprehensive understanding of both the causes of conflict and the pathways toward sustainable resolution (Osman *et al*., 2021; Mwangangi, 2022).

Peace-Building Theory informs the analysis of broader contextual factors such as governance structures, resource distribution, and historical grievances. It explains the structural environment within which conflicts occur and underscores the importance of addressing systemic inequalities, marginalization, and institutional weaknesses in order to achieve sustainable peace. In the context of Samburu East Sub-County, this perspective is particularly useful in examining how long-standing governance challenges and uneven access to resources contribute to recurring inter-communal tensions (Elliott & Dunning, 2020; Alhaji, 2021).

Transformative Mediation Theory guides the examination of the mediation process itself, with particular attention to the role of elders, dialogue, and spiritual practices in transforming relationships and fostering reconciliation. It provides the analytical basis for understanding how elders-led mediation moves beyond dispute settlement to address issues of recognition, empowerment, and trust-building among conflicting parties. This is especially relevant in pastoralist communities where relationships, identity, and social cohesion are central to conflict dynamics (Mutonyi *et al*., 2022; Adu, 2022).

The Natural Resource Conflict Triangle (NRCT) Theory, developed by David Downing, is applied to explain how competition over land and water resources interacts with human needs and governance structures to shape conflict between the Samburu and Turkana communities. The theory guides the analysis by linking resource-based pressures, socio-economic conditions, and institutional responses to the dependent variable of conflict resolution. Within this framework, elders-led spiritual mediation is understood as a culturally grounded mechanism that addresses the human needs dimension through reconciliation, healing and restoration of social cohesion, thereby contributing to sustainable peace (Adu, 2022; Ndaruhutse *et al*., 2023).

By integrating these theoretical perspectives, the study is able to capture the complexity of conflict resolution in pastoralist communities. It recognizes that effective conflict resolution requires the simultaneous engagement of structural conditions, relational dynamics and resource-based realities, and that culturally grounded practices such as elders-led spiritual mediation play a crucial role in bridging these dimensions. This integrated approach strengthens the study's analytical depth and enhances its potential to generate contextually relevant and sustainable conflict resolution strategies (Osman *et al*., 2021; Mutonyi *et al*., 2022).

2.3 Empirical Literature Review

This section critically reviews empirical literature relevant to elders-led spiritual mediation as an Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) mechanism for inter-communal land conflicts. The review focuses on the nature and drivers of pastoralist conflicts, dialogue and negotiation, the role of elders and spiritual mediators, cultural and spiritual reconciliation, existing conflict-resolution approaches, sustainable peace, and strategies for integrating indigenous me-

diation into contemporary ADR frameworks. The review moves from general evidence on indigenous mediation to the specific conflict environment of northern Kenya and, ultimately, to the Samburu East Sub-County–Turkana Community context in Isiolo County.

2.3.1 Elders-Led Spiritual Mediation

Elders-led spiritual mediation is increasingly recognized as a culturally embedded approach to conflict management, particularly in communities where customary institutions continue to exercise social and moral authority. Its significance lies in its capacity to address conflict through dialogue, negotiation, moral persuasion, cultural norms and reconciliation rather than through adjudication alone. Amsler et al. (2020) observe that indigenous mediation derives much of its legitimacy from the social relationships, shared norms and cultural values within which it operates. This gives elders an important role as trusted actors capable of facilitating communication and rebuilding relationships between conflicting parties.

The strength of this approach is its cultural legitimacy and accessibility. Unlike formal justice institutions, elders are normally located within the communities concerned and understand the historical relationships, customary expectations and social consequences surrounding disputes. However, the literature also indicates that indigenous mediation should not be romanticized. Modernization, political interference, changing generational attitudes and the weakening of traditional authority may reduce the influence of elders (Amsler et al., 2020). Thus, cultural legitimacy does not automatically guarantee successful conflict resolution.

This distinction is particularly important in the Samburu East–Turkana context, where conflicts are associated with land, grazing, water, mobility, historical grievances and changing patterns of pastoralist livelihoods. Contemporary research on Samburu demonstrates that conflict in the region is influenced by interconnected governance, livelihood and resource pres-

sures rather than by a single cause (Lekapua, 2023). Lekapua's contribution is important because it places Samburu conflict within the broader ASAL environment; however, the study is centered on Samburu County and does not specifically examine elders-led spiritual mediation between Samburu East and the Turkana community in Isiolo.

The literature therefore establishes the relevance of elders as indigenous mediators but leaves a contextual and empirical gap concerning how elders-led spiritual mediation actually operates between Samburu and Turkana actors in the selected localities of Isiolo County. This study addresses that gap by examining the contribution of elders' dialogue, moral authority, spiritual practices, forgiveness, impartiality and community compliance to conflict resolution.

2.3.2 Dialogue and Negotiation

Dialogue and negotiation constitute central mechanisms through which elders-led mediation operates. Dialogue creates an opportunity for conflicting parties to articulate grievances, clarify misunderstandings, listen to competing perspectives and search for mutually acceptable solutions. Folger et al. (2021) emphasizes the importance of communication and mutual recognition in mediation, while Adams (2019) associates community dialogue with improved communication, cooperation and reduced hostility.

The strength of dialogue-based mediation is that it shifts conflict management from confrontation towards communication and consensus. In pastoralist societies, this is particularly important because conflict frequently damages relationships that must continue after a particular dispute has been settled. Negotiated settlements can therefore contribute to coexistence by allowing communities to reach practical arrangements concerning resources, compensation and future interaction.

Nevertheless, dialogue has limitations. It may be ineffective where there is deep mistrust, unequal power, continued insecurity or unwillingness to compromise. Dialogue may also

settle an immediate dispute without addressing the historical or structural conditions that produced it. Consequently, dialogue should be understood as one component of a broader mediation process rather than as a sufficient solution in itself.

Within the present study, dialogue is therefore examined together with elder authority and spiritual reconciliation. This provides a more comprehensive basis for determining whether mediation contributes to durable conflict resolution rather than merely producing temporary agreements.

2.3.3 Role of Elders and Spiritual Mediators

Elders occupy an important position in indigenous governance because their authority is generally derived from age, experience, social standing, knowledge of customary norms and perceived moral integrity. Amsler et al. (2020) emphasizes the importance of mediator legitimacy in achieving acceptance of mediated outcomes. Elders can therefore function as facilitators, negotiators, custodians of customary norms and, in some circumstances, arbiters.

Their strength lies in their proximity to the communities and their knowledge of local history and relationships. They may also possess greater social influence than external mediators because disputants understand the cultural basis of their authority. This can encourage voluntary compliance and make reconciliation more socially meaningful.

However, the authority of elders is increasingly challenged by modern governance systems, political actors and generational change. Younger people may question customary authority, while women and other groups may have limited participation in traditionally male-dominated structures. Consequently, the legitimacy of elder-led mediation requires continuing examination rather than assumption.

The present study is significant in this respect because it examines not simply whether elders are respected but whether their authority contributes to specific conflict-resolution outcomes. It therefore connects the institutional role of elders with observable dimensions of mediation, including dialogue, impartiality, forgiveness and compliance.

2.3.4 Spiritual and Cultural Reconciliation Practices

Spiritual and cultural reconciliation practices constitute another important dimension of elders-led mediation. Such practices may involve prayer, rituals, symbolic acts, public acknowledgement of wrongdoing, forgiveness and communal ceremonies. Kwuelum (2024) and Baihuzhakava (2023) emphasize the importance of spiritual and moral dimensions in reconciliation, particularly where conflict has affected relationships and communal identity.

The major strength of spiritual reconciliation is that it addresses dimensions of conflict that may not be resolved through legal adjudication alone. A court may determine rights and responsibilities, but it may not necessarily restore trust, remove resentment or repair damaged social relationships. Spiritual and cultural practices can provide symbolic closure and reaffirm communal commitments to peaceful coexistence.

However, the application of spiritual practices also presents challenges. Practices differ across communities and may not be equally accepted by all groups, particularly in increasingly religiously and socially diverse environments. There is therefore a need to distinguish between culturally legitimate spiritual practices and practices that may conflict with constitutional rights or the values of inclusive peacebuilding.

Existing literature gives considerable attention to the symbolic importance of reconciliation but provides less empirical evidence on how spiritual practices operate together with elder authority and dialogue in resolving specific inter-communal land disputes. This study

addresses this gap by examining spiritual mediation as an integrated process rather than treating spirituality as an isolated ritual component.

2.4 Existing Mediation and Conflict Resolution Approaches

Conflict resolution in pastoralist regions operates within a plural institutional environment in which formal state mechanisms coexist with indigenous systems. Conflicts involving land, grazing, water and mobility require mechanisms capable of responding both to immediate disputes and to their underlying structural causes (FAO, 2022; Nyukuri & Muigua, 2023).

Formal mechanisms include courts, administrative structures, county peace structures and statutory land-governance institutions. Their principal strength is legal authority, procedural regularity and the possibility of enforceable decisions. However, their effectiveness in remote pastoralist settings may be constrained by cost, distance, bureaucratic delays and limited cultural sensitivity (Kinyua, 2023; Mathenge, 2020).

Indigenous mechanisms, in contrast, emphasize accessibility, cultural legitimacy, collective responsibility and restoration of relationships. Amsler et al. (2020) argue that indigenous mechanisms derive strength from the shared values and moral authority of the communities in which they operate. Adams (2019) similarly highlights the value of community-based dialogue and negotiated settlements.

The weakness of both approaches becomes apparent when they operate in isolation. Formal institutions may lack cultural legitimacy, while indigenous systems may lack formal recognition, documentation and enforceability. Ngugi et al. (2024) therefore point to the importance of stronger interaction between formal and informal mechanisms. The critical issue is not whether one system should replace the other, but how their complementary strengths can be connected.

2.4.1 Historical Land Claims, Resource Competition and Conflict in Isiolo

A particularly important foundation for understanding land conflict in Isiolo is provided by Boye and Kaarhus (2011). Their study demonstrates that competing land claims in Isiolo are constructed through historical narratives, first-comer claims, former government decisions, citizenship claims and collective group rights. The study is particularly valuable because it shows that land conflict cannot be reduced to competition over physical territory; it also involves competing interpretations of history, belonging and legitimacy.

The strength of Boye and Kaarhus (2011) is therefore its detailed historical and socio-political explanation of contested land claims in Isiolo. Its limitation is temporal: the study predates recent developments in climate stress, mobility, conservation governance and contemporary peacebuilding interventions. It also does not examine elders-led spiritual mediation as an ADR mechanism. Consequently, it provides a foundational explanation of the historical character of land disputes but requires supplementation by more recent studies.

Contemporary evidence confirms that resource and mobility pressures remain important. The International Organization for Migration (IOM, 2022), through its Mobility Tracking and Multi-Sectoral Location Assessment, documented drought-induced mobility and related livelihood, water, health and other needs across Isiolo County. This is significant because pastoral mobility can intensify competition over already constrained resources. However, IOM's assessment is primarily humanitarian and mobility-oriented rather than a study of mediation; it therefore helps explain the conflict environment but does not establish how elders resolve such conflicts.

Lekapua (2023) further strengthens the contemporary conflict perspective by examining destructive conflicts in Samburu County and relating them to the broader ASAL environment. The study contributes an important understanding of governance, livelihood insecurity

and resource-related pressures affecting Samburu communities. Its limitation is that it addresses Samburu County broadly rather than the specific Samburu East–Turkana relationship in Isiolo County and does not systematically assess spiritual mediation.

Okwany and Owino (2024) provide more recent evidence from Samburu and Isiolo counties. Their study examines conservation, resource governance and relations among pastoralist communities, state actors and the Northern Rangeland Trust. Based on interviews, focus group discussions, field observations and transect walks, the study demonstrates how resource governance arrangements can generate contestation, power struggles and violence. Its major strength is its direct geographical relevance to Samburu and Isiolo and its attention to resource governance. Its limitation for the present study is that it focuses on conservation, power and resource conflict rather than on elders-led spiritual mediation.

Lind and Rogei (2025) extend this contemporary perspective by examining contestation surrounding the Lake Turkana Wind Power project in northern Kenya. They demonstrate that land and resource conflicts involve not only material interests but also recognition, rights, governance and authority, while highlighting the agency of local communities. Their study is methodologically strong because it combines community-based participatory research with qualitative and ethnographic approaches. Nevertheless, it focuses on large-scale investment and the Lake Turkana context rather than the Samburu East–Turkana conflict in Isiolo or elders-led mediation.

Taken together, these studies demonstrate that land conflict in northern Kenya is historically grounded and continually reshaped by resource scarcity, mobility, governance, conservation and changing economic interests. They therefore strengthen the argument that conflict resolution cannot focus solely on the immediate dispute. However, they leave a significant gap concerning the culturally grounded processes through which local actors themselves seek

reconciliation. This is the point at which elders-led spiritual mediation becomes particularly relevant to the present study.

2.4.2 Peacebuilding and Conflict-Management Perspective

Contemporary peacebuilding literature further demonstrates the importance of prevention, early warning, community participation and local peace infrastructures. Interpeace (2022), for example, reports peacebuilding interventions in Turkana, Samburu and other northern Kenyan counties that employed early warning, rapid response, mediation, peace sensitization and local peace infrastructures. The study demonstrates the value of linking community-level mechanisms with formal actors and referral structures.

The strength of this approach is its emphasis on prevention and institutional coordination rather than responding only after violence has occurred. Its limitation, however, is that early warning and peacebuilding frameworks do not necessarily explain the cultural and spiritual processes through which communities achieve forgiveness and reconciliation.

This distinction is important for the present study. Conflict management may prevent escalation, while reconciliation seeks to repair relationships and establish conditions for sustainable coexistence. Elders-led spiritual mediation potentially connects these dimensions by combining preventive dialogue with culturally legitimate reconciliation. The unresolved question is therefore how such indigenous processes can complement existing peacebuilding and ADR structures without losing their cultural legitimacy.

2.4.3 Inter-Communal Conflict Resolution Outcomes

Conflict resolution should be assessed through identifiable outcomes rather than through the existence of mediation activities alone. Relevant outcomes include reduced violence, improved communication, restoration of trust, acceptance of agreements, cooperation and strengthened social cohesion (Nyukuri & Muigua, 2023).

Successful mediation should therefore move beyond temporary cessation of hostilities towards improved relationships and predictable interaction. In pastoralist settings, this may include cooperation concerning grazing, water access, migration routes and livestock-related disputes. However, the recurrence of conflict demonstrates that settlement of an immediate dispute does not necessarily constitute sustainable peace.

The present study consequently considers conflict resolution as a process involving both immediate settlement and longer-term relational change. This provides a basis for assessing whether elders-led spiritual mediation contributes to meaningful peace outcomes.

2.4.4 Sustainable Peace and Resource Relations

Sustainable peace involves more than the absence of violence. It requires institutions and relationships capable of managing competition over resources and preventing the recurrence of conflict (African Union, 2021). FAO (2022) similarly emphasizes the importance of resource governance and cooperation in pastoralist areas where mobility and environmental variability are integral to livelihoods.

The contemporary evidence from Isiolo and Samburu reinforces this position. Drought-induced mobility documented by IOM (2022), resource-governance tensions identified by Okwany and Owino (2024), and wider contestation over land and authority examined by Lind and Rogei (2025) demonstrate that peace is closely connected to the governance of land and natural resources.

The literature therefore suggests that sustainable peace requires an approach that combines conflict management with resource governance, social legitimacy and reconciliation. This provides a strong justification for investigating elders-led spiritual mediation as a potential complementary ADR mechanism.

2.5 Contribution of Spiritual Mediation in Resolving Inter-Communal Land Conflicts

Spiritual mediation may be understood as a conflict-resolution process that incorporates cultural values, moral authority, spiritual beliefs and reconciliation practices into mediation. Its relevance to land conflict arises from the fact that land in pastoralist communities is associated not only with economic livelihood but also with identity, belonging, ancestry and social relations.

Kwuelum (2024) and Baihuzhakava (2023) emphasize reconciliation, forgiveness and moral restoration as important dimensions of spiritually informed conflict resolution. The strength of this approach is its ability to address relational and emotional dimensions that may remain unresolved after formal adjudication. However, its effectiveness cannot be assumed merely because a process is culturally legitimate. It must be examined through concrete outcomes and community experiences.

2.5.1 Concept and Nature of Spiritual Mediation

Spiritual mediation differs from purely adjudicative approaches because it seeks to restore relationships as well as resolve the immediate dispute. Baihuzhakava (2023) associates spiritually grounded reconciliation with forgiveness, humility, communal responsibility and restoration of harmony. Langer and Brown (2016) similarly highlight the relevance of traditional and spiritually informed approaches in contexts where social relationships are central to peace.

Within the Samburu East–Turkana context, spiritual mediation may therefore involve elders guiding disputants through dialogue, moral persuasion, acknowledgement of wrongdoing, forgiveness and culturally recognized reconciliation practices. The present study treats these elements as interconnected rather than as independent activities.

2.5.2 Mechanisms through Which Spiritual Mediation Operates

Four mechanisms are particularly important. First, dialogue enables disputants to communicate grievances and understand competing perspectives (Folger et al., 2021). Second, moral persuasion allows elders to appeal to shared values and encourage responsibility and forgiveness. Third, spiritual and cultural reconciliation can provide symbolic closure and reinforce commitments to peaceful relations (Kwuelum, 2024; Baihuzhakava, 2023). Fourth, community validation can strengthen compliance because agreements are socially recognised.

These mechanisms demonstrate why spiritual mediation may be particularly relevant to conflicts in which relationships extend beyond the immediate disputants. Nevertheless, their operation depends on the credibility of elders, community acceptance, willingness to participate and the wider political and environmental context.

2.5.3 Empirical Evidence on Contributions

Evidence from African and indigenous contexts indicates that customary, faith-based and community reconciliation mechanisms can contribute to reduced hostility and social reintegration (Abdi & Nemomsa, 2023; Nduwayezu et al., 2021). Nyukuri and Muigua (2023) similarly emphasize the continued importance of customary approaches in Kenyan pastoralist conflict management.

However, much of this literature is either broad geographically or concerned with customary mediation generally. It does not sufficiently isolate the contribution of spiritual practices combined with elder authority in inter-communal land conflicts. Moreover, some studies emphasize the normative value of traditional mediation without measuring specific outcomes.

The present study contributes by examining identifiable dimensions of elders-led spiritual mediation and relating them to conflict-resolution outcomes in the specific Samburu East–

Turkana context. This provides empirical evidence beyond the general claim that traditional mediation is culturally important.

2.5.4 Strengths of Spiritual Mediation

The literature identifies several strengths. First, spiritual mediation has cultural legitimacy because it is grounded in community values. Second, it is relatively accessible and less costly than formal litigation. Third, it emphasizes reconciliation rather than punishment. Fourth, it may promote voluntary compliance through social and moral authority. Finally, it addresses relational and emotional dimensions of conflict that formal mechanisms may overlook (Amsler et al., 2020; Langer & Brown, 2016).

These strengths make spiritual mediation potentially valuable in remote pastoralist environments. Nevertheless, they should be assessed empirically because legitimacy and accessibility do not necessarily guarantee impartiality or sustainability.

2.5.5 Limitations and Challenges

Spiritual mediation also faces important limitations. First, agreements may have weak formal enforceability where they are not documented or recognized by statutory institutions. Second, traditional authority may be weakened by modernization and generational change. Third, political interests may influence mediation processes, particularly where land and resources have high economic or political value. Fourth, unequal participation may undermine inclusivity.

The contemporary literature strengthens these concerns. Interpeace (2022) demonstrates the continuing importance of political and historical grievances in conflict dynamics, while Okwany and Owino (2024) show how resource governance and power relations can intensify conflict in Samburu and Isiolo. Lind and Rogei (2025) further demonstrate that land

and resource disputes involve questions of authority, recognition and rights that cannot always be resolved through statutory procedures alone.

Consequently, the appropriate scholarly position is not that spiritual mediation is inherently superior to formal mechanisms, but that it may provide important complementary capacities—particularly cultural legitimacy, reconciliation and community ownership—that can strengthen broader ADR and peacebuilding systems.

2.6 Strategies for Integrating Elders-Led Spiritual Mediation into ADR Frameworks for Sustainable Peacebuilding

The literature increasingly supports the integration of formal and indigenous mechanisms rather than treating them as mutually exclusive. Such integration is particularly relevant in pastoralist contexts where formal institutions possess legal authority while indigenous institutions possess cultural legitimacy.

2.6.1 Policy Recognition and Legal Framework Integration

The Constitution of Kenya (2010) recognizes alternative dispute resolution and traditional dispute-resolution mechanisms subject to constitutional and legal safeguards. Odey and Ugar (2023) argue that institutional recognition can strengthen indigenous mechanisms by providing greater legitimacy and support.

The challenge is translating constitutional recognition into practical local arrangements. Clear procedures are required to determine which disputes may be handled by elders, how agreements are documented and when matters should be referred to formal institutions. This study therefore considers policy recognition as a foundation for sustainable integration rather than as an end in itself.

2.6.2 Institutional Collaboration Between Formal and Traditional Systems

Amsler et al. (2020) support hybrid approaches that connect formal and informal systems. Such collaboration may involve referral arrangements between elders, county peace committees, administrators and other ADR institutions. Ngugi et al. (2024) similarly highlight the problem of fragmented conflict-resolution systems.

Interpeace's (2022) experience with early warning, rapid response and integrated referral structures further demonstrates the practical value of connecting community peace infrastructures with government and other actors.

For the Samburu East–Turkana context, institutional collaboration could therefore allow elders to address culturally sensitive disputes while formal institutions provide legal safeguards, documentation and enforcement where necessary.

2.6.3 Capacity Building for Elders and Mediators

Traditional authority does not eliminate the need for mediation skills. Elders may benefit from training in negotiation, communication, human rights, gender sensitivity, documentation and referral procedures. Such capacity building would strengthen the ability of elders to address increasingly complex disputes while retaining cultural legitimacy.

The objective should not be to replace customary knowledge with formal training but to create a complementary competence that enables elders to operate effectively within contemporary ADR systems.

2.6.4 Community Participation and Inclusivity

Inclusive participation is essential to the legitimacy of mediation. Although elders have traditionally occupied central decision-making positions, women and youth may experience the consequences of conflict differently and may therefore provide perspectives that strengthen the sustainability of agreements.

Mwangi (2023) and Mutonyi et al. (2022) highlight concerns regarding the dominance of male elders and limited participation of other groups. Interpeace (2022) similarly demonstrates the value of involving women, youth and marginalized groups in peacebuilding initiatives.

The implication is that integration should preserve elder authority while creating meaningful opportunities for wider community participation.

2.6.5 Integration of Spiritual and Cultural Dimensions into ADR

Spiritual and cultural dimensions should not be treated as peripheral if they constitute important sources of legitimacy within the communities concerned. Kwuelum (2024) and Baihuzhakava (2023) demonstrate the potential importance of reconciliation, forgiveness and symbolic practices in restoring relationships.

However, integration must respect constitutional rights, individual freedom and inclusivity. The objective is therefore not to impose spiritual practices through formal institutions but to recognize culturally appropriate reconciliation practices where the parties voluntarily accept them.

2.6.6 Strengthening Local Governance Structures

County governments and local peace structures can provide an institutional bridge between elders and formal authorities. Nyukuri and Muigua (2023) emphasize the importance of coordinated conflict-management mechanisms, while Ngugi et al. (2024) highlight the weaknesses associated with fragmented institutional responses.

Local institutions can support documentation, monitoring, referral and follow-up of agreements while leaving culturally appropriate mediation functions within the community. Such an arrangement could strengthen accountability without eliminating indigenous ownership.

2.6.7 Public Awareness and Peace Education

Peace education can strengthen understanding of both formal ADR and indigenous mechanisms. Schools, religious institutions, community organizations and peace committees can promote dialogue, tolerance, forgiveness and non-violent conflict management.

Wanjiru and Mutua (2023) additionally highlight the potential of digital tools for documentation and accountability. Although technological approaches should be adapted to local conditions, appropriate documentation could improve institutional memory and facilitate follow-up of mediated agreements.

2.7 Identified Gaps and Contribution to the Study

The literature reviewed reveals substantial knowledge concerning pastoralist conflict, indigenous mediation, resource governance and peacebuilding, but important gaps remain.

First, there is a contextual gap. Boye and Kaarhus (2011) provide a strong historical explanation of competing land claims in Isiolo, while more recent studies address Samburu conflict, resource governance and northern Kenya more broadly. However, these studies do not provide a systematic examination of elders-led spiritual mediation between the Samburu East and Turkana community in the specific context investigated by this study.

Second, there is a conceptual gap. Existing studies frequently examine traditional mediation, peacebuilding or spiritual reconciliation separately. There is less attention to the interaction among dialogue, elder authority, spiritual practices, forgiveness, cultural legitimacy and compliance as components of a single mediation process. The present study addresses this gap by examining elders-led spiritual mediation as an integrated ADR mechanism.

Third, there is an empirical gap. Much of the available literature explains why indigenous mediation is important but provides limited empirical measurement of the specific factors

through which it contributes to conflict resolution. The present study therefore examines concrete dimensions of elders-led spiritual mediation and their contribution to inter-communal conflict resolution.

Fourth, there is a governance and institutional gap. Existing literature identifies weaknesses in the relationship between formal and customary systems, but provides limited practical guidance on how elders-led mediation can be linked to formal ADR, county peace structures, documentation and referral systems (Ngugi et al., 2024; Odey & Ugar, 2023).

Fifth, there is a peacebuilding gap. Interpeace (2022) demonstrates the importance of early warning, rapid response and local peace infrastructures, while Lekapua (2023) and Okwany and Owino (2024) demonstrate the importance of resource, governance and livelihood factors in northern Kenyan conflicts. However, these approaches provide less explanation of how culturally grounded spiritual reconciliation can complement broader conflict-management systems.

Sixth, there is an adaptation and sustainability gap. IOM (2022) demonstrates the continuing importance of mobility and drought-related pressures in Isiolo, while Lind and Rogei (2025) show how contemporary land and resource contestation is shaped by governance, authority and claims for recognition. These developments suggest that traditional mediation must operate within changing social, environmental and economic conditions. Yet the literature provides limited evidence on how elders-led spiritual mediation can adapt to these pressures.

Seventh, there is an inclusivity gap. Existing research indicates that traditional mediation can be dominated by elders and may provide limited space for women and youth (Mwangi, 2023; Mutonyi et al., 2022). The present study therefore recognizes inclusivity as an important consideration in assessing the sustainability and legitimacy of elders-led mediation.

Finally, there is a theoretical and integration gap. Existing literature tends to approach conflict from legal, anthropological, peacebuilding or cultural perspectives separately. There remains insufficient integration of these perspectives to explain how dialogue, elder authority, spiritual reconciliation and institutional support interact to influence sustainable peace. The present study addresses this gap by bringing together indigenous mediation, peacebuilding and transformative perspectives within an ADR framework.

The contribution of this study therefore extends beyond demonstrating that elders are important in pastoralist communities. It seeks to provide empirical evidence on how elders-led spiritual mediation functions, which elements strengthen or weaken its contribution to conflict resolution, and how it can be integrated into contemporary ADR and peacebuilding frameworks.

The study consequently adds value in four principal areas: first, by providing context-specific evidence from the Samburu East Sub-County–Turkana Community setting in Isiolo County; second, by examining dialogue, elder authority and spiritual reconciliation as interconnected mediation processes; third, by identifying institutional and social conditions that influence sustainable mediation outcomes; and fourth, by proposing practical strategies for linking culturally legitimate elders-led mediation with formal ADR and peacebuilding structures.

Overall, the reviewed literature demonstrates that inter-communal land conflict in northern Kenya is shaped by historical claims, resource competition, mobility, environmental pressures, governance arrangements and changing political and economic interests. Contemporary studies strengthen this understanding, but they do not adequately explain how elders-led spiritual mediation can address the relational, cultural and spiritual dimensions of these conflicts. The present study therefore occupies a distinct research space by examining elders-

led spiritual mediation as a culturally grounded ADR mechanism for sustainable peace between the Samburu East Sub-County and Turkana community in Isiolo County, Kenya.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the methodological framework that guided the study on elders-led spiritual mediation as an alternative dispute resolution (ADR) approach to inter-communal land conflicts between the Samburu East Sub-County and the Turkana community in Isiolo County, Kenya. It detailed the research strategy, study site, population of interest, sampling methods, research tools, data gathering methodologies, data processing approaches and processes for ensuring the validity, reliability, and general credibility of the results.

In order to provide empirical evidence on the efficacy of spiritual mediation led by elders in pastoralist settings in promoting reconciliation, restoring trust, and sustaining coexistence, this chapter gives a systematic explanation of how data were collected, organized, and analyzed.

3.2 Research Design

The study employed a survey research design, where data were gathered through questionnaires, key informant interviews and focus group discussions. The survey research design was considered ideal for this study since it enabled the researcher to collect data from a significant number of community members and stakeholders drawn from Samburu East Sub-County within Samburu County and the Turkana settlements within Isiolo County, whose experiences of land-related conflict and mediation could be generalized to comparable pastoral communities. Moreover, it enabled the researcher to collect large amounts of empirical data that were both quantitative and qualitative within a single fieldwork period and at reasonable cost (Kothari, 2021; Kumar & Kothari, 2022). The mixed methods research approach adopted for the study also adheres to this research design (Creswell, 2020). Finally, it allowed the

researcher to select from various data collection methods, including questionnaires, interview guides and focus group discussions. The descriptive survey research design was adopted for this study.

Descriptive survey research design aims to describe a phenomenon and its features (Creswell, 2020). Adopting descriptive survey research allowed the researcher to describe the phenomenon, which in this case was elders-led spiritual mediation as an alternative dispute resolution mechanism in inter-communal land conflicts between Samburu East Sub-County and the Turkana community in Isiolo County. According to Kothari (2021), a descriptive style of analysis is best for ensuring the data gathered are meaningful and precisely define the objectives. This justified its adoption in this study since it helped in exploring and explaining the current state and the relationships among the study's key variables, which were the nature of inter-communal land conflicts, the existing mediation and conflict resolution approaches, the influence of elders-led spiritual mediation on conflict resolution, and the strategies for integrating elders-led spiritual mediation into alternative dispute resolution frameworks.

A descriptive survey research design was also chosen because it worked well for dispersed populations, such as pastoral communities occupying wide grazing territories across two counties. Lastly, several studies on indigenous conflict resolution and mediation in pastoral settings employed the descriptive survey design, indicating its effectiveness in a variety of settings and scopes.

This study adopted a mixed methods research approach, which integrates qualitative and quantitative techniques (Creswell, 2020), to fully assess elders-led spiritual mediation as an alternative dispute resolution mechanism in inter-communal land conflicts. From a quantitative perspective, the study benefited from a larger sample size, enabling the researcher to identify patterns and trends within the sample, assess the prevalence of specific conflict

drivers and mediation practices, and draw conclusions applicable to the wider population (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2021). From a qualitative perspective, the opinions held by the respondents offered more insight into the trends that the quantitative perspective pointed out, allowing the researcher to comprehend questions about the causes, progression and consequences of these trends while also giving respondents the freedom to share their thoughts and explain their practices in their own words (Bryman, 2021).

The mixed methods approach was also considered suitable for this study given the complexity of the study's constructs, which were the nature of inter-communal land conflicts, the existing mediation and conflict resolution approaches, the influence of elders-led spiritual mediation on conflict resolution, and the strategies for integrating elders-led spiritual mediation into alternative dispute resolution frameworks. Using the mixed methods approach enabled the researcher to explore the underlying issues and get the best understanding of these constructs, which was not achievable by using the quantitative or qualitative approach alone. Employing mixed techniques also enabled the researcher to employ inductive methods to identify emergent patterns from qualitative data and deductively apply the theories discussed in Chapter Two to quantitative data (Creswell, 2020). In addition, the researcher used words and narratives to add meaning, thus enabling the study to draw credible conclusions and enhance the generalisability of the findings.

3.3 Location of the Study

The study was conducted in Samburu East Sub-County (Archers Post, Wamba, Serolipi, and Marti) in Samburu County and in Turkana County areas of Ngaremara, Daaba, LMD, and Mlango, all located in the arid and semi-arid regions of northern Kenya. These areas were purposively selected due to their long-standing history of inter-communal conflicts, often centered on competition for grazing land, access to water resources, and contested territorial

boundaries. In recent decades, these conflicts had been further intensified by environmental degradation, climate change, historical marginalization, and political tensions.

Data were collected from selected conflict-prone areas within Samburu East Sub-County: Archers Post, Wamba, Serolipi, and Marti and Turkana community areas in Isiolo County, including Ngaremara, Daaba, LMD and Mlango. In addition, the study included perspectives from youth (particularly young men) from Samburu East Sub-County (Ilmurran) and pastoral youth from the Turkana community in Isiolo County (Ngikiliok), who were involved in cattle rustling activities.

The Samburu East and Turkana communities in Isiolo County possess strong spiritual and cultural governance systems, including elders, seers and spiritual leaders, who have traditionally played a central role in conflict resolution and the maintenance of social harmony. The presence of these indigenous institutions made the study areas particularly suitable for examining the role of elders-led spiritual mediation as an alternative dispute resolution mechanism.

Furthermore, the resilience, deep-rooted cultural traditions, and adaptive capacities of these communities provided a valuable context for exploring how indigenous peacebuilding practices could be integrated with contemporary conflict resolution approaches.

3.4 Target Population

The study's target population comprised community elders, religious and spiritual leaders, government officials, women representatives, youth representatives and affected landowners and households drawn from the eight study sites in Samburu East Sub-County and among the Turkana community in Isiolo County. The research participants were categorised into two broad categories: mediation actors, comprising community elders, religious and spiritual leaders and government officials, and conflict-affected community members,

comprising women representatives, youth representatives and affected landowners and households. The mediation actors category was examined to establish the nature and conduct of elders-led spiritual mediation, the authority on which it rests, the spiritual and cultural practices through which it operates, and its interaction with formal dispute resolution structures. The conflict-affected community members category was examined to establish the experience and consequences of land-related conflict and the perceived effectiveness of mediation among those on whom its outcomes fall most directly.

The community elders were relevant to the study since they are the custodians of indigenous knowledge and the principal actors in customary dispute resolution within both communities. They convene mediation sessions, determine the sequence of proceedings, adjudicate competing claims, negotiate compensation and preside over oath-taking, blessings and reconciliation ceremonies. Their authority derives from age, lineage and demonstrated wisdom rather than from formal appointment, and community compliance with mediated agreements rests substantially on the legitimacy accorded to them. They were therefore positioned to explain the mechanisms through which elders-led spiritual mediation operates, the conditions under which it succeeds or fails, and the constraints that currently limit its reach.

The religious and spiritual leaders, drawn from Christian, Muslim and traditional faith systems, were deemed relevant to the study owing to their role in providing moral guidance, conducting prayer and blessing during reconciliation, and encouraging forgiveness across faith and community lines. Their participation enabled the study to examine the spiritual dimension of mediation, including the significance attached to rituals, curses and sanctions, and the extent to which spiritual authority reinforces or complements the customary authority of elders. Traditional spiritual practitioners and seers within this category were further positioned to

explain practices that are not documented in formal records and are known principally to those who conduct them.

The government officials, comprising administrators and members of county and sub-county land and peace committees, were considered relevant to the study as they oversee the formal dispute resolution machinery operating alongside customary systems. Their responsibilities include convening peace meetings, coordinating security responses, documenting agreements and implementing county peacebuilding programmes. Their involvement enabled the study to assess the existing formal mediation and conflict resolution approaches, the points at which formal and customary systems converge or conflict, and the institutional, policy and resource conditions that would govern any integration of elders-led spiritual mediation into alternative dispute resolution frameworks.

The sampling frame for community elders, religious and spiritual leaders and government officials was established from institutional registers held by local administrative offices, faith institutions and community peace structures across the eight study sites, compiled by the researcher prior to data collection. These registers provided comprehensive and current records of all persons occupying the specified roles within the participating locations, thereby ensuring accurate identification and coverage of the study population.

The women representatives were relevant to the study because women bear a substantial share of the consequences of inter-communal conflict through displacement, loss of livestock and livelihoods, disruption of households, restricted mobility and insecurity, while remaining under-represented in customary mediation structures. Their inclusion ensured that the study captured the experience of conflict among those least involved in its resolution, and enabled assessment of the extent to which the inclusion of women in mediation is regarded as necessary and feasible within both communities.

The youth representatives, comprising the Ilmurran of Samburu East Sub-County and the Ngikiliok of the Turkana community in Isiolo County, were considered relevant to the study given their prominence in raiding, retaliation, livestock protection and community defence. As the cohort most directly involved in the visible manifestations of conflict, they were positioned to explain the motivations underlying participation in raids, the influence of poverty, unemployment, cultural expectation and political mobilisation, and the conditions under which they would participate in dialogue and reconciliation. Their inclusion also enabled the study to examine the prospects for youth involvement in mediation as a peacebuilding measure rather than solely as a conflict variable.

The affected landowners and households were included because they had experienced land-related disputes, displacement or loss directly, and were therefore positioned to assess whether mediation had restored trust, secured compensation, resolved boundary claims or prevented recurrence in their own cases. Their participation grounded the study's assessment of mediation outcomes in documented experience rather than general perception.

The sampling frame for women representatives, youth representatives and affected landowners and households was established from community registers and records of documented land-related disputes held by local administrative and community structures across the eight study sites. Where an individual appeared on more than one register, that individual was assigned to the category corresponding to their primary community role, so that no person entered the frame twice. Inclusion required that a participant be aged eighteen years or above, be resident in one of the eight study sites, and either occupy one of the six enumerated roles or have been directly affected by a documented land-related dispute in the study area. Individuals who declined consent, who were unavailable during the data collection window, or whose

community role could not be verified against a register were excluded from the frame. The distribution of the study's target population is shown in Table 3.1.

Table 3. 1: Distribution of the Target Population

Target Population	**Population Size**
Community Elders	60
Religious and Spiritual Leaders	50
Government Officials	46
Women Representatives	40
Youth Representatives	40
Affected Landowners and Households	50
Total	**286**

Source: *Compiled by the researcher from institutional and community registers held across the eight study sites.*

3.5 Sampling Procedures and Sample Size

The study applied both probability and non-probability sampling techniques in determining and selecting participants. Stratified random sampling was applied to the questionnaire respondents, while purposive sampling was applied to the key informant interview and focus group discussion participants.

3.5.1 Sampling Procedure

Stratified random sampling was adopted for the questionnaire survey to ensure that all six subgroups within the target population were proportionally represented. The target population was divided into six strata according to community role, namely community elders, religious and spiritual leaders, government officials, women representatives, youth representatives, and affected landowners and households. Stratification was necessary because

each group occupies a distinct position in relation to land-related conflict and its settlement, and a simple random sample drawn from the population as a whole would have risked under-representing the smaller strata.

The inclusion criteria for questionnaire respondents required that a participant be aged eighteen years or above, be resident in one of the eight study sites, and either occupy one of the six enumerated community roles or have been directly affected by a documented land-related dispute in the study area. Individuals who declined consent, who were unavailable during the data collection window, or whose community role could not be verified against a register were excluded. Where an individual appeared on more than one register, that individual was assigned to the category corresponding to their primary community role, so that no person entered the frame twice.

Once the population had been divided into strata, the specific respondents were selected by simple random sampling. The names on each stratum register were numbered sequentially and the required number was drawn using a random number generator, so that every member of a stratum had an equal probability of selection. Stratification reduced selection bias, improved the precision of the estimates obtained, and secured the inclusion of women representatives and youth representatives, whose views are seldom recorded in discussions of land conflict despite their exposure to its consequences.

Purposive sampling was adopted for the qualitative strand because participants were required for the specific knowledge attaching to their roles and experiences rather than as representatives of a wider population. Random selection would have been inappropriate for this purpose, since it could have yielded participants with no direct involvement in mediation and would not have served the objective of obtaining detailed accounts of how mediation is conducted. Criterion sampling was therefore applied.

For the key informant interviews, eligibility was confined to sampled respondents having documented participation in the conduct of mediation, verified against the records of local administrative offices and community peace structures. This criterion limited the eligible pool to community elders, government officials and members of land and peace committees. Six informants were selected from each of these three categories, yielding eighteen informants distributed across the eight study sites and across both Samburu East Sub-County and the Turkana community in Isiolo County, so that any theme recurring throughout the set could be identified as common rather than particular to a single location or community. Community elders were selected because they convene mediation sessions, preside over reconciliation proceedings and are the custodians of the spiritual and cultural practices under investigation. Government officials and members of land and peace committees were selected because they administer the formal dispute resolution machinery operating alongside customary systems and were therefore positioned to explain the interaction between the two.

For the focus group discussions, the inclusion criterion was direct experience of land-related conflict in the study area, established from community registers and records of documented disputes. Participants were drawn from community members in the affected categories, including women and youth from both communities, and each discussion was constituted from participants drawn from a single study site.

The number of interviews and discussions was not fixed in advance but was determined by the point at which successive transcripts yielded no further themes. Transcripts were reviewed as fieldwork proceeded, and recruitment ceased once additional interviews and discussions produced no new themes.

3.5.2 Sample Size

The sample size for the questionnaire survey was determined using Yamane's formula (1967) for finite populations, expressed as:

$$n = N / (1 + Ne^2)$$

Where

n = required sample size,

N = target population and

e = level of precision.

Two alternative approaches were considered. Krejcie and Morgan's table and Fisher's formula for large populations were both examined, but Yamane's formula was selected because it permits the level of precision to be specified explicitly and adjusted in light of field conditions, which table-based approaches do not allow. This was material to the present study, since insecurity, the mobility of pastoral populations across extensive grazing territories and the distance separating the eight study sites constrained the number of respondents who could be reached within the data collection window.

Applying a target population of 286 at a confidence level of 95 per cent and a level of precision of 0.05:

$$n = 286 / (1 + 286 \times 0.058^2)$$

$$n = 286 / 1.962$$

$$n = 145.8 \approx 146$$

The sample of 146 respondents was distributed across the six strata by proportionate allocation, applying the formula:

$$nh = (Nh / N) \times n$$

Where nh is the sample size for stratum h, Nh is the population size for stratum h, N is the total population size and n is the total sample size. The resulting allocation is presented in Table 3.2.

Table 3. 2: Distribution of Strata Sample Size

Stratum	**Target population**	**Computation**	**Sample size**
Community elders	60	(60/286) × 146	31
Religious and spiritual leaders	50	(50/286) × 146	26
Government officials	46	(46/286) × 146	24
Women representatives	40	(40/286) × 146	20
Youth representatives	40	(40/286) × 146	20
Affected landowners and households	50	(50/286) × 146	25
Total	**286**		**146**

Proportionate allocation ensured that each stratum contributed to the sample in the same measure as it contributed to the population, thereby preserving the composition of the target population within the sample.

In addition to the questionnaire respondents, eighteen key informant interviews and six focus group discussions were conducted, with the number in each case determined by thematic saturation. Saturation was reached after fourteen interviews and four discussions, and the remaining interviews and discussions produced no new themes..

3.6 Research Instruments

The study employed three research instruments in the collection of primary data, namely structured questionnaires, semi-structured interview guides and focus group discussion guides. Each instrument served a distinct but complementary function. The questionnaire generated standardised quantitative data amenable to statistical analysis across the full sample, while the interview and discussion guides generated narrative data on the practices, beliefs and

experiences underlying the statistical patterns. The use of three instruments allowed the study to obtain both breadth of coverage across the six respondent categories and depth of account from those directly engaged in land dispute mediation.

3.6.1 Structured Questionnaires

The structured questionnaire was administered to all 146 sampled respondents, comprising 31 community elders, 26 religious and spiritual leaders, 24 government officials, 20 women representatives, 20 youth representatives and 25 affected landowners and household heads, drawn from the eight study sites. It was administered to the full sample because the study required perceptions of conflict and mediation to be compared across all six categories, which necessitated that each respondent be presented with an identical set of items. Standardising the stimulus in this way permitted comparison across a large number of participants and supported the statistical procedures applied in the analysis.

The questionnaire was organised into five sections. Section A collected demographic data on age, gender, marital status, level of education, community affiliation, area of residence, length of residence in the study area, and occupation or community role. Section B measured the nature of inter-communal land conflicts through five items covering competition over grazing land, water scarcity, livestock theft and grazing encroachment, boundary disagreements, and political influence on land disputes. Section C measured existing mediation and conflict resolution approaches through five items covering elders-led mediation, traditional reconciliation ceremonies, community dialogue forums, alternative dispute resolution procedures and government-led mediation programmes. Section D measured elders-led spiritual mediation through six items covering the facilitation of dialogue by elders, community respect for elders during mediation, the promotion of forgiveness through traditional mediation, the contribution of spiritual rituals to reconciliation, the impartiality of elders in

mediating disputes, and community compliance with the decisions of elders. Section E measured the proposed strategies for integrating elders-led spiritual mediation into alternative dispute resolution frameworks, through items covering formal recognition of elders, collaboration with government and security agencies, training of elders in mediation and alternative dispute resolution processes, inclusion of youth and women in mediation processes, and county government support through policy and resource allocation.

Items in Sections B to E were measured on a five-point Likert scale, on which 5 denoted strongly agree, 4 agree, 3 neutral, 2 disagree and 1 strongly disagree. The scale was adopted because it records the intensity of agreement rather than the mere presence or absence of an opinion, and because it yields data suitable for the descriptive and inferential procedures applied in the study. In interpreting the results, a mean score above the neutral value of 3.00 was taken to indicate agreement with the statement in question and a mean score below 3.00 to indicate disagreement, with the neutral value serving as the test value in the one-sample t-tests reported in Chapter Four.

Each section additionally carried open-ended items inviting respondents to explain their responses, identify challenges affecting mediation and propose measures for improvement. These items yielded supplementary qualitative data which were analyzed alongside the interview and discussion transcripts. Enumerator assistance was provided to respondents with limited literacy so that participation was not restricted by level of formal education. The questionnaire is presented as Appendix F.

3.6.2 Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the eighteen key informants selected under the criteria set out in Section 3.5.1, comprising community elders, government officials and members of land and peace committees. The instrument was selected because these

informants possessed detailed knowledge of the conduct of mediation that could not be captured through fixed-response items, and because a semi-structured format permits the researcher to pursue matters raised by the informant while retaining a common set of questions across all interviews.

The interview guide was organised into five sections corresponding to the study constructs, covering elders-led spiritual mediation, dialogue and conflict resolution, the role of elders and spiritual mediators, spiritual reconciliation practices, and policy and institutional support, followed by a concluding section inviting recommendations. Each section comprised open-ended questions with provision for follow-up probing. Through these interviews the study examined the cultural practices, spiritual processes, historical circumstances and personal experiences that shape land conflict and its mediation, thereby providing an account of the belief systems and authority structures underpinning elders-led spiritual mediation. The interview guide is presented as Appendix G.

3.6.3 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

Six focus group discussions were conducted with the women representatives and youth representatives within the sample, comprising two discussions with the 20 women representatives, each of ten participants, and four discussions with the 20 youth representatives, each of five participants. The discussions were distributed across the study sites, with participants drawn from Marti, Daaba, Ngaremara, LMD and Serolipi, so that the accounts obtained reflected conditions in different localities rather than in a single settlement. The smaller size adopted for the youth discussions permitted a wider distribution across sites while retaining sufficient participants in each group to generate the interaction on which the method depends.

These two categories were selected for group discussion rather than individual interview because their knowledge of conflict is held collectively as community experience rather than through an official or custodial role, and because they were the categories least likely to speak freely in the presence of elders and officials. Youth representatives were included because they are the cohort most directly involved in raiding, retaliation and community defence, and women representatives because they bear a substantial share of the consequences of conflict through displacement, loss of livelihoods and household disruption while remaining under-represented in customary mediation structures.

The discussion guide followed the same five constructs as the interview guide but framed the questions around shared community experience rather than individual professional knowledge. Discussions were moderated to ensure that participation was distributed across the group and that dissenting views were recorded rather than suppressed by the emergence of a dominant opinion. The discussions captured collective perspectives on the causes and consequences of conflict, community attitudes towards elders-led spiritual mediation, and the social and emotional dimensions of displacement, retaliation and reconciliation. They further permitted the identification of both convergent and divergent views across social groups, particularly between the youth cohorts most directly involved in raiding and the women most exposed to its consequences. The focus group discussion guide is presented as Appendix H.

3.7 Data Collection Procedures

Data collection proceeded in two complementary phases. The first phase comprised a review of documentary sources, which established the theoretical and empirical foundation of the study. The second phase comprised fieldwork, through which primary data were obtained from respondents in the study area. This two-phase procedure ensured that the primary data

were gathered against an established understanding of the subject and that the findings could be situated within the existing body of scholarship.

The first phase involved a systematic review of published works on spiritual mediation, indigenous conflict resolution and alternative dispute resolution processes. The sources consulted included books, peer-reviewed journal articles, policy documents, legal instruments, government reports and previous theses and dissertations. Particular attention was given to prior research on pastoralist communities, customary mediation practices and the dynamics of land conflict in Kenya and comparable contexts. This review refined the research instruments, clarified the constructs to be measured, and established the gaps that the present study set out to address.

The second phase comprised fieldwork conducted across the eight study sites in Samburu East Sub-County and among the Turkana community in Isiolo County. Prior to entering the field, the researcher obtained ethical clearance and a research permit as detailed in Section 3.12, and sought the authorisation of county and sub-county administrative offices and the consent of community leadership in each of the study sites. Entry was negotiated through local administrators and community elders, whose endorsement was necessary for access in an area where outsiders are approached with caution owing to the sensitivity of conflict-related matters.

Structured questionnaires were administered to the 146 sampled respondents. Questionnaires were delivered in person and, where the respondent's schedule allowed, completed and collected on the same visit, with follow-up visits arranged where this was not possible. Respondents with limited literacy were assisted by the researcher or a research assistant, who read each item aloud in the respondent's preferred language and recorded the response given, without offering interpretation or suggesting an answer.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the eighteen key informants at locations and times of their choosing, in order to secure privacy and to accommodate the demands of their community and official responsibilities. Six focus group discussions were held at agreed community venues within the study sites. Each discussion was moderated by the researcher, with a research assistant maintaining a written record of the proceedings. Interviews and discussions were audio-recorded where participants consented to recording, and detailed notes were taken in all cases.

The researcher was supported in the field by research assistants recruited for their fluency in the Samburu and Turkana languages and their familiarity with local customs and settlement patterns. The assistants were trained before the commencement of fieldwork on the objectives of the study, the content and administration of each instrument, the requirements of informed consent and confidentiality, and the conduct expected in culturally sensitive settings. Their participation was material to the study in three respects. They established rapport with participants who would otherwise have been reluctant to discuss conflict with an outsider, they ensured the accurate rendering of questions and responses between the local languages and English, and they advised the researcher on protocol in approaching elders and religious leaders.

The instruments were prepared in English and orally translated into the Samburu and Turkana languages during administration. To guard against distortion in meaning, the assistants were briefed on the intended sense of each item before fieldwork began, and translated responses were read back to respondents for confirmation where an answer was extended or ambiguous. Interview and discussion recordings were transcribed and translated into English, and a sample of transcripts was reviewed against the recordings to verify the accuracy of the translation.

Throughout the fieldwork, participants were treated with courtesy and their informed consent was obtained before any instrument was administered. Data collection observed local customs governing the conduct of meetings, the order of speaking and the approach to elders, and was scheduled to avoid periods of heightened insecurity and to accommodate the seasonal movement of livestock.

3.8 Data Quality Control

The research used data quality control procedures to guarantee the reliability, validity, and correctness of the results. Preliminary testing of the research equipment, validation of the data, and confirmation of its dependability will be the primary goals of these steps.

3.8.1 Pretesting

Prior to the main data collection exercise, the research instruments were subjected to pretesting. The instruments were pretested with fifteen participants drawn from the pastoralist community of Ngambela in Meru County, along the boundary shared with Isiolo County. This site was selected because its socio-cultural organisation, livelihood system and exposure to resource-based conflict closely resemble the conditions obtaining in the study area, while lying outside the eight study sites. Conducting the pretest beyond the study area ensured that no participant in the pretest formed part of the main sample, thereby preventing the contamination of the sampling frame and avoiding the response conditioning that arises where the same respondents encounter an instrument twice.

The fifteen participants were selected to reflect the composition of the study population, comprising community elders, a religious leader, a local administrator, women and youth. This distribution allowed the instruments to be tested against the full range of respondent categories to which they would subsequently be administered, rather than against a single category. Kumar and Kothari (2022) observe that a pretest conducted with a small sample drawn from a

population comparable to the study population is sufficient for the purpose of refining research instruments. The fifteen participants engaged represented approximately ten per cent of the sample of 146, a proportion consistent with the practice adopted in survey research of this kind.

The pretest served four purposes. It identified ambiguity in the wording of individual items, particularly where terms rendered readily in English carried no direct equivalent in the Samburu or Turkana languages. It established the clarity and sequence of the questionnaire sections and the interview and discussion guides. It determined whether the items elicited the information the constructs were intended to capture. It further established the average time required to administer each instrument, which informed the scheduling of fieldwork across the eight study sites.

Feedback from the pretest was analysed and the instruments revised accordingly. Items found to be ambiguous were rewritten, the phrasing of several items was adjusted to reflect the terms in which respondents themselves described conflict and mediation, and the ordering of sections was altered so that sensitive items concerning raiding and retaliation followed rather than preceded the less sensitive items. The revised instruments were reviewed once more before administration, as set out in Section 3.8.2. Data obtained during the pretest were used solely for instrument refinement and were not included in the analysis reported in Chapter Four.

3.8.2 Validity

To enhance the validity of the research instruments, both content and face validity were established through expert review processes. The research tools were reviewed by experienced supervisors and scholars specializing in fields such as conflict resolution, religious studies, and social sciences.

These experts assessed whether the instruments adequately covered the key concepts and dimensions of spiritual mediation and land conflict resolution, and whether the questions

were appropriately framed to elicit meaningful and relevant responses. Any suggestions or critiques offered by the reviewers were incorporated to strengthen the overall validity of the research instruments before their full deployment in the field.

3.8.3 Reliability

The data collected for each main construct of the study was tested for reliability to establish its internal consistency before being subjected to further analysis. Reliability testing was necessary because the study relied on several Likert-scale items measuring key constructs such as elders-led spiritual mediation, dialogue in mediation, role of elders and spiritual mediators, spiritual reconciliation practices, policy and institutional support and inter-communal conflict resolution outcomes. Therefore, Cronbach's Alpha coefficients were computed for the major study variables to determine whether the items under each construct consistently measured the intended variable. According to Hair and Alamer (2022), a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.70 and above is generally considered acceptable for research purposes, while values closer to 0.80 and above indicate stronger internal consistency. Ahmad *et al*. (2024) further observe that Cronbach's Alpha is widely used in questionnaire-based studies to determine whether items measuring a given construct produce consistent and dependable results as shown in Table 3.3.

Table 3. 3: Reliability of Data Based on Main Variables of the Study

Main Construct of the Study	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient	Interpretation
Elders-led spiritual mediation in land conflict resolution	3	0.842	Reliable
Dialogue and negotiation in mediation	3	0.815	Reliable
Role of elders and spiritual mediators	3	0.826	Reliable
Spiritual and cultural reconciliation practices	3	0.839	Reliable
Policy and institutional support for ADR integration	3	0.804	Reliable
Inter-communal conflict resolution and sustainable peace outcomes	4	0.853	Reliable
Overall reliability coefficient	19	0.830	Reliable

These findings presented indicate that all the main constructs of the study had Cronbach's Alpha coefficients above 0.70. According to Hair and Alamer (2022), Cronbach's Alpha values above 0.70 are acceptable for research purposes, while higher coefficients demonstrate greater consistency among items measuring the same construct. Therefore, the findings suggested that the data collection instrument was reliable and suitable for use in analysing elders-led spiritual mediation as an alternative dispute resolution mechanism in conflicts between Samburu East Sub-County and the Turkana community in Isiolo County.

3.9 Data Analysis Procedures

In order to provide a well-rounded and thorough explanation of the results, the research used quantitative and qualitative data analysis methodologies. The results were very congruent with the study's intended use as data analysis was based on the research questions and goals.

3.9.1 Overview of Analytical Approach

This research used a mixed-methods strategy for its analysis, combining descriptive and inferential statistics with theme analysis to sift through qualitative data. Univariate, bivariate, and multivariate analyses were used in the quantitative component. Specifically, the characteristics and perceptions of the respondents were summarized using descriptive statistics. Relationships among the study variables were then examined using inferential techniques such as one-sample t tests, chi-square tests of association, exploratory factor analysis (EFA), Pearson product moment correlation, multiple regression, and analysis of variance (ANOVA). To guarantee the data matched the underlying statistical assumptions, suitable diagnostic tests were run for each inferential model. The statistical package for the social sciences (SPSS) was used for all quantitative analyses, and a significance level of $\alpha = 0.05$ was used for evaluation.

3.9.2 Qualitative Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was employed in examining the qualitative data obtained from the eighteen semi-structured interviews, the six focus group discussions and the open-ended items in the questionnaire. The approach was selected because the study sought to establish the meanings participants attached to mediation practices and the reasoning underlying their assessments of those practices, neither of which is accessible through frequency counts alone.

The analysis proceeded through six stages. Audio recordings and field notes were first transcribed and, where the exchange had taken place in the Samburu or Turkana language, translated into English. The researcher then undertook close and repeated reading of the transcripts in order to become familiar with the data as a whole before any coding was attempted, noting initial impressions and points of interest without assigning formal codes. Initial codes were subsequently generated by working systematically through each transcript and assigning labels to segments of text bearing on the research objectives. Codes were then

examined for commonality and grouped into candidate themes, each theme comprising codes that addressed a common aspect of conflict or mediation. The candidate themes were reviewed against the coded extracts and against the full data set to establish that each was supported by sufficient evidence and that the themes were distinct from one another. Themes were finally defined and named in terms reflecting the substance of what participants had said.

Coding was conducted with the assistance of NVivo, which was used to categorise the data systematically, to trace connections across separate interviews and discussions, and to examine the relationships between themes. The programme served as an organising instrument rather than an analytical one, the interpretation of the data remaining the work of the researcher throughout.

Particular attention was given to ensuring that the themes remained grounded in the participants' own words and experiences. Verbatim extracts were retained alongside each code so that the basis of every theme could be traced back to the transcript from which it derived. Where participants expressed views at variance with the prevailing account, those views were recorded and reported rather than set aside, so that divergence within the data was represented as fully as agreement.

Quotations presented in Chapter Four are identified by an anonymised convention which records the instrument, the participant number, and the sex, community affiliation and age of the speaker, together with the study site where relevant. No participant is identified by name. This convention permits the reader to establish the provenance and range of the accounts presented while preserving the confidentiality undertaken to participants, as set out in Section 3.11.

The number of interviews and discussions conducted was determined by thematic saturation. Transcripts were coded as fieldwork proceeded, and recruitment continued until

successive interviews and discussions yielded no codes not already present in the data. Saturation was reached after fourteen interviews and four discussions, with the remaining four interviews and two discussions confirming that no further themes were emerging.

Where a theme was held across the majority of participants, its extent is reported in Chapter Four as the number of participants expressing it in relation to the total. This limited use of counting served to indicate the weight of a theme within the data and is not presented as a statistical finding, the qualitative sample having been purposively rather than randomly selected.

3.9.3 Quantitative Data Analysis

Descriptive and inferential statistics were used in examining the quantitative data obtained from the structured questionnaires. Descriptive statistics comprising frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations were used to summarise the demographic characteristics of the respondents, namely age, gender, marital status, level of education, community affiliation, area of residence, length of residence and community role, together with their perceptions of the nature of inter-communal land conflicts, the existing mediation approaches, elders-led spiritual mediation, and the strategies for incorporating indigenous mechanisms into alternative dispute resolution frameworks.

Inferential statistics were then applied in establishing relationships among the study variables and in determining the statistical significance of the observed differences and associations. A one-sample t-test was used to establish whether the mean scores recorded on the principal constructs differed significantly from the neutral test value of 3.0. A chi-square test of association was used to establish whether perceptions of land disputes and of the approaches to resolving them differed significantly across the categories of respondents.

Exploratory factor analysis was used to establish the underlying dimensions of inter-communal land conflicts and of the approaches currently employed in resolving them. Prior to factor extraction, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy and Bartlett's test of sphericity were computed in order to confirm the suitability of the data for factor analysis. Extraction was carried out using principal axis factoring, factors were retained on the Kaiser criterion of eigenvalues exceeding one, supported by inspection of the scree plot, and the retained factors were rotated using the direct oblimin method. An oblique rotation was adopted because the dimensions under examination were expected to be related rather than independent. Items loading at 0.40 and above were treated as substantively associated with a factor.

Pearson product-moment correlation analysis was used to establish the strength and direction of the relationships between the dimensions of elders-led spiritual mediation, namely dialogue and negotiation, elders' authority and spiritual reconciliation, and conflict resolution, and between the proposed integration strategies, namely formal recognition of elders, institutional collaboration, capacity building and training, and inclusive participation, and sustainable peacebuilding.

Multiple regression analysis was used to establish the extent to which the dimensions of elders-led spiritual mediation predicted conflict resolution, and the extent to which the proposed integration strategies predicted sustainable peacebuilding. Prior to the estimation of either model, a series of diagnostic tests was conducted in order to establish the suitability of the data for regression analysis. Normality was assessed using the Shapiro-Wilk test, linearity through inspection of residual plots, homoscedasticity using the Breusch-Pagan test, independence of errors using the Durbin-Watson statistic, absence of multicollinearity using the Variance Inflation Factor, and the presence of influential observations using Cook's distance. The diagnostic results confirmed that the assumptions underlying multiple regression

were adequately satisfied in both models, thereby supporting the estimation of the models and the interpretation of the regression coefficients.

Analysis of variance was used to establish the overall significance of each regression model, with the F-statistic and the corresponding probability value reported in each case. The significance threshold for all statistical tests was set at $\alpha = 0.05$.

3.9.4 Triangulation of Findings

Finally, the study triangulated findings from both qualitative and quantitative analyses. This integration allowed for the comparison and validation of results across different data sources, leading to a richer, more nuanced understanding of the role of spiritual mediation as an alternative dispute resolution mechanism for land conflicts among the Turkana and Samburu communities. Qualitative themes were used to illustrate, confirm, or elaborate upon quantitative patterns, and any convergence or divergence between the two data sets was noted and interpreted in light of the research objectives.

3.10 Ethical Considerations

To safeguard the rights, dignity, and protection of all participants, the research maintained stringent ethical standards all the way through its design, data collecting, analysis, and reporting stages. The necessary Institutional Review Boards (IRBs) were consulted prior to the commencement of fieldwork. These IRBs included CUEA's Postgraduate Research Committee and NACOSTI's National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI). Fundamental ethical concepts of fairness, beneficence, and respect for humans governed all research operations.

The research's goals, methods, and procedures, as well as the intended use of the results, were explained to all participants in detail before they agreed to take part. Both oral and written permission forms with thorough explanations conveyed this information. Each participant gave

their informed permission after carefully reviewing the research details, guaranteeing that their participation was totally voluntary. All participants were informed that they might decline to answer any questions or quit from the research at any time without any negative consequences.

At all times, participants' identities and the confidentiality of their data were protected. To ensure the confidentiality of the participants, all replies were coded and no personal identifiers were associated with the data obtained. Only the lead investigator and other approved members of the study team had access to the securely kept data. In compliance with predetermined ethical standards, data were either safely stored or erased when the research was over.

Given the sensitive and culturally significant nature of the research topics, particular attention was paid to cultural sensitivity during all interactions with participants. Research assistants were trained on how to engage respectfully and appropriately, using local languages where necessary, and ensuring that all discussions were conducted in a manner that honoured local customs, beliefs, and values.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION, INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents, discusses and interprets the findings of the study on elders-led spiritual mediation as an alternative dispute resolution mechanism in conflicts between Samburu East Sub-County and the Turkana community in Isiolo County, Kenya. The findings are organized according to the four research objectives of the study. The chapter begins with the response rate, reliability of the research instrument and demographic characteristics of the respondents. It then presents the objective-based findings using frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations where appropriate. Qualitative responses from interviews and open-ended questionnaire items are integrated thematically to enrich and interpret the quantitative findings.

4.2 Response Rate

The study involved distributing questionnaires and conducting interviews and focus group discussions across the eight study sites.

Questionnaires were distributed to all 146 sampled respondents, allocated across the six strata in the proportions established through proportionate allocation. Each sampled respondent received a questionnaire, as the study required perceptions of conflict and mediation to be compared across all six categories, which necessitated that every respondent be presented with an identical set of items. Of the 146 questionnaires distributed, 145 were returned and 143 were found complete and suitable for analysis, yielding a usable response rate of 97.9%. The response rate by respondent category is presented in Table 4.1.

Table 4. 1: Questionnaire Response Rate by Respondent Category

Respondent category	Distributed	Returned	Usable	Usable response rate (%)
Community elders	31	31	30	96.8
Religious and spiritual leaders	26	26	25	96.2
Government officials	24	24	24	100.0
Women representatives	20	20	20	100.0
Youth representatives	20	20	20	100.0
Affected landowners and households	25	24	24	96.0
Total	**146**	**145**	**143**	**97.9**

Source: Field data, 2025.

Two questionnaires were returned incomplete and one was not returned. The incomplete returns were excluded from the analysis, substantial portions of the Likert items having been left unanswered, while the single non-return arose where a respondent relocated with livestock before a follow-up visit could be undertaken. The 143 usable responses constituted the basis for all descriptive and inferential analyses reported in this chapter.

Eighteen key informant interviews were conducted with respondents selected from among the 146 sampled respondents. Eligibility was confined to those respondents having documented participation in the conduct of mediation, which limited the pool to community elders, government officials and members of land and peace committees. Six informants were purposively selected from each of these three categories, yielding eighteen informants distributed across the eight study sites and across both communities. Six focus group discussions were held with the 20 women representatives and 20 youth representatives within the sample, comprising two discussions of ten participants each with the women representatives and four discussions of five participants each with the youth representatives. Every scheduled

interview and discussion was successfully conducted, no participant having withdrawn or become unavailable during the fieldwork period.

The number of interviews and discussions was determined by thematic saturation rather than by a predetermined target, and no response rate is therefore computed for the qualitative instruments. Saturation was attained after fourteen interviews and four discussions, the remaining four interviews and two discussions yielding no themes not already present in the data. Participants in the interviews and discussions were drawn wholly from among the 146 sampled respondents, ensuring that the qualitative accounts pertained to the same body of respondents from which the quantitative data were obtained. The eighteen interviews and six discussions constituted the basis for all qualitative material presented in this chapter.

The response attained was adequate for statistical analysis and interpretation. Babbie (2020) holds that response rates above 70% are generally sufficient to minimise non-response bias and to support confidence in survey findings, while Holtom *et al*. (2022) observe that high response rates contribute materially to the validity of survey-based research. The usable response rate of 97.9% therefore provided a sound basis for analysis, and the completion of every scheduled interview and discussion ensured that the qualitative strand was equally well supported. The response reflected the willingness of respondents to participate, the perceived relevance of the study within the affected communities, and the access secured through local administrators and community leadership prior to the commencement of fieldwork.

4.3 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

For the purpose of establishing the sample's background makeup and determining whether the research collected appropriate voices for analyzing elder-led spiritual mediation in inter-communal land disputes, this section offers the respondents' demographic characteristics. Age, gender, education, community membership, dwelling area, duration of residency in the

research region, and employment or community function were the demographic characteristics taken into account.

4.3.1 Age Distribution of Study Population

The study sought to establish the age distribution of respondents who participated in the study. The results (Figure 4.1) revealed that respondents aged 36–45 years constituted 24% of the sample, followed by those aged 46–55 years at 21%. Respondents aged 26–35 years accounted for 20%, while those aged 56 years and above constituted 19% of the respondents. Participants aged 18–25 years represented 14% of the sample, whereas respondents aged below 18 years formed the smallest proportion at 3%.

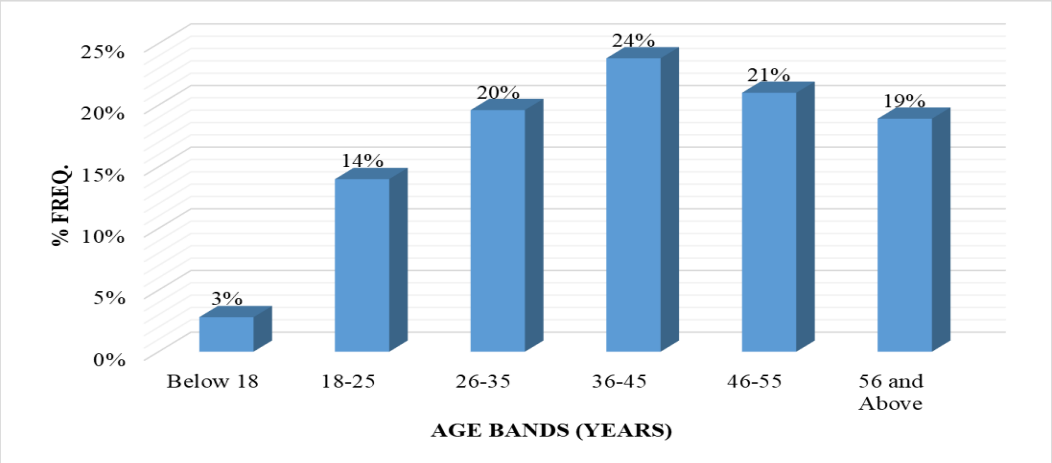


Figure 4. 1: Age Distribution of Respondents

Source: Field data, 2026.

The findings indicate that the study was predominantly represented by adults, particularly those aged 36–45 years, 46–55 years, and 26–35 years. This suggests that the data were largely obtained from mature respondents who are likely to possess relevant experience and knowledge regarding community affairs and peacebuilding processes. The low representation of respondents below 18 years indicates limited involvement of minors in the issues under investigation.

4.3.2 Gender Distribution of Study Population

The study sought to establish the gender distribution of respondents who participated in the study. The results (Figure 4.2) revealed that male respondents constituted 62.2% of the sample, while female respondents accounted for 35.7%. Respondents who preferred not to disclose their gender represented 2.1% of the sample.

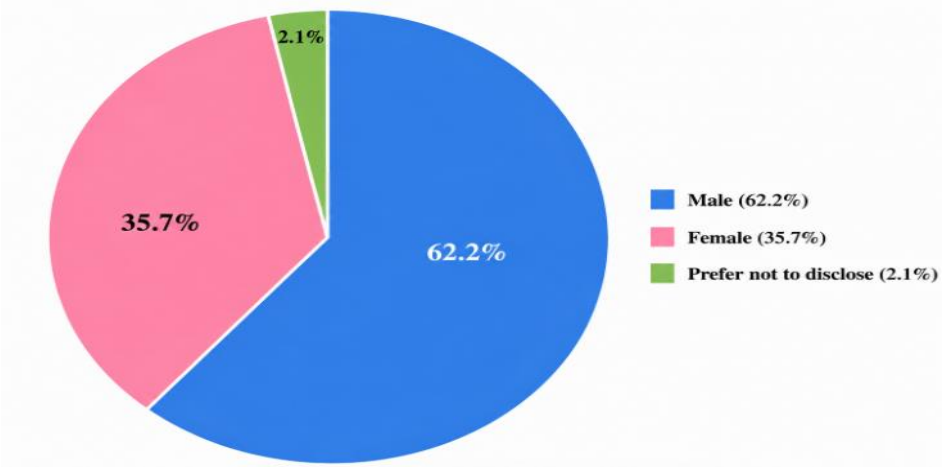


Figure 4. 2: Gender Distribution of Study Population

The findings indicate that the study was predominantly represented by male respondents. This suggests that the study captured the perspectives of individuals who are traditionally more involved in pastoral conflict management and mediation structures. However, the inclusion of female respondents ensured that the experiences and perspectives of women affected by inter-communal conflicts were also represented.

4.3.3 Distribution of Marital Status in the Study Population

The study sought to establish the marital status of respondents who participated in the study. The results (Figure 4.3) revealed that married respondents constituted 62.2% of the sample, followed by single respondents at 23.1%. Widowed respondents accounted for 9.8%, while divorced respondents represented 4.9% of the sample.

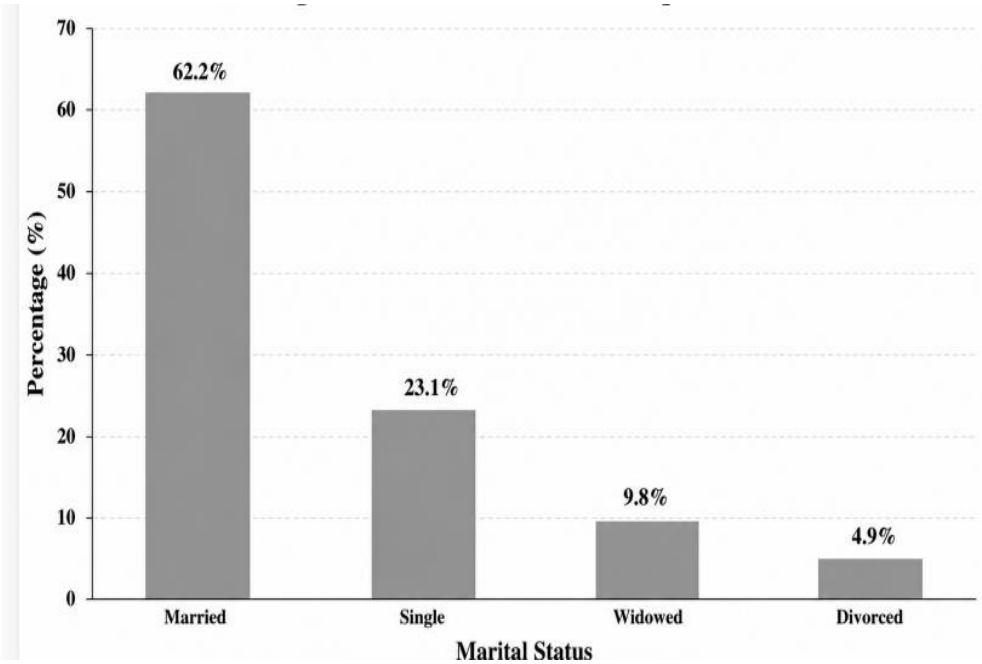


Figure 4. 3: Distribution of Marital Status in the Study Population

Source: Field data, 2026.

The findings indicate that the majority of respondents were married. This suggests that most participants had family and livelihood responsibilities and were therefore likely to be directly affected by issues relating to conflict, insecurity, resource competition and peacebuilding initiatives.

4.3.4 Distribution of Level of Education in the Study Population

The purpose of the research was to determine the average degree of education held by the participants. According to the data (Figure 4.4), the highest percentage of respondents had completed secondary school, at 35.7%, with 27.3% having completed elementary school. There were 23.1% of respondents with a bachelor's degree or above and 14.0% with no degree at all.

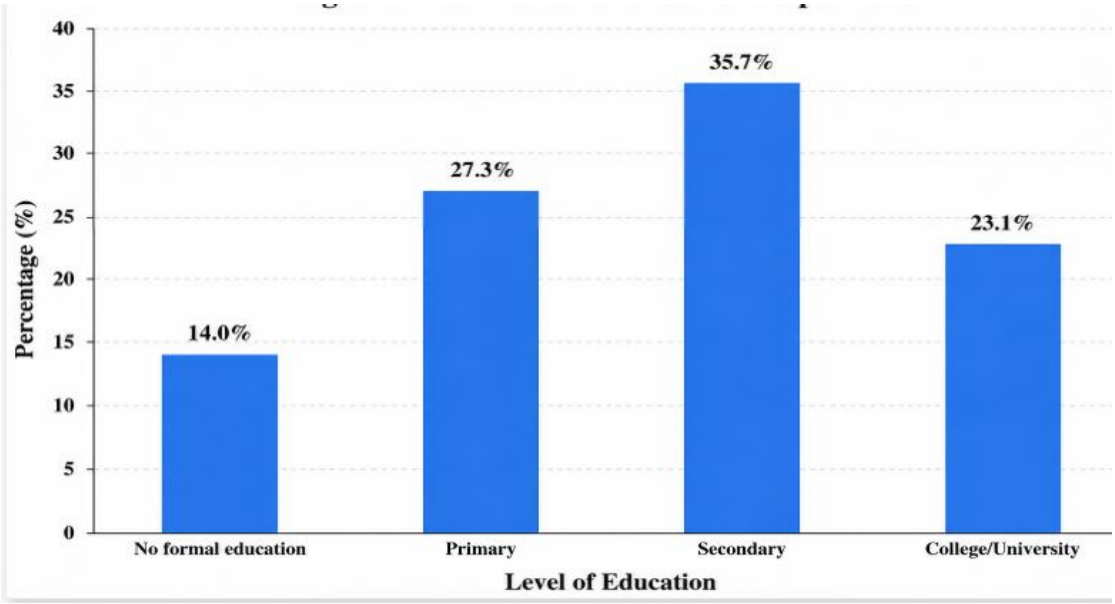


Figure 4. 4: Level of Education of the Study Population

Source: Field data, 2026.

The findings indicate that the respondents possessed varying levels of educational attainment. This suggests that the study captured views from both formally educated respondents and individuals possessing indigenous knowledge and lived experience relevant to community conflict resolution and peacebuilding.

4.3.5 Distribution of Community Affiliation of Study Population

The study sought to establish the community affiliation of respondents who participated in the study. The results (Figure 4.5) revealed that 49.0% of the respondents were from the Turkana community, while 47.6% were from the Samburu community. Respondents from other communities or those who did not specify their affiliation accounted for 3.5% of the sample.

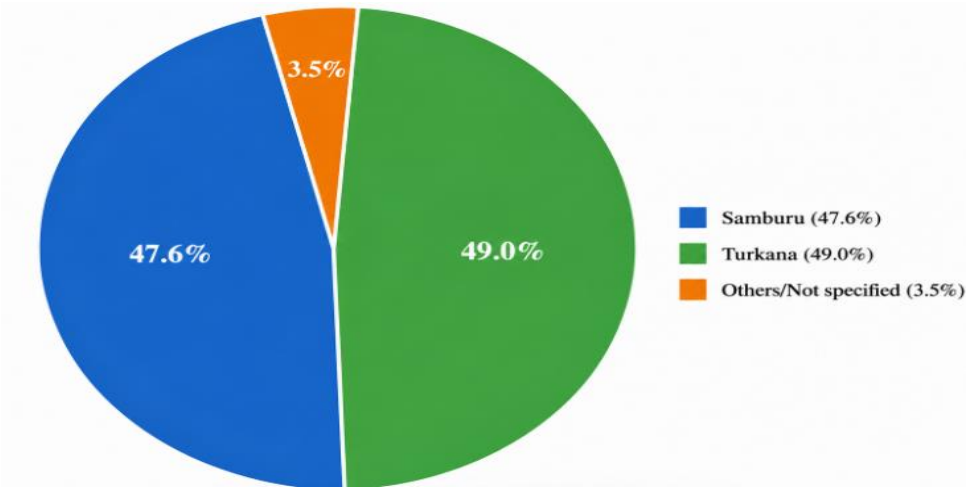


Figure 4. 5: Distribution of Community Affiliation of Study Population

The findings indicate that the study achieved nearly equal representation from the Samburu and Turkana communities. This suggests that the views of the two communities involved in the conflict were adequately captured, thereby enhancing the credibility and balance of the findings.

4.3.6 Distribution of Area of Residence in the Study Population

The study sought to establish the area of residence of respondents who participated in the study. The results (Figure 4.6) revealed that Ngaremara recorded the highest proportion of respondents at 16.8%, followed by Archers Post and Daaba at 12.6% each. Respondents from Wamba constituted 11.9%, while those from Marti accounted for 11.2%. Serolipi, LMD, and Mlango each recorded 10.5%, whereas respondents from other or unspecified areas represented 3.5% of the sample.

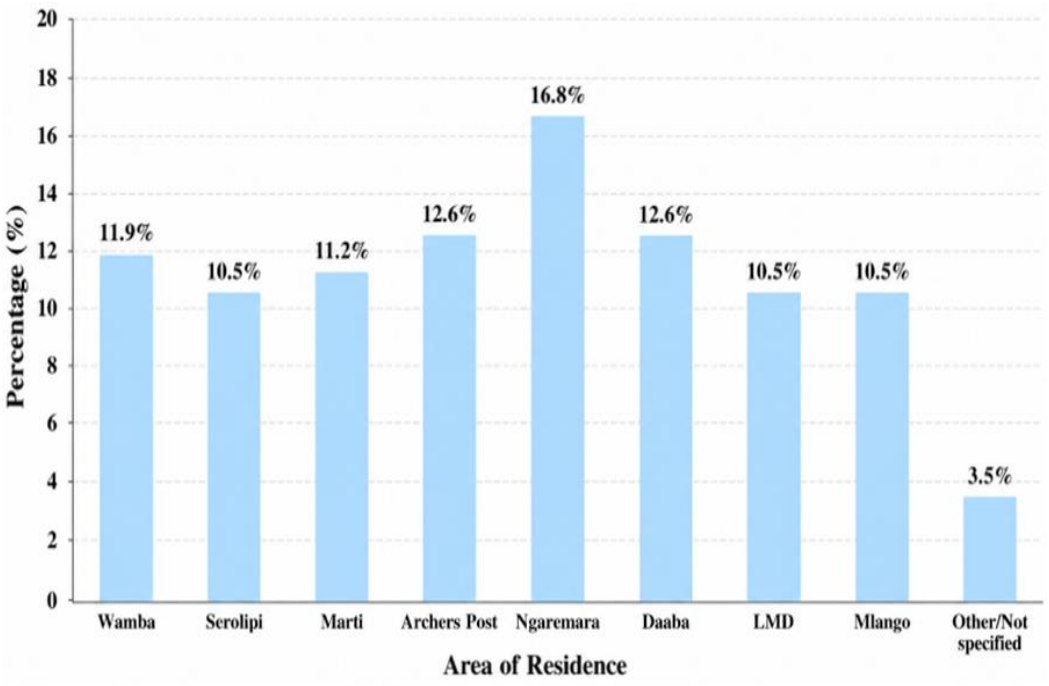


Figure 4. 6: Distribution of Area of Residence in the Study Population

Source: Field data, 2026.

The findings indicate that respondents were drawn from diverse geographical locations within the study area. This suggests that the study captured experiences and perceptions from different localities affected by inter-community interactions, resource competition, and peacebuilding initiatives.

4.3.7 Length of Residence in the Study Area

Finding out how long respondents had lived in the study region was the primary goal of the research. More over half of the respondents (54.5%) had resided in the research region for at least ten years, according to the data (Figure 4.7). Thirteen percent of respondents had been locals for five to ten years, while fourteen percent had been there for less than five years.

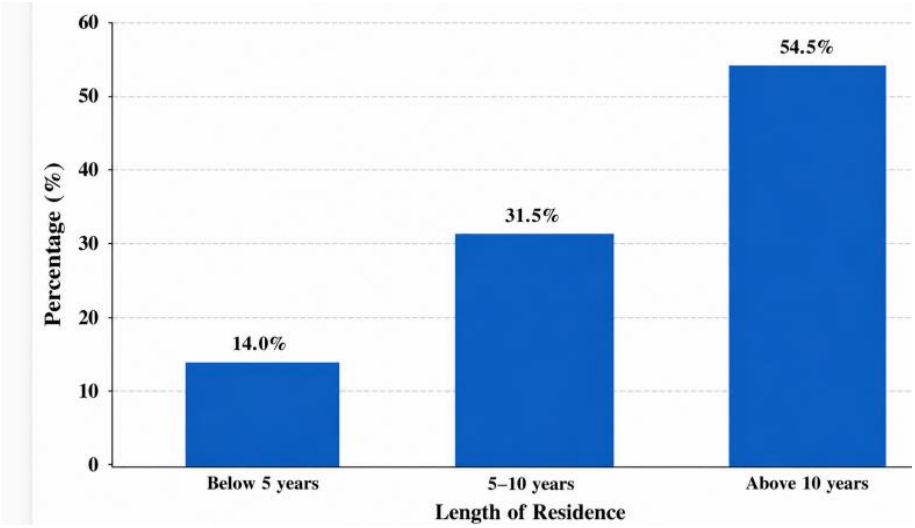


Figure 4. 7: Length of Residence in the Study Area

Source: Field data, 2026.

The findings indicate that the majority of respondents had lived in the study area for a long period. This suggests that most participants possessed substantial knowledge and experience regarding the historical, social, and cultural dimensions of inter-community conflicts and peacebuilding processes.

4.3.8 Occupation or Community Role of Respondents

The study sought to establish the occupation or community role of respondents who participated in the study. The results (Figure 4.8) revealed that community elders constituted the largest proportion of respondents at 21.0%, followed by religious or spiritual leaders at 17.5% and government officials at 16.8%. Peace committee members and youth or morans each accounted for 14.0% of the sample. Respondents from other occupational categories or affected households represented 10.5%, while teachers constituted 6.3% of the respondents.

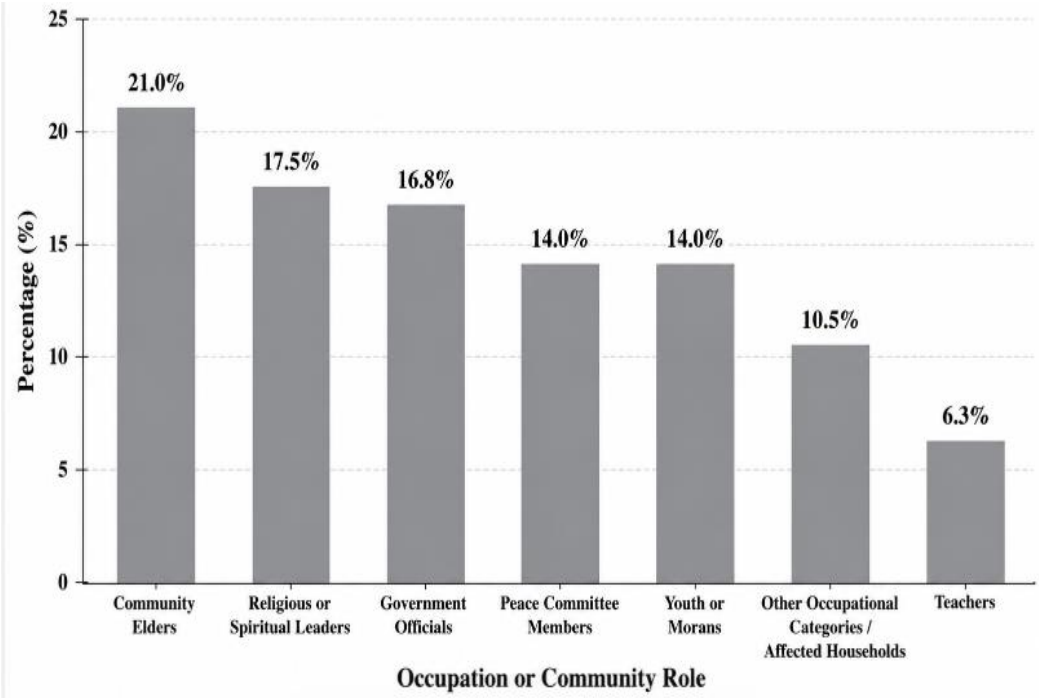


Figure 4. 8: Occupation or Community Role of Respondents

Source: Field data, 2026.

The findings indicate that the study captured respondents occupying diverse roles within the community. This suggests that the data were obtained from individuals directly involved in conflict management, peacebuilding, spiritual leadership, community mobilization, and local administration, thereby providing relevant perspectives on elder-led spiritual mediation and conflict resolution.

These findings show that respondents were drawn from diverse social categories, including elders, religious and spiritual leaders, government officials, women representatives, youth representatives, and affected households. This diversity was important because the study required perspectives from actors directly involved in conflict experience, mediation processes, local governance, spiritual reconciliation, and peacebuilding.

4.4 Nature of Inter-Communal Land Conflicts

The first objective of the study sought to examine the nature of inter-communal land conflicts between the Samburu and Turkana communities in Isiolo County. Land conflicts have

remained a major challenge in pastoral areas due to competition over scarce natural resources, shifting settlement patterns, livestock movements, and changing socio-political dynamics. Understanding the nature of these conflicts is critical for developing appropriate intervention measures and sustainable peacebuilding strategies.

In order to accomplish this, we used a five-point Likert scale, where 1 was for Strongly Disagree, 2 was for Disagree, 3 was for Neutral, 4 was for Agree, and 5 was for Strongly Agree, to ask respondents to rate how much they agreed with statements about the causes and symptoms of land conflicts between communities. Grazing land disputes, water resource disputes, border disagreements, livestock-related conflicts, and political effect on land disputes were the particular topics studied. Key informant interviews and focus groups supplemented the quantitative data, which was analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics.

4.4.1 Descriptive Statistics on the Nature of Inter-Communal Land Conflicts

The study sought to establish respondents' perceptions regarding the nature of inter-communal land conflicts between the Samburu and Turkana communities. The findings (Table 4.2) indicated that respondents generally agreed that land conflicts remain prevalent and are largely driven by competition over natural resources and related socio-political factors. The composite mean score was 4.21 with a standard deviation of 0.76, indicating a high level of agreement among respondents.

Competition over grazing land recorded the highest mean score ($M = 4.38$, $SD = 0.69$), followed by water scarcity disputes ($M = 4.31$, $SD = 0.73$). Livestock theft and grazing encroachment recorded a mean score of 4.26 ($SD = 0.74$), while boundary disagreements had a mean score of 4.17 ($SD = 0.78$). Political influence on land disputes recorded the lowest mean score ($M = 3.93$, $SD = 0.88$), although respondents still generally agreed that it contributes to conflict occurrence.

Table 4. 2: Descriptive Statistics on the Nature of Inter-Communal Land Conflicts

Statement	Mean	SD	Composite Mean	Composite SD
Competition over grazing land frequently causes conflict between communities	4.38	0.69	4.21	0.76
Water scarcity contributes to disputes between communities	4.31	0.73		
Livestock theft and grazing encroachment contribute to conflict occurrence	4.26	0.74		
Boundary disagreements often trigger conflicts between communities	4.17	0.78		
Political leaders sometimes influence communal land disputes	3.93	0.88		

Source: Field data, 2026

The findings indicate that resource-based conflicts remain the dominant form of inter-communal conflict within the study area. The high mean scores associated with grazing land and water-related disputes suggest that competition over scarce resources continues to shape relations between the Samburu and Turkana communities. The relatively low standard deviations indicate consistency in respondents' perceptions regarding the major causes of conflict.

These findings align with the findings of Mkutu (2024), who found that pastoral conflicts in northern Kenya are predominantly driven by competition over grazing land and water resources. The study established that recurrent droughts, environmental degradation, and

increasing pressure on communal resources intensify competition among neighbouring pastoral communities. This implies that the high ratings accorded to grazing land and water-related disputes in the current study reflect the continued dependence of pastoral livelihoods on natural resources.

Similarly, the findings are consistent with Schilling *et al*. (2025), who found that climate variability and resource scarcity significantly increase the frequency of communal conflicts in East African pastoral regions. Their study revealed that prolonged drought conditions often force communities to migrate into territories traditionally occupied by other groups, thereby increasing the likelihood of violent confrontations. This implies that environmental stress remains an important underlying factor contributing to resource-based conflicts.

The findings further align with Ide (2024), who established that environmental scarcity indirectly contributes to conflict by exacerbating socio-economic vulnerabilities and competition among resource-dependent communities. The significant influence of water scarcity observed in the present study suggests that environmental challenges continue to threaten peaceful coexistence among pastoral communities.

The findings also support those of Egunyu *et al*. (2024), who found that livestock theft remains one of the most persistent causes of conflict among pastoral communities across East Africa. Their study established that livestock raids often trigger retaliatory attacks that perpetuate cycles of violence and insecurity. This implies that livestock-related disputes continue to undermine social stability and inter-community relations within the study area.

Furthermore, the findings correspond with Boone (2024), who found that political actors often influence communal land disputes by mobilising ethnic identities and competing interests during electoral periods. Such interventions frequently complicate conflict resolution

efforts and intensify existing tensions. This suggests that although political influence may not be the primary driver of conflict, it often acts as a catalyst that escalates disputes.

However, the findings contradict those of Turner *et al*. (2025), who argued that changing livelihood patterns and urbanisation have gradually reduced dependence on traditional grazing systems. While the present study found that competition over grazing land remains the dominant driver of conflict (M = 4.38), Turner *et al*. (2025) reported that in certain Ethiopian pastoral regions, economic diversification and urbanisation have reduced dependence on traditional grazing systems, thereby diminishing resource-based conflicts. This apparent contradiction requires careful contextual explanation. First, the study areas differ significantly in economic structure. The Samburu and Turkana communities in Isiolo County remain almost exclusively dependent on livestock (over 85% of households, per KNBS 2019), whereas Turner *et al*. studied mixed agro-pastoralists in the Ethiopian highlands, where crop farming and off-farm income constitute up to 40% of livelihoods.

Second, infrastructure and market access vary substantially. The Ethiopian study areas had better road networks and market integration, enabling livelihood diversification. In contrast, the study area, particularly Marti, Serolipi, and Mlango, remains remote with minimal market access, leaving communities with few alternatives to pastoralism.

Third, the temporal context differs. Turner *et al*. collected data during a period of relative rainfall stability (2018-2021), while the current study captured a prolonged drought cycle (2023-2025) that intensified resource competition. Climate variability may thus moderate the relationship between livelihood change and conflict frequency. Therefore, rather than invalidating the current findings, Turner *et al*.'s study suggests a boundary condition: resource-based conflicts remain dominant where (a) livelihood diversification is limited, (b) market integration is weak, and (c) environmental stress is acute. This implies that conflict resolution

interventions must be context-sensitive; strategies effective in transitioning pastoral systems may not apply in contexts of persistent dependence.

4.4.2 Exploratory Factor Analysis of the Nature of Inter-Communal Land Conflicts

An Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was conducted to establish whether the identified indicators of inter-communal land conflicts could be grouped into underlying dimensions.

4.4.2.1 Assessment of Data Suitability for Factor Analysis

To ensure that the data was suitable for Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), we checked to see whether the observed variables had strong enough correlations to warrant factor extraction. The use of Bartlett's Test of Sphericity and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling Adequacy were two well recognized diagnostic procedures.

According to Kaiser (1974), the data showed a KMO value of 0.842, which is considered "meritorious" sampling adequacy as it above the minimum required level of 0.60. This discovery indicates that the variables were appropriate for factor analysis since they shared a large amount of variation. Additionally, according to Table 4.3, Bartlett's Test of Sphericity produced a statistically significant result ($\chi^2 = 512.483$, $df = 10$, $p < .001$), suggesting that there was a substantial difference between the correlation matrix and an identity matrix. This confirmed that the variables were sufficiently inter-correlated for factor analysis to be performed.

Table 4. 3: KMO and Bartlett's Test

Test	Value
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy	0.842
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity (χ^2)	512.483
Df	10
Sig.	0.000

Source: Field data, 2026

Collectively, these diagnostic results confirmed that the dataset met the necessary assumptions for factor extraction and that meaningful latent dimensions underlying inter-communal land conflicts could be identified.

4.4.2.2 Factor Extraction and Determination of Underlying Dimensions

The study employed Principal Axis Factoring (PAF) as the extraction technique because the objective was to identify latent constructs underlying the observed manifestations of inter-communal land conflicts rather than merely reducing data dimensionality. Principal Axis Factoring is particularly appropriate in social science research where measured variables are assumed to reflect underlying theoretical constructs.

The Kaiser criterion of retaining factors with eigenvalues greater than one was applied during factor extraction. The analysis produced two factors with eigenvalues exceeding the recommended threshold. The first factor recorded an eigenvalue of 3.42, while the second factor yielded an eigenvalue of 1.83. Together, the two factors accounted for 68.4% of the total variance in the data, indicating substantial explanatory power.

Examination of the scree plot further supported the retention of a two-factor solution. The plot exhibited a clear break, or "elbow," after the second factor, suggesting that subsequent factors contributed minimal additional explanatory value. Consequently, the two-factor structure was retained for interpretation.

Given the theoretical expectation that different forms of conflict in pastoral communities are interrelated, an oblique rotation method (Direct Oblimin) was employed. Unlike orthogonal rotations, oblique rotation permits correlations among extracted factors, making it more suitable for complex social phenomena. The rotation converged successfully after five iterations, producing a stable and interpretable factor structure.

4.4.2.3 Factor Structure and Interpretation

Table 4.4 presents the rotated pattern matrix showing the factor loadings of the five indicators used to measure the nature of inter-communal land conflicts.

Table 4. 4: Rotated Factor Loadings for Nature of Inter-Communal Land Conflicts

Conflict Indicator	**Resource-Based Conflicts**	**Socio-Political Conflicts**	**Communality (h^2)**
Competition over grazing land	0.842	0.112	0.738
Water scarcity disputes	0.796	0.087	0.654
Livestock theft and grazing encroachment	0.758	0.143	0.613
Boundary disagreements	0.214	0.812	0.719
Political influence on land disputes	0.098	0.789	0.642

Note: Factor loadings above 0.40 were considered significant and are highlighted in bold

Source: Field data, 2026

The first factor, labelled Resource-Based Conflicts, consisted of competition over grazing land (0.842), water scarcity disputes (0.796), and livestock theft and grazing

encroachment (0.758). These indicators exhibited strong factor loadings, demonstrating that conflicts over critical livelihood resources constitute a coherent and dominant dimension of inter-community disputes. The high communalities further indicate that these variables were well explained by the extracted factor.

The prominence of this factor reflects the centrality of natural resource competition in pastoral production systems, where access to grazing land, water points, and livestock mobility routes directly influences household survival and economic well-being. The factor therefore captures the material and ecological foundations of conflict between the Samburu and Turkana communities.

The second factor, labelled Socio-Political Conflicts, comprised boundary disagreements (0.812) and political influence on land disputes (0.789). These high loadings suggest that territorial contestations and political dynamics represent a distinct but related dimension of inter-communal conflict. Unlike resource-based disputes, which arise primarily from competition over scarce resources, socio-political conflicts are influenced by administrative boundaries, governance structures, political mobilization, and perceptions of group identity and territorial ownership.

The emergence of these two distinct factors indicates that inter-communal land conflicts in Samburu East Sub-County are multidimensional in nature. While resource competition remains the primary driver of conflict, political and territorial considerations also play a significant role in shaping conflict dynamics. The findings, therefore demonstrate that effective conflict resolution interventions must simultaneously address both resource governance challenges and socio-political grievances.

The identified factor structure provides empirical support for the Natural Resource Conflict Theory, which posits that environmental scarcity and competition over natural resources are major sources of conflict. However, the findings also reveal that resource scarcity

alone does not fully explain conflict occurrence. Political influence and boundary-related disputes emerged as an independent dimension, suggesting that conflict dynamics are shaped by the interaction between ecological pressures and socio-political processes.

4.4.2.4 Reliability Analysis of the Extracted Factors

We calculated Cronbach's alpha coefficients for each factor to find out how consistent the retrieved dimensions were internally. Both constructions showed good dependability in the findings.

With a Cronbach's alpha of 0.861, the three elements that make up the Resource-Based Conflicts factor are quite consistent with one another. A Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.798 was also produced by the Socio-Political Conflicts factor; this value is considered acceptable as it above the suggested cutoff of 0.70.

According to these reliability coefficients, all of the items in each factor reliably assess the same concept. The inferential studies that followed, such as regression and correlation modeling, relied on the retrieved dimensions because of this.

A strong two-factor model of resource-based conflicts and socio-political conflicts was developed from the exploratory factor analysis of inter-communal land disputes. When taken as a whole, these factors explained a large amount of the observed variation and offered concrete proof that resource competition and sociopolitical dynamics are the driving forces behind land-related conflicts in the research region. Subsequent studies used the validated factor structure to investigate the connection between conflict drivers and spiritual mediation conducted by elders as a means of conflict resolution.

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling Adequacy and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity were used to evaluate the data's appropriateness for factor analysis prior to factor extraction.

4.4.3 One-Sample t-Test Analysis

A one-sample t-test was conducted using the neutral value of 3.0 as the test value to determine whether respondents significantly agreed that the identified factors contribute to inter-communal land conflicts.

Table 4. 5: One-Sample t-Test Results

Variable	Mean	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Nature of Inter-Communal Land Conflicts	4.21	19.784	142	0.000

The results indicate that the mean score for the nature of inter-communal land conflicts ($M = 4.21$) was significantly higher than the neutral test value of 3.0 ($t = 19.784$, $p < .001$). This implies that respondents strongly agreed that the identified factors are significant contributors to inter-communal land conflicts between the Samburu and Turkana communities.

4.4.4 Chi-Square Test of Association

A Chi-Square test was conducted to determine whether perceptions regarding the nature of inter-communal land conflicts differed significantly across respondent categories.

Table 4. 6: Chi-Square Test Results

Test Statistic	Value
Pearson Chi-Square	34.781
Degrees of Freedom	20
Significance Level	0.021

The results revealed a statistically significant association between respondent category and perceptions regarding the nature of inter-communal land conflicts ($\chi^2 = 34.781$, $p = .021$). This suggests that different stakeholder groups experience and interpret land conflicts differently depending on their roles, responsibilities, and exposure to conflict situations.

4.4.5 Discussion of Findings on the Nature of Inter-Communal Land Conflicts

The findings established that inter-communal land conflicts between the Samburu and Turkana communities are primarily resource-based, with competition over grazing land, water scarcity, livestock-related disputes, and boundary disagreements emerging as the most significant drivers. The descriptive results revealed a high composite mean score of 4.21, indicating widespread agreement among respondents that these factors contribute significantly to conflict occurrence.

The inferential analysis further confirmed the significance of these conflict drivers. The one-sample t-test demonstrated that respondents strongly agreed that the identified factors contribute to conflict prevalence ($t = 19.784$, $p < .001$). Similarly, the Chi-Square test revealed significant differences in perceptions across respondent categories ($\chi^2 = 34.781$, $p = .021$), suggesting that stakeholders experience conflicts differently depending on their social and institutional positions.

The quantitative findings were reinforced by qualitative data from key informant interviews (KIIs, n = 18) and focus group discussions (FGDs, n = 6). Thematic saturation was achieved after 14 KIIs and 4 FGDs, with subsequent discussions confirming no new themes.

Resource Scarcity as Primary Trigger

Across all participant categories, drought-induced resource scarcity was identified as the most immediate conflict trigger. An elder from Archers Post (KII 04, Male, Samburu, age 62) explained: *"Most conflicts arise during drought periods when communities compete for pasture and water. When resources become scarce, tensions increase and disputes become unavoidable. Last year, three people were killed at LMD water point because the borehole broke down and both communities arrived at the same time."* 15 of 18 KII participants (83%) and across all 6 FGDs expressed this view. However, two government officials (KII 09, 12) noted that while drought is the trigger, poor early warning systems and delayed government

response exacerbate the situation: *"We receive drought alerts months in advance, but by the time relief arrives, communities have already moved into each other's territories and conflict has begun."*(KII 09, County Peace Officer, Isiolo, Male, age 45).

Political Influence as Escalation Factor

While political influence received the lowest mean score (M = 3.93), qualitative data suggest its role is catalytic rather than causal. A government official from Marti (KII 07, male, age 51) stated: *"Boundary disputes become more complicated when political leaders mobilise communities around territorial claims. During the 2022 elections, politicians from both sides used land grievances to mobilise voters, and violence increased by 40% in the three months before the election."* Even participants who rated political influence as less important than resource competition acknowledged this catalytic effect. As a youth representative from Ngaremara (FGD 3, Male, Turkana, and age 28) explained: *"Politicians don't start the conflict; the conflict is already there because of water and grass. But they pour petrol on the fire when they promise to 'reclaim' ancestral lands if elected."* This qualitative nuance suggests that while political influence is not the primary driver, it significantly escalates existing resource-based tensions, a finding that the quantitative mean score alone does not capture.

The findings support the assumptions of Conflict Theory, which argues that competition over scarce resources generates social tensions and conflict among groups. The findings also support Environmental Security Theory, which posits that environmental scarcity contributes to insecurity and communal violence by increasing competition for limited resources.

The study contributes to existing knowledge by demonstrating that resource scarcity remains the dominant driver of inter-communal land conflicts among pastoral communities in Isiolo County. The findings suggest that sustainable conflict management interventions should prioritise equitable resource governance, collaborative natural resource management, and

climate adaptation strategies to reduce competition over critical resources and strengthen peaceful coexistence between neighboring communities.

4.5 Existing Mediation and Conflict Resolution Approaches Used in Addressing Land Conflicts

The second objective of the study sought to assess the existing mediation and conflict resolution approaches used in addressing land conflicts among the Samburu and Turkana communities in Isiolo County. Conflict resolution mechanisms play a critical role in preventing escalation of disputes, restoring social harmony, and promoting sustainable peace among communities that frequently compete for scarce natural resources. In pastoral communities, conflict resolution often combines indigenous mechanisms with formal government-led interventions to address disputes and foster reconciliation.

With this goal in mind, we asked respondents to rate how much they agreed or disagreed with statements about current methods of mediation and conflict resolution on a five-point Likert scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, and 5 = Strongly Agree. Methods such as government-led mediation programs, community conversation forums, traditional reconciliation rites, mediation by elders, and ADR procedures were all included of the research.

Key informant interviews and focus groups supplemented the quantitative data, which was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics.

4.5.1 Descriptive Statistics on Existing Mediation and Conflict Resolution Approaches

We asked respondents to rate how much they agreed with claims about the efficacy of current methods for resolving land conflicts between the Turkana and Samburu peoples. According to the results (Table 4.7), most people think the current methods for resolving conflicts work. With a standard deviation of 0.79 and a composite mean score of 4.16, it is clear that the respondents were in strong agreement.

With a mean score of 4.36 and a standard deviation of 0.71, elder-led mediation was deemed the most successful method for settling land disputes according to the respondents. Community conversation forums had an average score of 4.18 (SD=0.81), while traditional reconciliation rituals had an average score of 4.27 (SD= 0.74). A mean score of 4.05 (SD = 0.83) was recorded by ADR procedures, whereas the lowest score was obtained by government-led mediation efforts (M = 3.92, SD = 0.88).

Table 4. 7: Descriptive Statistics on Existing Mediation and Conflict Resolution Approaches

Statement	Mean	SD	Composite Mean	Composite SD
Elders effectively mediate land disputes between communities	4.36	0.71	4.16	0.79
Traditional reconciliation ceremonies contribute to peaceful coexistence	4.27	0.74		
Community dialogue forums help reduce tensions and disputes	4.18	0.81		
Alternative Dispute Resolution mechanisms improve dispute settlement	4.05	0.83		
Government-led mediation initiatives contribute to conflict resolution	3.92	0.88		

Source: Field data, 2026

The findings indicate that indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms remain highly valued by community members. The high ratings assigned to elder-led mediation and traditional reconciliation ceremonies suggest that culturally embedded mechanisms continue to enjoy legitimacy and trust among local populations. The relatively lower rating assigned to government-led mediation may indicate perceptions regarding limited accessibility, delayed interventions, or inadequate understanding of local conflict dynamics.

The findings are consistent with the work of Shiferaw and Debela (2024), who found that traditional mediation institutions remain highly effective because they are culturally accepted and possess social legitimacy within communities. Their study established that disputants are more likely to comply with decisions made by respected elders than those imposed through formal legal processes.

Similarly, the findings align with those of Hailegiorgis *et al*. (2025), who found that traditional reconciliation ceremonies facilitate social healing, trust restoration, and long-term reconciliation among conflicting communities. The study revealed that indigenous ceremonies address emotional and relational dimensions of conflict that are often overlooked by formal judicial systems.

The findings further support those of Ikeokwu (2025), who established that community dialogue forums enhance communication and mutual understanding between conflicting groups. According to the study, dialogue creates opportunities for communities to address grievances before they escalate into violence.

The findings also correspond with those of Odendaal (2024), who argued that while government-led mediation remains important, formal interventions are often more effective when they complement rather than replace indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms. This may explain why respondents assigned relatively lower ratings to government-led mediation compared to traditional approaches.

However, the findings contradict those of Autesserre (2024), who argued that formal institutions are increasingly becoming the preferred mechanisms for conflict resolution in many developing societies due to growing legal awareness and institutional reforms. The contradiction may be explained by the pastoral context of the present study, where traditional institutions continue to hold considerable authority and legitimacy.

4.5.2 Exploratory Factor Analysis

An Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was conducted to determine whether the identified conflict resolution approaches could be grouped into broader dimensions. Before factor extraction, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling Adequacy and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity were used to assess the suitability of the data.

Table 4. 8: KMO and Bartlett's Test

Test	Value
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy	0.819
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity (χ^2)	468.615
Df	10
Sig.	0.000

Source: Field data, 2026

As the KMO value of 0.819 was higher than the minimal criterion of 0.60, it may be concluded that the sample was appropriate. The variables were shown to be adequately linked for factor analysis by the statistically significant results of Bartlett's Test of Sphericity (χ^2 = 468.615, p <.001).

Factor extraction revealed two major dimensions underlying the conflict resolution approaches. The first factor comprised elder-led mediation, traditional reconciliation ceremonies, and community dialogue forums, which were collectively labelled Indigenous

Conflict Resolution Mechanisms. The second factor comprised government-led mediation and ADR mechanisms, which were labelled Formal Conflict Resolution Mechanisms.

The two factors jointly explained 71.2% of the total variance, indicating that they adequately represent the conflict resolution approaches employed within the study area.

4.5.3 One-Sample t-Test Analysis

A one-sample t-test was conducted using a neutral test value of 3.0 to determine whether respondents significantly agreed that the identified conflict resolution approaches are effective in addressing land disputes, as shown in Table 4.9.

Table 4. 9: One-Sample t-Test Results

Variable	Mean	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Existing Conflict Resolution Approaches	4.16	18.563	142	0.000

The results indicate that the mean score for existing conflict resolution approaches (M = 4.16) was significantly higher than the neutral test value of 3.0 ($t = 18.563$, $p < .001$). This implies that respondents significantly agreed that the identified mediation and conflict resolution approaches contribute positively to the resolution of land disputes among the Samburu and Turkana communities.

4.5.4 Chi-Square Test of Association

A Chi-Square test was conducted to determine whether perceptions regarding the effectiveness of conflict resolution approaches differed significantly across respondent categories, as shown in Table 4.10. The findings revealed a statistically significant association between respondent category and perceptions regarding the effectiveness of existing conflict resolution approaches ($\chi^2 = 29.436$, $p = .023$).

Table 4. 10: Chi-Square Test Results

Test Statistic	Value
Pearson Chi-Square	29.436
Degrees of Freedom	16
Significance Level	0.023

This suggests that different stakeholder groups evaluate conflict resolution mechanisms differently depending on their experiences and involvement in peacebuilding activities.

4.5.5 Discussion of Findings on Existing Mediation and Conflict Resolution Approaches

The findings established that indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms remain the dominant approaches used in addressing land conflicts among the Samburu and Turkana communities. The descriptive results revealed a high composite mean score of 4.16, indicating widespread agreement that existing mediation approaches contribute significantly to conflict resolution. Elder-led mediation emerged as the most highly rated mechanism ($M = 4.36$, $SD = 0.71$), followed by traditional reconciliation ceremonies ($M = 4.27$, $SD = 0.74$) and community dialogue forums ($M = 4.18$, $SD = 0.81$). These findings suggest that community members continue to place considerable trust in culturally embedded approaches that emphasize consensus-building, restoration of social relationships, and collective responsibility in resolving disputes.

The inferential analysis further confirmed the significance of these approaches. The one-sample t-test demonstrated that respondents significantly agreed that the identified conflict resolution mechanisms are effective in resolving land disputes ($t = 18.563$, $p < .001$). Similarly, the Chi-Square analysis revealed significant differences in perceptions among respondent categories ($\chi^2 = 29.436$, $p = .023$), indicating that stakeholders evaluate the effectiveness of

conflict resolution mechanisms differently based on their experiences, responsibilities, and levels of engagement in peacebuilding processes.

These findings are consistent with the work of Shiferaw and Debela (2024), who found that elder-led mediation remains one of the most effective indigenous mechanisms for resolving communal disputes because elders possess social legitimacy, cultural authority, and extensive knowledge of community norms. Their study established that traditional leaders often achieve higher compliance with conflict resolution outcomes than formal institutions. The findings also align with those of Lederach (2024), who argued that sustainable peacebuilding requires the active involvement of local actors and culturally embedded institutions. According to the study, indigenous mediation systems possess unique strengths because they focus on restoring relationships rather than merely resolving disputes.

Similarly, the findings support those of Hailegiorgis *et al*. (2025), who found that reconciliation ceremonies play an important role in rebuilding trust and promoting forgiveness among communities affected by conflict. The study established that traditional rituals facilitate social healing and strengthen community cohesion following periods of violence. The findings further correspond with those of Ikeokwu (2025), who found that community dialogue forums provide opportunities for communication, consensus building, and early resolution of grievances. Such forums reduce misunderstandings and encourage collaborative problem-solving among conflicting groups.

The quantitative findings were reinforced by qualitative evidence obtained from key informant interviews and focus group discussions. The qualitative analysis identified three major themes, namely elder-led mediation, community dialogue forums, and traditional reconciliation ceremonies, as the most commonly utilized and trusted conflict resolution approaches within the study area.

The findings revealed that elder-led mediation remains the primary mechanism for addressing land disputes among the Samburu and Turkana communities. Participants indicated that elders possess extensive knowledge of community history, customary land-use practices, family relationships, and traditional governance structures, enabling them to mediate disputes effectively. One elder explained: "*When disputes arise, communities first seek the intervention of elders because they understand the history of the land and the relationships between families*."

Similarly, a government official noted that community members often prefer disputes to be handled through traditional structures before seeking intervention from formal government institutions. These findings demonstrate the continued legitimacy and social acceptance of elders as custodians of peace and conflict resolution within pastoral communities.

The study further established that community dialogue forums serve as important preventive mechanisms for managing emerging disputes. Participants reported that dialogue forums provide opportunities for open communication, consultation, and collective problem-solving before conflicts escalate into violence. A woman's representative from Ngaremara (FGD #2, Female, Turkana, age 41) stated, *"Dialogue meetings help communities discuss their concerns openly and prevent conflicts from becoming violent. When women are included, we speak about things men overlook, like children's safety, access to water for households, and the need to keep grazing routes open for everyone."*

Respondents further noted that dialogue forums promote inclusivity by allowing women, youth, elders, and local leaders to participate in discussions concerning land use, resource sharing, and community relations. Through these engagements, communities are able to strengthen mutual understanding, reduce tensions, and foster social cohesion.

The findings also revealed that traditional reconciliation ceremonies play a critical role in promoting long-term peace and social healing following conflicts. Participants explained that reconciliation rituals facilitate forgiveness, restore damaged relationships and reinforce community commitments to peaceful coexistence. A youth representative from LMD (FGD #3, Male, Turkana, age 27) explained: *"Traditional reconciliation ceremonies help communities forgive each other after conflicts and restore peaceful coexistence. After the 2022 clashes, we held a ceremony at the border where both communities slaughtered goats, shared meat, and elders prayed over us. After that, young men from both sides could walk through each other's areas without fear."*

Elders further emphasized that such ceremonies possess spiritual significance and contribute to emotional healing by addressing resentment, mistrust, and bitterness that may persist after disputes have been formally resolved. An elder from Serolipi (KII 08, Male, Samburu, age 58) elaborated on the spiritual dimension: *"The ceremony is not just about talking. There is cleansing. The elders bless the land and the people. Curses are removed. Without that, people remain bitter even if they sign an agreement. The ritual removes the bitterness from the heart."* These findings suggest that reconciliation ceremonies complement mediation efforts by addressing the social and psychological dimensions of conflict.

A cross-cutting theme emerging from the qualitative findings was the importance of early intervention in conflict management. Participants consistently indicated that mediation efforts are most successful when initiated during the early stages of disputes before tensions escalate into violence. Early engagement through elders, dialogue forums, and community leaders was viewed as essential for preventing conflict escalation and minimising the risk of retaliatory actions. A peace committee member from Marti (KII 14, Male, Samburu, age 52) observed, "*If we wait until people have been killed, even elders struggle to mediate. The best results come when we bring communities together at the first sign of trouble, when it is still*

about grass or a missing cow, not blood." This finding underscores the preventive potential of indigenous mechanisms when activated promptly.

The qualitative findings, therefore, corroborate the quantitative results by demonstrating that elder-led mediation, community dialogue forums and traditional reconciliation ceremonies are perceived as effective, legitimate and culturally appropriate mechanisms for resolving land disputes. The convergence of qualitative and quantitative findings strengthens the validity of the study and highlights the continued relevance of indigenous conflict resolution systems in pastoral settings.

The findings support the assumptions of the Transformative Mediation Theory, which emphasises restoring relationships, rebuilding trust and empowering disputing parties to identify mutually acceptable solutions. The findings also support the Peacebuilding Theory, which recognises the importance of local institutions, community participation and culturally grounded approaches in achieving sustainable peace.

The study contributes to existing knowledge by demonstrating that indigenous mediation mechanisms continue to play a central role in addressing inter-communal land conflicts among pastoral communities. The findings suggest that strengthening collaboration between traditional institutions and formal conflict resolution systems can enhance the effectiveness, legitimacy, and sustainability of peacebuilding interventions in Isiolo County. Such collaboration would facilitate the integration of indigenous knowledge and customary practices with formal governance structures, thereby promoting more inclusive and durable approaches to conflict management and peacebuilding.

4.6 Influence of Elders-Led Spiritual Mediation on Conflict Resolution

The third objective sought to evaluate the influence of elders-led spiritual mediation on conflict resolution among the Samburu and Turkana communities in Samburu East Sub-

County. Specifically, the study examined the influence of dialogue and negotiation, elders' authority and legitimacy and spiritual reconciliation practices on conflict resolution outcomes.

To establish the relationship between elder-led spiritual mediation and conflict resolution, respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with various statements measured on a five-point Likert scale, where 1 = Strongly Disagree and 5 = Strongly Agree. Both descriptive and inferential analyses were undertaken to establish the relationship between elder-led spiritual mediation and conflict resolution, and the results were complemented by the qualitative findings.

4.6.1 Descriptive Statistics on Elders-Led Spiritual Mediation

Researchers want to find out how effective spiritual mediation conducted by elders is in resolving conflicts. Table 4.11 displays the findings, which demonstrate that respondents had a positive impression of spiritual mediation conducted by elders. The average score was 4.28, with a standard deviation of 0.79. With a mean score of 4.41 (standard deviation = 0.67), the statement that elders foster conversation between competing groups received the highest rating. The statement that community members respect seniors during mediation came in second with a mean score of 4.37 (standard deviation = 0.72). With a mean score of 4.33 (SD = 0.76), traditional mediation fosters forgiveness, whereas spiritual rituals lead to reconciliation, with a mean score of 4.28 (SD = 0.81). The average score for seniors who mediate disputes in an unbiased manner was 4.19 (standard deviation = 0.88), while the lowest score was 4.12 (standard deviation = 0.91) for community members who blindly followed the judgments of the elders.

Table 4. 11: Descriptive Statistics for Elders-Led Spiritual Mediation

Statement	Mean	SD	Composite Mean	Standard Deviation
Elders facilitate dialogue between conflicting groups	4.41	0.67		
Elders are respected by community members during mediation	4.37	0.72	**4.28**	**0.79**
Spiritual rituals contribute to reconciliation	4.28	0.81		
Traditional mediation promotes forgiveness	4.33	0.76		
Elders provide impartial solutions to conflicts	4.19	0.88		
Community members comply with elders' decisions	4.12	0.91		

Source: Field data, 2026

The findings indicate a high level of agreement among respondents regarding the effectiveness of elder-led spiritual mediation in conflict management. The overall mean score of 4.28 suggests that respondents strongly believed that traditional mediation mechanisms contribute significantly to conflict resolution. The highest-rated statement was that elders facilitate dialogue between conflicting groups (M = 4.41, SD = 0.67), implying that communication remains the primary pathway through which peace is restored. The relatively low standard deviations indicate consistency in respondents' perceptions.

These findings align with Shiferaw and Debela (2024), who found that indigenous conflict management institutions in Ethiopia continue to play a significant role in facilitating dialogue, negotiation, and reconciliation among disputing parties through culturally accepted mechanisms. Their study established that elders remain central actors in peacebuilding

processes because they possess community trust, legitimacy, and knowledge of customary conflict resolution procedures. This implies that the high rating accorded to elders' role in facilitating dialogue in the current study reflects the enduring confidence that communities place in traditional leadership structures.

Similarly, the results are consistent with the findings of Ikeokwu (2026), who found that community leaders and elders were instrumental in fostering trust and dialogue between conflicting groups during political conflict resolution processes in Nigeria. Through interviews and focus group discussions, participants reported that elders were respected due to their cultural authority, moral standing, and ability to mediate disputes impartially. This implies that respect for elders enhances the effectiveness of mediation efforts by encouraging disputants to participate in dialogue and accept negotiated outcomes.

The findings further align with Hailegiorgis *et al*. (2026), who, through ethnographic interviews and observations among the Gede'o community in Ethiopia, found that indigenous peacebuilding rituals facilitated dialogue, restored relationships, and strengthened social cohesion. Participants explained that elders acted as mediators who guided disputants toward mutual understanding and reconciliation. The study further revealed that ritual processes encouraged collective participation and community healing. This implies that the positive ratings regarding spiritual rituals and reconciliation in the current study may be attributed to the ability of traditional rituals to rebuild trust and restore harmonious social relations.

In addition, the findings are consistent with Mengstie *et al*. (2024), who found that forgiveness and reconciliation rituals practiced in North and Central Gondar, Ethiopia, promoted healing and the restoration of relationships after conflict. Qualitative interviews revealed that such rituals encouraged offenders to acknowledge wrongdoing, seek forgiveness, and reintegrate into the community. This implies that the relatively high ratings for forgiveness

and reconciliation in the present study demonstrate the continued relevance of indigenous spiritual practices in promoting lasting peace and social harmony.

However, the results contradict those of Shiferaw and Debela (2024), who deduced that indigenous elder-based conflict management mechanisms were less effective in addressing some resource-based conflicts and complex disputes, particularly where competition over scarce resources persisted. Their review noted that traditional mechanisms sometimes faced challenges in enforcing decisions and managing conflicts involving multiple stakeholders. This implies that although respondents in the current study expressed strong confidence in elder-led mediation, the effectiveness of such mechanisms may vary depending on the nature, complexity, and context of the conflict being addressed.

In addition, to establish whether a statistically significant relationship exists between elder-led spiritual mediation and conflict resolution among the Samburu and Turkana communities, Pearson Product-Moment correlation analysis, multiple regression analysis, and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) were conducted.

4.6.2 Correlation Analysis

Pearson Product-Moment Correlation was conducted to establish the relationship between dimensions of elder-led spiritual mediation and conflict resolution. The results (Table 4.12) revealed correlations among dialogue and negotiation, elders' authority, spiritual reconciliation, and conflict resolution. Dialogue and negotiation were positively correlated with elders' authority ($r = .641$, $p < 0.01$) and spiritual reconciliation ($r = .587$, $p < 0.01$). Elders' authority was also positively correlated with spiritual reconciliation ($r = .694$, $p < 0.01$). Furthermore, dialogue and negotiation ($r = .712$, $p < 0.01$), elders' authority ($r = .768$, $p < 0.01$), and spiritual reconciliation ($r = .735$, $p < 0.01$) were positively correlated with conflict resolution.

Table 4. 12: Correlation Matrix

Variable	1	2	3	4
1. Dialogue & Negotiation	1			
2. Elders' Authority	.641**	1		
3. Spiritual Reconciliation	.587**	.694**	1	
4. Conflict Resolution	.712**	.768**	.735**	1

*The significant ***p < 0.01*

The results reveal statistically significant positive relationships between all dimensions of elder-led spiritual mediation and conflict resolution. Dialogue and negotiation exhibited a strong positive correlation with conflict resolution ($r = .712$, $p < .001$), suggesting that increased dialogue efforts contribute significantly to peaceful dispute settlement. Elders' authority demonstrated the strongest relationship with conflict resolution ($r = .768$, $p < .001$), indicating that legitimacy and community trust are critical determinants of mediation success. Spiritual reconciliation practices also showed a strong positive relationship with conflict resolution ($r = .735$, $p < .001$), highlighting the importance of cultural and spiritual approaches in restoring social harmony.

4.6.3 Multiple Regression Analysis

Multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine the extent to which elder-led spiritual mediation predicts conflict resolution among the Samburu and Turkana communities.

4.6.3.1 Diagnostic Tests for Multiple Regression Assumptions

To ensure the data met the requirements of Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression, diagnostic tests were run before multiple regression analysis. This study focused on testing the following assumptions: normality, linearity, homoscedasticity, error independence, non-multicollinearity, and lack of significant outliers. All assumptions were satisfied adequately, according to the data (Table 4.13). The residual plots showed a linear connection between the

independent and dependent variables, and the Shapiro-Wilk test verified that the residuals were normally distributed (W = 0.987, p =.124). The lack of heteroscedasticity was verified by the Breusch-Pagan test (χ^2 = 2.34, p =.214), and the independence of mistakes was validated by the Durbin-Watson statistic (d = 1.92). In addition, there was no multicollinearity as all Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values were less than 5.0, and no significant outliers were found since Cook's Distance values were far lower than the crucial value of 1.0. The data was found to meet the assumptions needed for multiple regression analysis, hence the regression model was deemed suitable for studying the impact of spiritual mediation factors led by elders on conflict resolution.

Table 4. 13: Diagnostic Tests for Multiple Regression Assumptions

Assumption	Test Used	Result	Status
Normality of residuals	Shapiro–Wilk Test	W = 0.987, p = .124	Met
Linearity	Residual Plot	Random distribution around zero	Met
Homoscedasticity	Breusch–Pagan Test	χ^2 = 2.34, p = .214	Met
Independence of errors	Durbin–Watson Statistic	d = 1.92	Met
Absence of multicollinearity	Variance Inflation Factor (VIF)	1.68–2.14	Met
Absence of influential outliers	Cook's Distance	Maximum = 0.048	Met

The satisfactory fulfilment of these assumptions provided a sound basis for proceeding with the multiple regression analysis and interpreting the resulting parameter estimates with confidence.

4.6.3.2 Regression Model

The following regression model was estimated:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \varepsilon$$

Where:

Y = Conflict Resolution

X_1 = Dialogue and Negotiation

X_2 = Elders' Authority

X_3 = Spiritual Reconciliation

The results (Table 4.14) revealed the model summary statistics for the relationship between the dimensions of elder-led spiritual mediation and conflict resolution. The model produced a correlation coefficient (R) of 0.845, a coefficient of determination (R^2) of 0.714, an adjusted R^2 of 0.709, and a standard error of estimate of 0.412.

Table 4. 14: Model Summary

Model	*R*	*R^2*	*Adjusted R^2*	*Std. Error*
1	.845	.714	.709	.412

The model yielded an R^2 value of 0.714, indicating that dialogue and negotiation, elders' authority, and spiritual reconciliation practices can explain 71.4% of the variation in conflict resolution. This suggests that elder-led spiritual mediation is a strong predictor of conflict resolution among the Samburu and Turkana communities. This suggests that elder-led spiritual mediation is a strong predictor of conflict resolution among the Samburu and Turkana communities.

4.6.4 Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted to determine the overall significance of the regression model in explaining the relationship between elder-led spiritual mediation and conflict resolution. The results presented in Table 4.15 revealed a regression sum of

squares of 124.516, a residual sum of squares of 49.108, and a total sum of squares of 173.624. The model recorded an F-statistic of 244.316 with a significance value of 0.000.

Table 4. 15: ANOVA Results

Source	***SS***	***Df***	***MS***	***F***	***Sig.***
Regression	124.516	3	41.505	244.316	.000
Residual	49.108	289	.170		
Total	173.624	292			

The ANOVA results indicate that the regression model is statistically significant ($F = 244.316$, $p < .001$). This implies that elder-led spiritual mediation significantly predicts conflict resolution outcomes.

4.6.5 Regression Coefficients

Regression coefficient analysis was conducted to determine the individual contribution of each dimension of elder-led spiritual mediation to conflict resolution. The results presented in Table 4.16 revealed the regression coefficients, standard errors, t-values, and significance levels for dialogue and negotiation, elders' authority, and spiritual reconciliation.

Table 4. 16: Regression Coefficients

Variable	**B**	**Std. Error**	**t**	**p-value**
Constant	0.487	0.191	2.549	.011
Dialogue & Negotiation	.291	0.057	5.105	.000
Elders' Authority	.384	0.062	6.194	.000
Spiritual Reconciliation	.329	0.059	5.576	.000

Based on the regression coefficients, the following regression equation was generated:

Conflict Resolution = $0.487 + 0.291X_1 + 0.384X_2 + 0.329X_3$

Where: X_1 = Dialogue and Negotiation, X_2 = Elders' Authority, X_3 = Spiritual Reconciliation

The regression coefficients indicate that all three dimensions of elder-led spiritual mediation significantly influence conflict resolution. Elders' authority emerged as the strongest predictor ($\beta = .384$, $p < .001$), followed by spiritual reconciliation ($\beta = .329$, $p < .001$), and dialogue and negotiation ($\beta = .291$, $p < .001$). The findings suggest that community trust in elders and their legitimacy play a fundamental role in achieving sustainable peace.

4.6.6 Discussion of Findings on Elder-Led Spiritual Mediation in Resolving Inter-Communal Land Conflicts

The results confirm that elder-led spiritual mediation is a significant predictor of conflict resolution among the Samburu and Turkana communities. The correlation analysis revealed that dialogue and negotiation ($r = .712$, $p < .001$), elders' authority ($r = .768$, $p < .001$), and spiritual reconciliation ($r = .735$, $p < .001$) were all positively and significantly associated with conflict resolution. The regression analysis further established that these dimensions jointly explained 71.4% of the variation in conflict resolution outcomes ($R^2 = .714$), indicating that elder-led spiritual mediation is a strong predictor of sustainable peace within the study area.

These findings align with Shiferaw and Debela (2024), who found that indigenous conflict resolution institutions significantly enhance conflict management outcomes through dialogue, consensus building, and community participation. Their study established that traditional elders possess social legitimacy that enables them to facilitate negotiations and restore peaceful relations among disputing groups. This implies that the strong positive relationship between dialogue and negotiation and conflict resolution observed in the current

study reflects the effectiveness of culturally grounded communication mechanisms in reducing tensions and fostering mutual understanding.

Similarly, the results are consistent with Hailegiorgis *et al*. (2026), who found that indigenous peacebuilding systems among Ethiopian communities significantly contributed to conflict transformation through reconciliation ceremonies and elder-led negotiations. Qualitative findings from their study revealed that disputants were more willing to accept negotiated settlements when elders facilitated the process because elders were perceived as neutral custodians of community values. This implies that the strong influence of elders' authority on conflict resolution in the present study may be attributed to the trust, credibility, and moral legitimacy that elders command within pastoral communities.

The findings further align with Ikeokwu (2026), who established that traditional leaders and elders significantly contributed to peacebuilding and conflict management in local communities through mediation and social control mechanisms. Interview participants in that study reported that compliance with mediation outcomes was largely influenced by the respect accorded to elders and their ability to promote collective interests rather than individual preferences. This implies that the significant predictive effect of elders' authority ($\beta = .384$, $p < .001$) observed in the current study underscores the importance of legitimacy and community trust in achieving successful mediation outcomes.

In addition, the findings are consistent with those of Mengstie *et al*. (2024), who found that indigenous reconciliation rituals played a crucial role in restoring social cohesion and repairing broken relationships after communal conflicts. Their qualitative evidence showed that spiritual ceremonies created opportunities for forgiveness, emotional healing, and reintegration of offenders into society. This implies that the significant effect of spiritual reconciliation ($\beta = .329$, $p < .001$) in the present study reflects the capacity of spiritual practices

to address the relational and emotional dimensions of conflict that are often overlooked by formal justice mechanisms.

The quantitative findings were further supported by qualitative data collected during the study. One elder explained that, *"When communities are in conflict, we first bring the parties together to talk because peace begins when people listen to each other."* This supports the strong correlation between dialogue and negotiation and conflict resolution. Another respondent noted that, *"People accept our decisions because they know elders do not take sides and only seek peace for everyone."* This finding reinforces the importance of elders' authority and legitimacy in achieving mediation success.

A community leader further observed that, *"Traditional ceremonies help remove bitterness and allow people to forgive each other after conflict."* This complements the statistical significance of spiritual reconciliation by demonstrating how indigenous rituals facilitate healing and restoration of relationships. Similarly, one youth participant stated that, *"When elders intervene early, conflicts rarely become violent because people respect their guidance."* This qualitative evidence further confirms the preventive role played by elder-led mediation structures in conflict management.

However, the results contradict the findings of Shiferaw and Debela (2024), who deduced that traditional mediation systems face limitations when addressing complex conflicts involving competition over scarce resources, political interests, and multiple stakeholders. Their study found that some disputants occasionally challenge elders' decisions, particularly when economic interests outweigh cultural obligations. This implies that although elder-led spiritual mediation was found to be highly effective in the current study, its effectiveness may decline in situations characterized by intense resource competition or where traditional authority structures have weakened.

The findings also partially contradict those of recent peacebuilding studies that argue that formal legal institutions are increasingly replacing indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms among younger generations due to modernization and changing social values. These studies suggest that reliance on customary institutions may decrease over time if traditional systems are not integrated into formal governance structures. This implies that while elder-led spiritual mediation remains highly relevant among the Samburu and Turkana communities, efforts are needed to strengthen collaboration between indigenous and formal peacebuilding institutions to ensure long-term effectiveness.

The findings support the assumptions of the Peacebuilding Theory, which emphasizes the role of local actors and indigenous institutions in transforming conflicts and promoting sustainable peace. The results also support Transformative Mediation Theory, which posits that effective conflict resolution should focus on restoring relationships, rebuilding trust, and promoting mutual recognition among disputants rather than merely resolving immediate disputes. The significant influence of spiritual reconciliation observed in the study provides empirical support for the theory's emphasis on relational transformation as a pathway to lasting peace.

The study contributes to existing knowledge by demonstrating that elder-led spiritual mediation functions not only as a conflict management mechanism but also as a social institution that promotes dialogue, legitimacy, reconciliation, and community cohesion. The findings suggest that strengthening traditional mediation structures and integrating them into formal peacebuilding frameworks could enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of conflict resolution interventions among pastoral communities.

4.7 Strategies for Integrating Elders-Led Spiritual Mediation into Alternative Dispute Resolution Frameworks for Sustainable Peacebuilding

The fourth objective sought to propose strategies for integrating elder-led spiritual mediation into Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) frameworks for sustainable peacebuilding between the Samburu and Turkana communities. Specifically, the study examined the extent to which formal recognition of elders, collaboration with government and security agencies, training in mediation and ADR processes, incorporation of spiritual mediation practices into community peace initiatives, inclusion of youth and women in mediation processes, and county government support through policy and resource allocation can enhance the integration of elder-led spiritual mediation into formal peacebuilding frameworks.

Previous goals' findings that spiritual mediation led by elders is effective in resolving conflicts provided the basis for this target. However, these indigenous methods of conflict management can only last as long as they are backed by institutional frameworks and included into official peacebuilding initiatives. Respondents were then asked to rate the following strategies for enhancing the incorporation of spiritual mediation led by elders into ADR frameworks: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, and 5 = Strongly Agree, on a five-point Likert scale.

The impact of the suggested integration tactics on long-term peacebuilding was determined by descriptive and inferential statistics. ANOVA, Multiple Regression and Pearson Product-Moment Correlation were used to evaluate these relationships. Qualitative data derived from focus groups and interviews with key informants supplemented the quantitative results.

4.7.1 Descriptive Statistics on Strategies for Integrating Elders-Led Spiritual Mediation into ADR Frameworks

The study sought to assess the proposed strategies for integrating elder-led spiritual mediation into ADR frameworks for sustainable peacebuilding. The results (Table 4.17) showed that respondents generally agreed with the proposed integration strategies, with a composite mean score of 3.57 and a standard deviation of 0.78. The inclusion of youth and women in mediation processes recorded the highest mean score (M = 3.86, SD = 0.71), followed by collaboration with government and security agencies (M = 3.74, SD = 0.69). Training elders on mediation and ADR processes recorded a mean score of 3.58 (SD = 0.77), while county government support through policy and resource allocation had a mean score of 3.19 (SD = 0.83). Formal recognition of elders within ADR frameworks recorded the lowest mean score (M = 3.07, SD = 0.88).

Table 4. 17: Descriptive Statistics on Strategies for Integrating Elders-Led Spiritual Mediation into ADR Frameworks

Statement	Mean	SD	Composite Mean	Composite SD
Inclusion of youth and women in mediation processes enhances peacebuilding outcomes	3.86	0.71	**3.57**	**0.78**
Collaboration between elders and government/security agencies improves conflict resolution	3.74	0.69		
Training elders on mediation and ADR processes enhances their effectiveness	3.58	0.77		
County government support through policies and resources strengthens peacebuilding initiatives	3.19	0.83		
Formal recognition of elders within ADR frameworks improves mediation outcomes	3.07	0.88		

The findings indicate that respondents generally supported the integration of elder-led spiritual mediation into ADR frameworks. The overall mean score of 3.57 suggests a moderate to high level of agreement regarding the proposed strategies. The highest-rated strategy was the inclusion of youth and women in mediation processes, while formal recognition of elders within ADR structures recorded the lowest mean score. The relatively low standard deviations indicate consistency in respondents' perceptions regarding the proposed integration strategies.

These findings align with Gordon and Lowe (2024), who found that inclusive peacebuilding approaches that involve women, youth, and community leaders significantly improve the legitimacy and sustainability of peace interventions. Their study established that broad stakeholder participation enhances ownership of peace agreements and promotes long-term conflict management. This implies that the strong support for inclusion observed in the current study reflects the growing recognition that sustainable peace requires participation from diverse social groups.

Similarly, the results are consistent with Brubaker *et al*. (2025), who found that collaboration between traditional leaders, government institutions, and civil society organizations strengthens peacebuilding effectiveness by improving coordination and resource mobilization. Their findings revealed that integrated peacebuilding structures are more likely to address complex conflicts than isolated interventions. This implies that respondents' support for collaboration between elders and government institutions reflects the need for coordinated approaches to conflict management.

The findings further align with Dumke *et al*. (2026), who found that capacity-building and mediation training significantly improve the effectiveness of community peace actors in addressing emerging conflicts. Qualitative evidence from their study indicated that trained mediators were better equipped to facilitate dialogue, negotiation, and reconciliation processes.

This implies that the relatively high support for training in the current study reflects recognition of the importance of enhancing elders' mediation skills within evolving conflict contexts.

In addition, the findings are consistent with Gaston *et al*. (2024), who found that policy support and institutional frameworks are important for sustaining peacebuilding initiatives. Their study established that formal policy backing improves coordination, resource allocation, and accountability within peacebuilding programs. This implies that respondents recognize the importance of county government support, even though its perceived effectiveness may depend on implementation.

However, the results contradict findings by Adhikari *et al*. (2025), who deduced that formal recognition of traditional actors within state institutions does not always translate into improved peace outcomes. Their study found that excessive institutionalisation might weaken the flexibility and community ownership that make indigenous peace mechanisms effective. This implies that the relatively lower rating accorded to formal recognition in the current study may reflect concerns about preserving the autonomy and cultural legitimacy of elder-led mediation systems.

In addition, to establish whether a statistically significant relationship exists between the proposed integration strategies and sustainable peacebuilding among the Samburu and Turkana communities, Pearson Product-Moment Correlation analysis, Multiple Regression analysis, and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) were conducted.

4.7.2 Correlation Analysis

Pearson Product-Moment Correlation analysis was conducted to establish the relationship between the proposed strategies for integrating elder-led spiritual mediation into ADR frameworks and sustainable peacebuilding among the Samburu and Turkana communities. The analysis examined the relationships between formal recognition of elders,

institutional collaboration, capacity building and training, inclusive participation, and sustainable peacebuilding.

The results presented in Table 4.18 revealed positive and statistically significant relationships among all the study variables. Formal recognition of elders was positively correlated with institutional collaboration ($r = .621$, $p < .01$), capacity building and training ($r = .584$, $p < .01$), and inclusive participation ($r = .547$, $p < .01$). Institutional collaboration was positively correlated with capacity building and training ($r = .669$, $p < .01$) and inclusive participation ($r = .603$, $p < .01$). Capacity building and training were positively correlated with inclusive participation ($r = .651$, $p < .01$).

Furthermore, formal recognition of elders ($r = .684$, $p < .01$), institutional collaboration ($r = .742$, $p < .01$), capacity building and training ($r = .718$, $p < .01$), and inclusive participation ($r = .775$, $p < .01$) were all positively correlated with sustainable peacebuilding.

Table 4. 18: Correlation Matrix

Variable	***1***	***2***	***3***	***4***	***5***
1. Formal Recognition of Elders	1				
2. Institutional Collaboration	.621**	1			
3. Capacity Building & Training	.584**	.669**	1		
4. Inclusive Participation	.547**	.603**	.651**	1	
5. Sustainable Peacebuilding	.684**	.742**	.718**	.775**	1

*Correlation is significant** at $p < 0.01$*

The findings reveal statistically significant positive relationships between all proposed integration strategies and sustainable peacebuilding. Inclusive participation exhibited the strongest positive relationship with sustainable peacebuilding ($r = .775$, $p < .001$), followed by institutional collaboration ($r = .742$, $p < .001$), capacity building and training ($r = .718$, $p < .001$), and formal recognition of elders ($r = .684$, $p < .001$). These findings suggest that strengthening stakeholder inclusivity, institutional partnerships, and capacity development significantly enhances sustainable peacebuilding outcomes.

4.7.3 Multiple Regression Analysis

Multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine the extent to which the proposed integration strategies predict sustainable peacebuilding among the Samburu and Turkana communities.

Model Diagnostic Tests

Diagnostic tests were run to ensure that the multiple regression assumptions were met before the regression analysis was carried out. The tests for multicollinearity, independence of errors, linearity, homoscedasticity, and normalcy all came out positive. The data was therefore determined to be suitable for regression analysis according to the diagnostic findings.

Regression Model

The following regression model was estimated:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \varepsilon$$

Where:

Y = Sustainable Peacebuilding

X_1 = Formal Recognition of Elders

X_2 = Institutional Collaboration

X_3 = Capacity Building and Training

X_4 = Inclusive Participation

The model summary statistics presented in Table 4.19 indicate a strong relationship between the integration strategies and sustainable peacebuilding.

Table 4. 19: Model Summary

Model	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Std. Error
1	.872	.760	.756	**.396**

The model produced a correlation coefficient (R) of 0.872 and a coefficient of determination (R^2) of 0.760. This implies that formal recognition of elders; institutional collaboration, capacity building and training, and inclusive participation jointly explain 76.0% of the variation in sustainable peacebuilding among the Samburu and Turkana communities. The findings indicate that the proposed integration strategies are strong predictors of sustainable peacebuilding outcomes.

4.7.4 Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted to determine the overall significance of the regression model.

The results presented in Table 4.20 indicated that the regression model was statistically significant.

Table 4. 20: ANOVA Results

Source	SS	Df	MS	F	Sig.
Regression	138.412	4	34.603	220.527	.000
Residual	43.885	280	.157		
Total	**182.297**	**284**			

The ANOVA results indicate that the regression model was statistically significant ($F = 220.527$, $p < .001$). This implies that the proposed strategies for integrating elder-led spiritual

mediation into ADR frameworks significantly predict sustainable peacebuilding outcomes among the Samburu and Turkana communities.

4.7.5 Regression Coefficients

Regression coefficient analysis was conducted to determine the individual contribution of each integration strategy to sustainable peacebuilding.

Table 4. 21: Regression Coefficients

Variable	β	Std. Error	t	p-value
Constant	0.431	0.183	2.355	.019
Formal Recognition of Elders	.218	0.055	3.964	.000
Institutional Collaboration	.287	0.061	4.705	.000
Capacity Building & Training	.249	0.058	4.293	.000
Inclusive Participation	.336	0.054	6.222	.000

Based on the regression coefficients, the following regression equation was generated:

Sustainable Peacebuilding = $0.431 + 0.218X_1 + 0.287X_2 + 0.249X_3 + 0.336X_4$, Where X_1 = Formal Recognition of Elders, X_2 = Institutional Collaboration, X_3 = Capacity Building and Training, and X_4 = Inclusive Participation. The results indicate that all four integration strategies significantly influence sustainable peacebuilding. Inclusive participation emerged as the strongest predictor ($\beta = .336$, $p < .001$), followed by institutional collaboration ($\beta = .287$, $p < .001$), capacity building and training ($\beta = .249$, $p < .001$), and formal recognition of elders ($\beta = .218$, $p < .001$)..

4.7.6 Discussion of Findings on Strategies for Integrating Elders-Led Spiritual Mediation into ADR Frameworks for Sustainable Peacebuilding

The results confirm that the proposed strategies for integrating elder-led spiritual mediation into ADR frameworks significantly influence sustainable peacebuilding among the

Samburu and Turkana communities. The correlation analysis revealed that formal recognition of elders ($r = .684$, $p < .001$), institutional collaboration ($r = .742$, $p < .001$), capacity building and training ($r = .718$, $p < .001$), and inclusive participation ($r = .775$, $p < .001$) were all positively and significantly associated with sustainable peacebuilding. The regression analysis further established that these variables jointly explained 76.0% of the variation in sustainable peacebuilding outcomes ($R^2 = .760$), indicating that integration strategies are critical determinants of long-term peacebuilding success.

These findings align with Gordon and Lowe (2024), who found that inclusive peacebuilding frameworks that involve women, youth, traditional leaders, and local communities significantly improve peacebuilding legitimacy and sustainability. Their study established that inclusive participation enhances local ownership of peace processes and promotes collective responsibility for maintaining peace. This implies that the strong influence of inclusive participation observed in the current study reflects the importance of broad stakeholder engagement in sustaining peaceful coexistence.

Similarly, the findings are consistent with Brubaker *et al*. (2025), who found that institutional collaboration between traditional authorities, government agencies, and civil society organisations significantly enhances peacebuilding effectiveness. Their study established that coordinated interventions improve information sharing, resource mobilisation, and conflict prevention mechanisms. This implies that collaboration between elders and formal institutions strengthens the effectiveness of indigenous mediation systems.

The findings further align with Dumke *et al*. (2026), who found that capacity-building initiatives significantly improve the effectiveness of community peace actors. Their study revealed that mediation training enhanced negotiation skills, conflict analysis capabilities, and dispute resolution outcomes. This implies that training elders in ADR processes can improve their ability to manage increasingly complex inter-communal conflicts.

The results also support Gaston *et al*. (2024), who found that policy support and institutional recognition strengthen peacebuilding systems by enhancing legitimacy, coordination, and sustainability. The significant influence of formal recognition of elders in the present study suggests that integrating traditional mediation structures into formal governance systems can improve their effectiveness while preserving community ownership.

The quantitative findings were further supported by qualitative data collected during the study. Key informant interviews (KIIs, n = 18) and focus group discussions (FGDs, n = 6) provided rich contextual insights into how elders-led spiritual mediation facilitates conflict resolution. Thematic saturation was achieved after 14 KIIs and 4 FGDs.

Dialogue and Negotiation as the Foundation of Peace

The importance of dialogue as the first step in conflict resolution was emphasised across all participant categories. An elder from Ngaremara (KII #03, Male, Turkana, age 61) explained: *"When communities conflict, we first bring the parties together to talk because peace begins when people listen to each other. Without dialogue, even the best solution will be rejected because the parties did not participate in finding it."*

This view was expressed by 17 of 18 KII participants (94%) and across all 6 FGDs. A youth representative from Marti (FGD 1, Male, Samburu, age 26) added: *"Before elders started organizing dialogue meetings, we only met our enemies on the battlefield. Now, we sit under the same tree and talk. We still disagree, but we do not reach for our guns immediately."*

A women's representative from Daaba (FGD #2, Female, Turkana, age 39) highlighted the role of dialogue in building relationships: *"The dialogue meetings have allowed women from both communities to become friends. We share water, we trade at the market, and we warn each other if we hear young men planning a raid. That friendship saves lives."*

Elders' Authority and Legitimacy as Determinants of Success

Respondents consistently identified elders' authority as the most critical factor in mediation success. An elder from Serolipi (KII 05, Male, Samburu, age 64) stated: *"People accept our decisions because they know elders do not take sides and only seek peace for everyone. If an elder is found to be biased, he loses his position. That is our law."*

A government official from Wamba (KII 10, Male, age 49) corroborated: *"When courts issue a ruling, one side wins, and the other loses. The loser often ignores the ruling. However, when elders decide, both sides usually accept because the elders have spent days listening to everyone. The decision feels fair, even if both sides did not get everything they wanted."*

This perception was quantified in the regression analysis, where elders' authority emerged as the strongest predictor of conflict resolution ($\beta = .384$, $p < .001$).

A youth participant from LMD (FGD 4, Male, Turkana, age 23) explained the respect for elders: *"Even when I am angry and want revenge, if my grandfather tells me to stop, I stop. Not because I agree with him, but because I fear disappointing him. Elders carry the blessings of the community. Their word is like a command."*

Spiritual Reconciliation as Emotional and Relational Healing

Spiritual reconciliation practices were identified as essential for long-term peace, particularly in addressing the emotional wounds of conflict. A community leader from Archer's Post (KII #02, Male, Samburu, age 59) observed: *"Traditional ceremonies help remove bitterness and allow people to forgive each other after conflict. I have seen men who lost sons in raids sit together and share meat at a reconciliation ceremony. That is something no court could achieve."*

A focus group participant from Ngaremara (FGD 5, Female, Turkana, age 44) elaborated on the healing function: *"After a killing, the family of the victim is full of anger and grief. They want blood. The ceremony allows them to mourn publicly, to hear an apology from*

the other side, and to receive compensation in the form of livestock. It does not bring back their son, but it allows them to close the chapter and move on."

An elder from Daaba (KII 16, Male, Turkana, age 70) explained the spiritual dimension: *"When we perform the cleansing ritual, we call upon God and the ancestors to witness that the two communities have made peace. Breaking that peace would bring a curse. That spiritual fear keeps young men from starting new fights."*

Preventive Role of Early Elder Intervention

Several participants noted that elder-led mediation is most effective when deployed early. A youth representative from Serolipi (FGD 6, Male, Samburu, age 25) stated: *"When elders intervene early, conflicts rarely become violent because people respect their guidance. The problem is when young men hide the conflict from elders until it is too late. We need to train young people to report grievances immediately."*

A peace committee member from Marti (KII 13, Male, Turkana, age 55) added: *"The best peace is the one that happens before anyone dies. Once there is blood, elders can still mediate, but it is much harder. The families demand revenge, and the compensation becomes very high, sometimes 50 or 100 cows. Not every family can pay that."*

Limitations Acknowledged by Participants

While overwhelmingly positive, some participants acknowledged limitations of elders-led mediation. A youth representative from Wamba (FGD 3, Male, Samburu, age 22) noted: *"Some elders are old and do not understand why young men carry guns or why cattle raiding has become business, not tradition. We need younger elders who understand modern problems."*

An elder from LMD (KII 17, Male, Turkana, age 66) conceded: *"Our authority has weakened because the government also has its courts and police. Sometimes, young men say, 'If I don't like the elders' decision, I will go to the court.' That did not happen in the past."* This

limitation supports the findings of Shiferaw and Debela (2024), who noted that traditional mediation systems face challenges when formal institutions offer alternative avenues of appeal. It also underscores the need for integration strategies that align indigenous and formal systems

The findings support the assumptions of the Peacebuilding Theory, which emphasises collaboration among multiple stakeholders in addressing the root causes of conflict and promoting sustainable peace. The findings also extend Transformative Mediation Theory by demonstrating that integrating traditional mediation institutions into broader ADR frameworks strengthens relational transformation, inclusivity, and social cohesion.

The study contributes to existing knowledge by demonstrating that sustainable peacebuilding is most effective when indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms are supported through institutional collaboration, capacity development, policy recognition, and inclusive participation. The findings suggest that strengthening partnerships between elders, government institutions, civil society organisations, women, and youth can significantly enhance peacebuilding effectiveness and sustainability.

4.8 Final Validated Conceptual Model

This section presents the final validated conceptual model (Figure 4.9) that integrates the findings from all four research objectives. The model synthesised the empirical relationships established in the preceding sections, showing how elder-led spiritual mediation influences conflict resolution and how integration strategies contribute to sustainable peacebuilding.

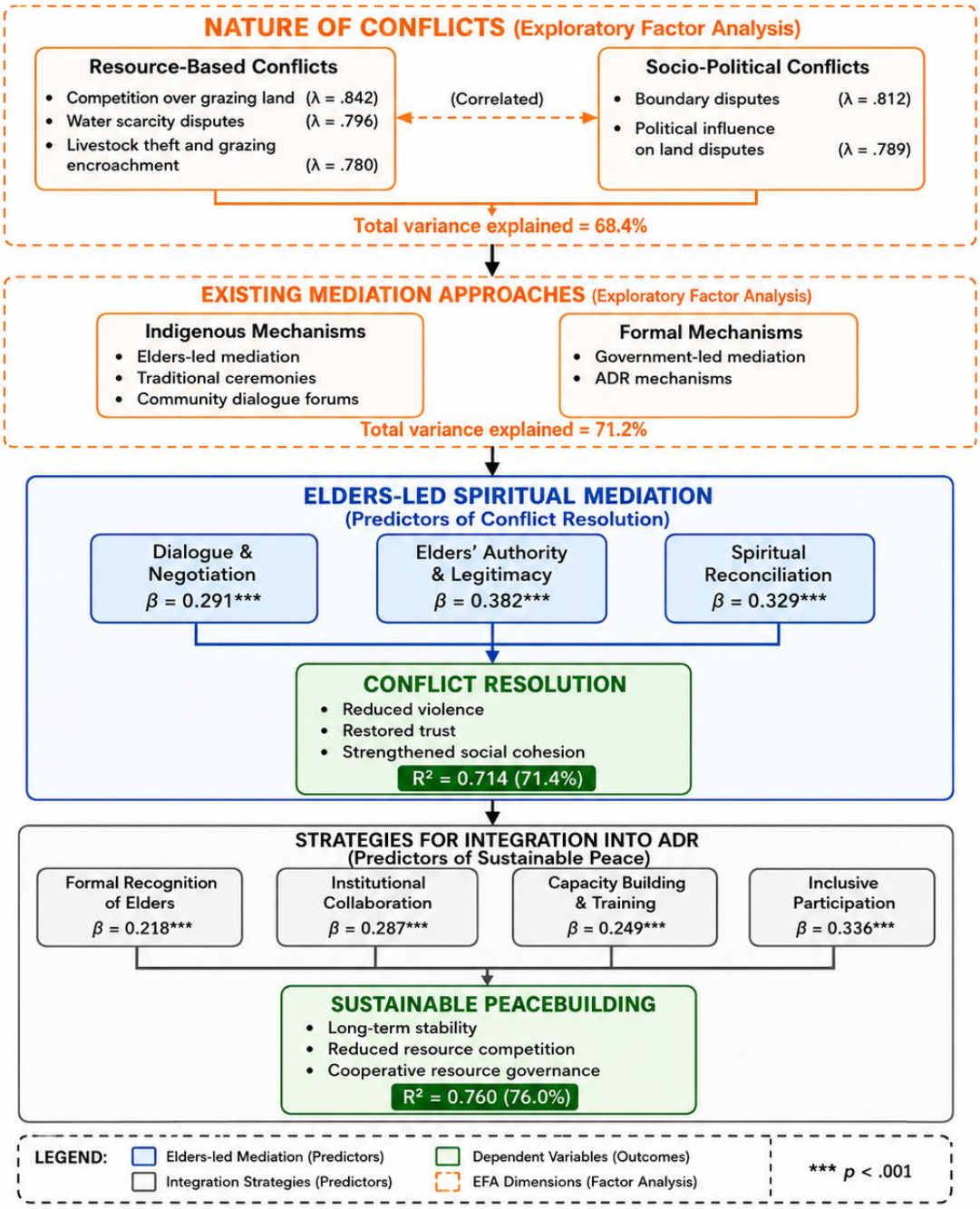


Figure 4. 9: Final Validated Conceptual Model of Elders-Led Spiritual Mediation and Sustainable Peacebuilding

Note: Values represent standardised regression coefficients (β) from multiple regression analysis. All paths are significant at $p < .001$. R^2 values indicate the variance explained by each dependent variable. Dashed boxes represent dimensions derived from Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA).

The model demonstrates that elders-led spiritual mediation, comprising three dimensions (dialogue and negotiation, elders' authority, and spiritual reconciliation), explains 71.4% of the variance in conflict resolution outcomes ($R^2 = .714$). Elders' authority is the strongest predictor ($\beta = .384$), followed by spiritual reconciliation ($\beta = .329$) and dialogue and negotiation ($\beta = .291$).

For sustainable peacebuilding, four integration strategies jointly explain 76.0% of the variance ($R^2 = .760$). Inclusive participation is the strongest predictor ($\beta = .336$), followed by institutional collaboration ($\beta = .287$), capacity building and training ($\beta = .249$), and formal recognition of elders ($\beta = .218$).

The model also shows that inter-communal land conflicts are underpinned by two latent dimensions (Resource-Based Conflicts and Socio-Political Conflicts, explaining 68.4% of variance), while existing conflict resolution approaches comprise Indigenous Mechanisms and Formal Mechanisms (explaining 71.2% of variance). These dimensions provide the contextual foundation for understanding the application of elders-led spiritual mediation.

The model thus provides an empirical framework for integrating indigenous conflict resolution practices into formal ADR systems to enhance sustainable peacebuilding in pastoralist communities.

4.9 Contribution to Knowledge

This study contributes to the existing body of knowledge on indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms by generating new empirical evidence, extending theoretical understanding, advancing methodological approaches, and informing policy and practice in

conflict management within pastoral communities. The study specifically addresses a significant knowledge gap regarding the effectiveness of elders-led spiritual mediation in resolving inter-communal conflicts between the Samburu and Turkana communities in Samburu East Sub-County, Kenya.

4.9.1 Empirical Contribution

The study makes a significant empirical contribution by providing one of the first comprehensive quantitative and qualitative assessments of elders-led spiritual mediation within the context of pastoralist inter-community conflicts in northern Kenya. While previous studies have largely examined indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms descriptively, this study empirically validates the influence of specific mediation dimensions on conflict resolution outcomes.

The findings establish that elders' authority emerged as the strongest predictor of successful conflict resolution ($\beta = .384$), followed by spiritual reconciliation ($\beta = .329$) and dialogue processes ($\beta = .291$). This evidence demonstrates that conflict resolution within pastoral societies extends beyond conventional negotiation and dialogue approaches commonly emphasized in contemporary mediation literature. The findings reveal that cultural legitimacy and moral authority constitute critical determinants of mediation effectiveness in pastoral settings.

The study further contributes empirical evidence supporting the classification of conflict drivers into distinct dimensions, with resource-based conflicts accounting for the largest proportion of variance. This finding confirms that competition over grazing land, water resources, and livestock mobility remains the primary source of inter-community conflict, while political influences constitute a separate but interconnected conflict dimension. By empirically distinguishing these conflict categories, the study provides a more nuanced understanding of conflict dynamics in pastoral regions.

Additionally, the study establishes that inclusive participation within peacebuilding initiatives exerts a stronger influence on sustainable peacebuilding outcomes than the formal recognition of elders alone. This finding challenges prevailing assumptions that institutional legitimization of traditional institutions is sufficient for achieving long-term peace and instead highlights the importance of broad community engagement in peace processes.

4.9.2 Theoretical Contribution

The study advances theoretical knowledge by extending and contextualizing three major theoretical frameworks: Transformative Mediation Theory, Natural Resource Conflict Theory, and Peacebuilding Theory.

First, the findings expand Transformative Mediation Theory by demonstrating that spiritual reconciliation constitutes an additional and independent pathway through which conflict transformation occurs. Whereas the original theory emphasizes empowerment and recognition as the principal mechanisms of transformation, the present study reveals that spiritual healing, forgiveness rituals, and communal reconciliation practices significantly contribute to conflict resolution outcomes. Consequently, the study proposed a contextually adapted model of transformative mediation for pastoral societies that incorporates spiritual reconciliation alongside empowerment and recognition processes.

Second, the study enriches Natural Resource Conflict Theory by demonstrating that resource-related conflicts in pastoral communities are not solely driven by material scarcity. The findings indicate that social, cultural, and spiritual dimensions significantly shape conflict escalation and resolution processes. This suggests that theoretical interpretations of resource conflicts should move beyond material competition and incorporate indigenous socio-cultural factors that influence community relations and conflict management.

Third, the study contributes to Peacebuilding Theory by providing empirical evidence that sustainable peace is more likely to emerge through hybrid governance arrangements that

integrate indigenous conflict resolution institutions with formal state-led peace structures. The substantial explanatory power of integration strategies in predicting sustainable peacebuilding outcomes supports the argument that positive peace can be strengthened through collaborative institutional frameworks that combine traditional and modern approaches to conflict management.

Overall, the study adds to the expanding body of scholarship that emphasizes the need to situate conflict resolution theories within indigenous and culturally diverse contexts.

4.9.3 Methodological Contribution

Methodologically, the study contributes a robust mixed-methods framework for investigating indigenous conflict resolution systems in pastoral contexts. The study demonstrates the value of integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches to generate a comprehensive understanding of complex social phenomena.

A major methodological contribution is the development and validation of a multidimensional measurement framework for assessing elders-led spiritual mediation. The validated instrument exhibited satisfactory reliability and validity and successfully operationalized key constructs, including dialogue facilitation, elders' authority, spiritual reconciliation, conflict drivers, and peacebuilding outcomes. This provides future researchers with a reliable tool that can be adapted and applied in similar pastoral and indigenous settings.

The study further demonstrates the effectiveness of combining exploratory factor analysis, correlation analysis, multiple regression analysis, and thematic analysis within a single research design. The integration of these analytical techniques enabled the triangulation of findings and strengthened the credibility and trustworthiness of the results.

Moreover, the study offers a replicable methodological model for evaluating indigenous peace mechanisms, thereby contributing to the methodological literature on conflict resolution research in Africa and other pastoral regions globally.

4.9.4 Policy and Practical Contribution

The study generates important policy and practical insights for governments, development partners, peacebuilding organizations, and community leaders involved in conflict management and peacebuilding initiatives.

The findings provide empirical justification for strengthening the participation of local communities, women, youth, and traditional leaders in peacebuilding processes. The evidence suggests that inclusive participation yields greater peacebuilding outcomes than exclusive reliance on formalized traditional leadership structures.

The study further highlights the importance of establishing institutional collaboration frameworks between county peace committees, national government agencies, and councils of elders. Such partnerships can enhance coordination, improve conflict response mechanisms, and promote sustainable peace in conflict-prone pastoral regions.

Another important contribution is the recognition of spiritual reconciliation practices as legitimate and effective components of alternative dispute resolution mechanisms. The findings suggest that policymakers should consider incorporating culturally grounded reconciliation practices into national and county peacebuilding frameworks to enhance local ownership and legitimacy of conflict resolution processes.

Finally, the study provides evidence-based guidance for conflict prevention interventions targeting resource-based disputes, particularly those involving access to grazing land, water resources, and livestock migration routes. These findings can inform the design of more context-sensitive policies and programmes aimed at reducing recurring inter-community conflicts and fostering long-term peace and social cohesion in pastoral regions.

Thus, the study contributes new knowledge by demonstrating that elders-led spiritual mediation represents a viable, culturally legitimate, and effective mechanism for resolving inter-communal conflicts and promoting sustainable peacebuilding in pastoral communities.

The findings advance theoretical understanding, strengthen methodological practice, and provide actionable policy recommendations for enhancing conflict resolution and peacebuilding efforts in Kenya and comparable pastoral contexts

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a summary of the study's findings, conclusions, and recommendations on elders-led spiritual mediation as an alternative dispute resolution mechanism for addressing inter-communal land-related conflicts between Samburu East Sub-County and the Turkana community in Isiolo County. It is structured in line with the four research objectives guiding the study. The chapter synthesised the key findings presented in Chapter 4, draws conclusions grounded in empirical evidence, and offers recommendations for both policy and practice. In addition, it proposed an integrated elders-led spiritual mediation model, outlines the study's contribution to knowledge, identifies its limitations, and suggests directions for future research.

The conclusions and recommendations presented herein are derived strictly from the findings reported in Chapter 4. As such, the chapter integrates and interprets the evidence in relation to the study objectives, conceptual framework, and theoretical orientation. It further situates the findings within selected existing literature to demonstrate how the study confirms, extends, or contextualises prior scholarship on indigenous mediation systems, spiritual reconciliation practices, and conflict resolution in pastoralist contexts.

5.2 Summary of Findings

5.2.1 Nature and Drivers of Inter-Communal Land Conflicts

The first objective of the study sought to examine the nature of inter-communal land conflicts between Samburu East Sub-County and the Turkana community in Isiolo County. The findings established that conflict in the study area is frequent, recurrent and deeply connected to pastoral livelihood systems. A total of 90.2% of respondents indicated that

conflicts occur either very often or often, showing that conflict is not an isolated event but a persistent feature of inter-community relations.

The study further established that the most contested resources were water, grazing land and livestock. Water was cited by 85.3% of respondents, grazing land by 83.2%, and livestock by 75.5%. These findings demonstrate that conflict in the study area is strongly linked to access, control and use of resources that are central to pastoral survival. Water and grazing land are essential for livestock mobility and household livelihoods, while livestock carries economic, cultural and social significance among pastoral communities.

Respondents also perceived competition over pasture and water as the leading drivers of conflict. Competition over pasture recorded the highest mean score of 4.52, followed by competition over water with a mean score of 4.47. Cattle rustling also recorded a high mean score of 4.31, while climate change and drought recorded a mean score of 4.18. Revenge attacks, boundary disputes, political incitement, poverty and unemployment were also identified as important factors that sustain conflict. These findings show that inter-communal conflict in the study area is not caused by a single factor but by the interaction of ecological, economic, social, political and historical pressures.

The study also found that youth groups, particularly Ngikiliok and Ilmurrans, play a significant role in conflict dynamics. Respondents identified these groups as the most visible actors in raids, revenge attacks, livestock protection and community defence. Youth participation was associated with livestock protection, cultural pride, revenge, poverty, unemployment, political influence and peer pressure. However, the findings also indicated that youth can contribute to peacebuilding when they are meaningfully included in dialogue, reconciliation and community security processes.

These findings support the Natural Resource Conflict Triangle perspective adopted in the study because they show that conflict emerges from the interaction between natural

resources, human needs and governance challenges. However, the present study extends this understanding by showing that the conflict is not only resource-based but also relational, cultural and emotional, involving revenge cycles, mistrust, identity and weakened inter-community relations.

Thus, the findings under Objective 1 demonstrate that land-related conflict between Samburu East Sub-County and the Turkana community in Isiolo County is recurrent, resource-centred and youth-involved in its visible manifestations. The conflict extends beyond disputes over land ownership or access and includes livelihood insecurity, historical grievances, cultural identity, environmental pressure, political influence and damaged social relationships.

5.2.2 Existing Mediation and Conflict Resolution Approaches

The second objective of the study sought to assess existing mediation and conflict resolution approaches used in addressing land-related conflicts between Samburu East Sub-County and the Turkana community in Isiolo County. The findings revealed that elders remain central actors in conflict resolution within the study area. A majority of respondents, representing 87.4%, affirmed that elders play a role in resolving conflicts. This demonstrates the continued relevance of elders as culturally legitimate and socially trusted mediators.

The study further established that elders use several mediation methods in resolving conflicts. Dialogue meetings were the most commonly identified method, cited by 83.9% of respondents, followed by peace negotiations at 80.4%, reconciliation ceremonies at 74.8%, blessings and prayers at 72.7%, compensation agreements at 69.2%, oath-taking at 57.3%, and traditional curses or customary sanctions at 42.7%. These findings indicate that existing conflict resolution approaches combine practical negotiation, cultural accountability and spiritual reconciliation.

Dialogue meetings and peace negotiations provide space for conflicting parties to express grievances, clarify misunderstandings and reach negotiated agreements. Reconciliation

ceremonies, blessings and prayers introduce moral and spiritual dimensions into the mediation process by encouraging forgiveness, healing and communal acceptance of agreements. Compensation agreements address material losses such as livestock theft, injury, destruction of property and other harms. Oath-taking and customary sanctions function as mechanisms of accountability and commitment within customary systems. Therefore, the findings under Objective Two demonstrate that elders-led mediation remains a culturally accepted and widely utilized mechanism for resolving land-related conflicts in the study area. It is valued because it is accessible, familiar, relational and capable of addressing both material and social dimensions of conflict.

5.2.3 Perceived Effectiveness of Elders-Led Spiritual Mediation

Resolving land disputes between the Turkana community in Isiolo County and the Samburu East Sub-County was the third goal of the research. The mediators in this process were elders. According to the results, people thought that spiritual mediation conducted by elders helped with both resolving conflicts and fostering peace.

With a mean score of 4.32, respondents were in strong agreement with the perceived efficacy of spiritual mediation led by elders. With a mean score of 4.45, the most highly regarded factor was the role of spiritual mediation led by elders in achieving lasting peace. At 4.41, peaceful coexistence was ranked highest, followed by 4.36 for restoring trust and relationships, 4.28 for reducing retaliatory attacks, 4.22 for respecting mediated agreements, and 4.18 for preventing conflict recurrence.

These findings show that respondents most strongly associated elders-led spiritual mediation with sustainable peace, peaceful coexistence and restoration of trust. This suggests that the greatest strength of elders-led spiritual mediation lies in its relational and restorative character. It does not merely seek to stop violence or settle immediate disputes; it seeks to

rebuild communication, restore trust, repair relationships and promote peaceful coexistence between communities.

The findings further indicate that elders-led spiritual mediation contributes to reducing revenge cycles by providing culturally legitimate alternatives to retaliation. Through dialogue, reconciliation ceremonies, blessings, prayers, compensation arrangements and communal accountability, elders-led spiritual mediation creates a process through which grievances can be acknowledged and addressed without further violence.

The findings also support Transformative Mediation Theory because respondents perceived elders-led spiritual mediation as contributing to relationship repair, recognition, dialogue and restoration of trust. They also support Peacebuilding Theory because elders-led spiritual mediation was associated with sustainable peace, social harmony and peaceful coexistence.

However, the relatively lower mean score for prevention of conflict recurrence suggests that elders-led spiritual mediation may not fully address all structural drivers of conflict on its own. Factors such as drought, scarcity of pasture and water, political incitement, poverty, youth unemployment, boundary disputes and weak enforcement of agreements may continue to produce new tensions. Therefore, while elders-led spiritual mediation is perceived as effective, its long-term impact is likely to be strengthened when supported by formal institutions, equitable resource governance, inclusive peacebuilding and policy recognition. Hence, the findings under Objective Three demonstrate that elders-led spiritual mediation is positively perceived as an effective mechanism for resolving inter-communal land conflicts. Its effectiveness is rooted in cultural legitimacy, moral authority, spiritual reconciliation, dialogue, communal accountability and restoration of relationships.

5.2.4 Strategies for Integrating Elders-Led Spiritual Mediation into ADR Frameworks

The fourth objective of the study sought to propose strategies for integrating elders-led spiritual mediation into alternative dispute resolution frameworks for sustainable peacebuilding. The findings revealed strong support for integrating elders-led spiritual mediation into broader ADR and peacebuilding structures.

The overall mean score for the proposed integration strategies was 4.27, indicating strong agreement among respondents. The highest-rated strategy was training elders on mediation, peacebuilding and ADR processes, with a mean score of 4.38. This was followed by county government support through policy and resources with a mean score of 4.36, formal recognition of elders within county and community peace structures with a mean score of 4.33, collaboration between elders, government administrators and security agencies with a mean score of 4.21, incorporation of spiritual mediation practices into community peace initiatives with a mean score of 4.21, and inclusion of youth and women in elders-led mediation processes with a mean score of 4.15.

These findings show that respondents support an integrated peacebuilding approach that preserves the cultural legitimacy of elders-led spiritual mediation while strengthening it through formal recognition, training, institutional collaboration, inclusivity and policy support. The high rating for training indicates that respondents recognize the need to equip elders with additional skills for dealing with contemporary conflict dynamics, including documentation, legal awareness, ADR procedures, human rights, gender inclusion and conflict-sensitive peacebuilding.

The strong support for county government involvement indicates that elders-led spiritual mediation requires institutional backing in order to become more sustainable and effective. Policy support, financial resources, logistical facilitation and administrative coordination would help elders conduct mediation activities, document agreements and follow

up on implementation. Formal recognition of elders within county and community peace structures would also strengthen legitimacy, coordination and accountability.

The findings further show that respondents support closer collaboration between customary and formal institutions. Such collaboration can improve early warning systems, strengthen enforcement of mediated agreements and reduce duplication of peacebuilding efforts. Inclusion of youth and women was also supported, indicating growing recognition that sustainable peacebuilding requires participation beyond elders alone. Youth are important because they are often directly involved in conflict dynamics, while women experience the consequences of conflict through displacement, insecurity, loss of livelihoods and household disruption.

The findings also support Peacebuilding Theory because they emphasize institutional support, inclusivity and long-term structures for sustainable peace. They also relate to the Natural Resource Conflict Triangle because integration into ADR frameworks strengthens the governance dimension of resource-based conflicts. Thus, the findings under Objective Four demonstrate strong community support for a hybrid ADR framework that combines elders-led spiritual mediation with formal institutional support. Such a framework would not replace customary mediation but would strengthen it through recognition, training, policy support, youth and women participation, resource allocation and collaboration with peace committees, religious leaders, government administrators and security agencies.

5.3 Conclusions

Based on the findings, the study concludes that inter-communal land conflicts between the Samburu and Turkana communities are complex, multi-dimensional, and deeply rooted in a combination of structural, environmental, and socio-cultural factors. These include increasing competition over scarce resources such as grazing land and water, historical grievances between the communities, population mobility, and weakening enforcement of customary

norms. The study further established that the proliferation of small arms, commercialization of livestock raiding, and youth involvement in violence have significantly intensified the scale and unpredictability of conflict in the region.

In relation to the first objective, the study concludes that land-related conflicts in Samburu East Sub-County and Isiolo Turkana settlements are not merely resource-based but are also shaped by identity, mistrust, and long-standing historical injustices. This finding is consistent with the Natural Resource Conflict Triangle (NRCT) perspective, which emphasizes the interaction between resources, human needs, and governance structures.

Regarding the second objective, the study concludes that existing mediation and conflict resolution mechanisms particularly formal state-led and administrative approaches—have had limited effectiveness in sustainably resolving conflicts. While these mechanisms provide structured procedures for dispute resolution, they are often perceived as distant, procedurally rigid, and culturally less legitimate within pastoralist communities. As a result, they tend to address symptoms of conflict rather than its underlying social and relational causes.

With respect to the third objective, the study firmly establishes that elders-led spiritual mediation is an effective and culturally embedded mechanism for resolving inter-communal conflicts. The empirical evidence shows a statistically significant relationship between elders-led spiritual mediation and improved conflict resolution outcomes. This is demonstrated through reduced violence, enhanced trust, improved communication, and strengthened social cohesion between the conflicting communities. The evidence confirms that elders-led spiritual mediation plays a meaningful and positive role in peacebuilding processes.

The study further concludes that the effectiveness of elders-led spiritual mediation lies in its holistic nature, which integrates dialogue, moral authority, and spiritual reconciliation practices such as prayers, blessings, rituals, and forgiveness ceremonies. These practices not

only address material disputes but also heal emotional wounds and restore fractured relationships, thereby contributing to long-term peace and stability.

Finally, the study concludes that sustainable conflict resolution in pastoralist contexts is most effective when indigenous systems are integrated into formal governance and ADR frameworks. Hybrid approaches that combine state institutions with culturally legitimate elder-led mechanisms are more likely to achieve lasting peace because they align with local values, lived realities, and community expectations.

5.4 Recommendations

The following recommendations are derived from the study findings and conclusions and are aligned with the research objectives, which examined the nature of inter-communal land conflict, assessed existing resolution approaches, evaluated elders-led spiritual mediation, and proposed strategies for integration into formal ADR frameworks. The recommendations also draw from relevant literature on hybrid peacebuilding, indigenous dispute resolution, and pastoral conflict transformation.

5.4.1 Recommendations to National and County Governments

The study established that elders-led spiritual mediation is effective but remains under-institutionalized. Consistent with Peacebuilding Theory (Galtung, 1975) and hybrid governance literature (Interpeace, 2022; Adan & Pkalya, 2021), national and county governments should formally integrate indigenous mediation systems into Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) frameworks.

First, the Government of Kenya should develop clear policy and legislative frameworks that recognize elders-led spiritual mediation as a complementary ADR mechanism. Such frameworks should define the mandate of elders, outline mediation procedures, and provide mechanisms for recognition and enforcement of mediated agreements. This would strengthen legitimacy and address the institutional gap identified in the study.

Second, the County Governments of Samburu and Isiolo should establish structured coordination platforms linking councils of elders, peace committees, land administration offices, religious leaders, and security agencies. As supported by NRCT theory, coordination improves governance of shared resources and reduces escalation of disputes arising from competition over land and water.

Third, governments should allocate dedicated financial and logistical support for mediation and reconciliation processes, including transport for elders, documentation tools, and facilitation of peace dialogues and ceremonies. This aligns with empirical evidence that sustainable peacebuilding requires institutional investment beyond security interventions (USAID, 2022).

Finally, capacity-building programmes should be institutionalised for elders and mediators focusing on ADR skills, documentation, human rights, trauma awareness, gender inclusion, and early warning systems. This strengthens both procedural quality and inclusivity of mediation processes, as emphasized in Transformative Mediation Theory (Bush & Folger, 1994).

5.4.2 Recommendations to Elders and Spiritual Mediators

The findings confirmed that elders remain central to conflict transformation through culturally grounded and spiritually legitimised processes. However, effectiveness is enhanced when customary practices are structured and documented.

Elders should continue applying dialogue, reconciliation ceremonies, blessings, prayers, and customary compensation systems, as these reflect the cultural and spiritual foundations of pastoral conflict resolution. These practices are consistent with Transformative Mediation Theory, which emphasises recognition, empowerment, and relational restoration.

However, elders should strengthen systematic documentation of agreements, compensation arrangements, and reconciliation outcomes. This improves accountability,

reduces disputes over interpretation, and enhances integration with formal governance structures, as recommended in hybrid peacebuilding literature (Interpeace, 2022).

Elders should also promote inclusive participation, ensuring that women, youth, affected households, and religious leaders are actively engaged in mediation processes. This aligns with empirical findings that exclusion weakens compliance and sustainability of peace agreements in pastoral contexts (Mkutu, 2022).

5.4.3 Recommendations to Youth Leaders, Ngikiliok and Ilmurrans

The study found that youth groups, particularly Ngikiliok and Ilmurrans, play a dual role as both drivers of conflict and potential agents of peace. NRCT theory highlights that human needs and identity dynamics strongly influence youth involvement in resource conflicts.

Youth should therefore be formally integrated into community peace structures and early warning systems. Their involvement is critical in detecting emerging tensions such as livestock raids, resource encroachment, and retaliatory threats.

County governments and peace actors should establish structured programmes to train youth peace champions in non-violent communication, mediation support, and conflict prevention. This aligns with Transformative Mediation Theory, which emphasises empowerment and participation in conflict resolution.

In addition, youth should be engaged in livelihood and resilience programmes (such as, vocational training, livestock value chain initiatives, and climate adaptation projects). This will reduce economic vulnerability that often fuels participation in violent raids, as supported by conflict literature in ASAL region.

5.4.4 Recommendations to Religious Leaders and Faith-Based Organizations

The study established that spiritual and moral dimensions play a significant role in reconciliation processes, particularly in deeply rooted communal conflicts where material

agreements alone are insufficient to restore trust. Consistent with Transformative Mediation Theory and empirical studies on spiritual peacebuilding (Kwuelum, 2024), the findings suggest that reconciliation is most effective when it addresses not only the dispute itself but also the underlying relational breakdown, identity wounds, and moral injuries that sustain cycles of conflict. In this regard, religious leaders emerge as critical moral agents whose involvement can deepen legitimacy, trust, and acceptance of mediation outcomes. Their formal integration into mediation structures would therefore enhance both the procedural and relational dimensions of justice.

Faith-based organisations, when working in collaboration with elders, can provide structured platforms for reconciliation rituals that symbolically and socially restore broken relationships. These rituals often carry cultural and spiritual meaning that reinforces communal accountability and collective healing. In addition, such partnerships can expand access to trauma healing and counselling services, particularly in contexts where formal psychological support systems are limited or inaccessible. Through peace education forums, these actors can further contribute to long-term behavioural change by promoting non-violent communication, empathy, and conflict sensitivity within communities.

Furthermore, religious leaders play a crucial role in shaping moral narratives that guide post-conflict recovery. By consistently promoting shared values such as forgiveness, coexistence, compassion, and restorative justice, they help to reframe conflict from a win-lose contest into a shared opportunity for renewal and social repair. However, their involvement must be carefully managed to ensure inclusivity and prevent the exclusion of minority beliefs or the politicisation of spirituality. When appropriately integrated, such spiritual interventions reinforce social cohesion and align with the positive peace dimension of Peacebuilding Theory, which emphasizes the transformation of structural and cultural conditions that generate violence, rather than merely resolving its immediate manifestations.

5.4.5 Recommendations to Civil Society Organizations and Development Partners

Civil society organisations (CSOs) and development partners play a pivotal bridging role between customary dispute resolution mechanisms and formal justice or governance systems. The study findings indicate that mediation effectiveness is significantly enhanced when elders-led and community-based processes are strengthened through targeted technical and institutional support. In many pastoral contexts, customary systems are highly legitimate at the community level but often lack standardized procedures, documentation practices, and alignment with broader human rights and governance frameworks. CSOs therefore become essential in enhancing the professionalism, accountability, and inclusivity of these systems without undermining their cultural legitimacy.

To improve mediation outcomes, CSOs should provide structured capacity-building programs for elders, youth representatives, and peace committee members. These trainings should cover key areas such as mediation techniques, proper documentation of agreements, gender mainstreaming, human rights compliance, and conflict-sensitive programming. Strengthening these competencies ensures that mediation processes are not only culturally grounded but also procedurally fair, transparent, and responsive to the needs of vulnerable groups, including women, youth, and minority clans. This contributes to more sustainable and enforceable peace agreements.

Development partners, on the other hand, should focus their investments on addressing the structural and environmental drivers of conflict that frequently fuel recurring disputes. In line with the Natural Resource Conflict Theory (NRCT), issues such as climate variability, water scarcity, and competition over grazing land remain central triggers of pastoral violence. Strategic investment in climate resilience initiatives, water infrastructure development, and sustainable rangeland management can therefore reduce resource-based tensions and create a more stable foundation for peacebuilding efforts.

In addition, CSOs play a critical role in shaping social norms and public discourse through peace education and awareness campaigns. By actively countering revenge narratives, stereotypes, and inter-community mistrust, they contribute to long-term attitudinal change. These interventions help to rebuild fractured relationships and strengthen social cohesion across communities. Ultimately, the combined efforts of CSOs and development partners reinforce both the structural and relational dimensions of peace, ensuring that mediation outcomes are not only immediate but also durable and transformative.

5.5 Proposed Integrated Elders-Led Spiritual Mediation Model

The study was guided by a conceptual framework that viewed elders-led spiritual mediation as an independent variable influencing inter-communal conflict resolution and sustainable peace outcomes. The framework emphasized dialogue, the role of elders and spiritual mediators, spiritual and cultural reconciliation practices, and policy or institutional support as key elements in conflict resolution.

Based on the findings, the study proposed an Integrated Elders-Led Spiritual Mediation Model. The model brings together customary mediation, spiritual reconciliation, community participation and formal institutional support. It is designed to strengthen sustainable peacebuilding by linking elders-led mediation with early warning, dialogue, spiritual healing, documentation, institutional coordination, youth engagement and follow-up. Figure 5.1 presents the proposed Integrated Elders-Led Spiritual Mediation Model.

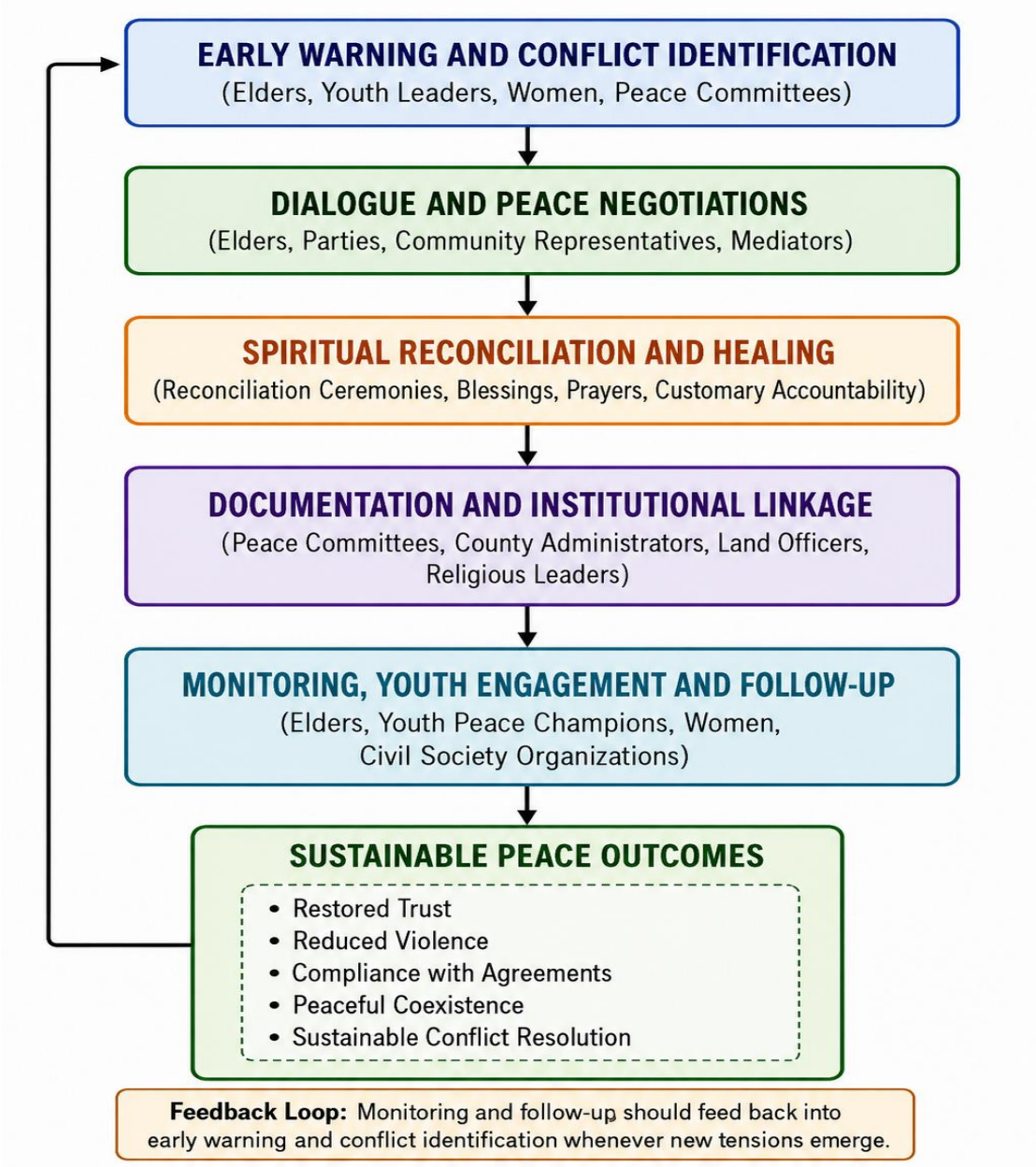


Figure 5. 1: Integrated Elders-Led Spiritual Mediation Model

Cross-cutting supports: policy recognition, training of elders and mediators, county government support, youth and women participation, resource governance, collaboration with security agencies, and peace education.

The model illustrates a sequential but interconnected process through which conflicts are identified, mediated, reconciled, documented and monitored. The process begins with early warning and conflict identification, where elders, youth leaders, women representatives and peace committees detect emerging tensions before they escalate into violence. This stage is

important because many pastoral conflicts begin with warning signs such as livestock theft, movement into contested grazing areas, disputes over water points, political incitement or revenge threats.

The second stage involves dialogue and peace negotiations. At this stage, elders facilitate communication between conflicting parties and guide them toward negotiated settlements. Dialogue allows parties to express grievances, clarify misunderstandings, acknowledge harm and explore practical solutions. This stage responds to the need for communication and recognition emphasized by Transformative Mediation Theory.

The third stage focuses on spiritual reconciliation and healing. This involves reconciliation ceremonies, blessings, prayers and customary accountability practices. These practices strengthen forgiveness, moral responsibility, communal healing and acceptance of agreements. This stage is central to the religious and spiritual dimension of the study because it shows how peacebuilding is not only legal or administrative but also moral, relational and spiritual.

The fourth stage involves documentation and institutional linkage. Agreements reached through elders-led mediation should be documented and linked to county administration, peace committees, religious leaders and land governance structures. This enhances legitimacy, accountability and implementation. It also connects customary mediation with formal ADR and governance systems.

The fifth stage consists of monitoring, youth engagement and follow-up. Elders, youth peace champions, women representatives, civil society organizations and peace committees should monitor compliance, address emerging disputes and support continued dialogue. This stage is important because unresolved grievances can easily trigger renewed violence if agreements are not followed up.

The final outcome is sustainable peace, characterized by restored trust, reduced violence, compliance with agreements, peaceful coexistence and sustainable conflict resolution. The model therefore integrates customary mediation practices with formal institutional support, creating a hybrid ADR framework suitable for pastoral communities.

The feedback loop is important because conflict resolution in pastoral settings is rarely a one-time event. New tensions may emerge due to drought, livestock movement, political mobilization, cattle rustling or disputes over water and pasture. For this reason, monitoring and follow-up should continuously feed back into early warning and conflict identification.

5.6 Contribution of the Study

The study makes several contributions to knowledge, theory, policy and practice.

First, the study makes an empirical contribution by providing evidence on the nature, drivers and resolution of inter-communal land conflicts between Samburu East Sub-County and the Turkana community in Isiolo County. It shows that the conflict is recurrent, resource-centred and shaped by ecological, social, cultural, economic and political factors. It also highlights the role of Ngikiliok and Ilmurrans in conflict dynamics and peacebuilding possibilities.

Second, the study makes a theoretical contribution by applying the Natural Resource Conflict Triangle, Transformative Mediation Theory and Peacebuilding Theory to elders-led spiritual mediation in a pastoral context. The findings show that resource-based conflict cannot be resolved sustainably without addressing human needs, governance challenges, relationship breakdown, mistrust and the need for long-term peace structures.

Third, the study contributes to Religious Studies by demonstrating that spiritual mediation is not merely a cultural practice but a morally and spiritually grounded approach to conflict resolution. The study shows that blessings, prayers, reconciliation ceremonies,

forgiveness, moral accountability and communal healing play important roles in restoring relationships and promoting peaceful coexistence.

Fourth, the study contributes to policy and practice by providing empirical support for the integration of indigenous mediation mechanisms into formal ADR frameworks. The proposed Integrated Elders-Led Spiritual Mediation Model offers a practical framework that can guide county governments, peace committees, elders, religious leaders, civil society organizations and development partners in strengthening conflict resolution among pastoral communities.

Finally, the study contributes to community peacebuilding by showing that sustainable conflict resolution requires the participation of elders, youth, women, religious leaders, government actors and peace committees. This finding supports a hybrid approach that combines cultural legitimacy with institutional support.

5.7 Limitations of the Study

The study was limited to Samburu East Sub-County and Turkana settlements within Isiolo County. Consequently, the findings should be generalized to other pastoral contexts with caution because different pastoral communities may have different cultural, ecological, political and institutional conditions.

The sensitive nature of conflict-related issues may have influenced some respondents to withhold information or provide socially desirable responses. Since the study dealt with conflict, cattle rustling, revenge attacks, political influence and inter-community relations, some participants may have been cautious in expressing their views.

The study also relied partly on respondents' perceptions, especially in assessing the effectiveness of elders-led spiritual mediation and proposed integration strategies. Therefore, the findings reflect community perceptions and experiences rather than direct long-term measurement of conflict reduction over time.

Additionally, insecurity, mobility of pastoral populations and climatic conditions occasionally affected accessibility to respondents during data collection. These factors are common in pastoral research contexts and may have influenced the timing and ease of data collection.

However, these limitations did not undermine the credibility of the study because data were collected from diverse respondent categories and triangulated through questionnaires, interviews and open-ended responses.

5.8 Suggestions for Further Research

Future studies should examine the long-term sustainability of agreements reached through elders-led spiritual mediation. Such studies could assess whether mediated agreements reduce conflict recurrence over several years.

Comparative studies should be conducted among other pastoral communities in Kenya to determine whether similar elders-led spiritual mediation models can be adapted in different cultural and ecological contexts.

Further research should investigate the role of women in elders-led mediation and spiritual reconciliation processes. Although women are often affected by conflict, they may be underrepresented in customary mediation structures.

Future studies should also examine the effectiveness of youth peace champions in reducing cattle raids, revenge attacks and inter-community mistrust among pastoral communities.

Further research should investigate the relationship between climate adaptation interventions and conflict reduction. This is important because resource scarcity, drought and competition over water and pasture were identified as major drivers of conflict.

Finally, future studies should test the proposed Integrated Elders-Led Spiritual Mediation Model in other pastoralist contexts in order to assess its applicability, strengths and limitations.

5.9 Final Conclusion

The study concludes that elders-led spiritual mediation remains a highly relevant and culturally legitimate alternative dispute resolution mechanism for addressing inter-communal land-related conflicts between Samburu East Sub-County and the Turkana community in Isiolo County. Its relevance is rooted in the fact that the conflict is not merely legal or administrative but also ecological, relational, cultural, moral and spiritual.

The study further concludes that elders-led spiritual mediation contributes to peacebuilding by promoting dialogue, reconciliation, forgiveness, moral accountability, restoration of relationships and peaceful coexistence. Respondents perceived it as effective in promoting sustainable peace, reducing retaliatory attacks, restoring trust and strengthening respect for mediated agreements.

However, the study also concludes that customary mediation mechanisms require institutional support in order to remain effective in contemporary conflict settings. Sustainable peace cannot be achieved through elders-led spiritual mediation alone. It requires integration with formal ADR structures, policy recognition, county government support, youth and women participation, documentation of agreements, resource governance and continuous monitoring.

The proposed Integrated Elders-Led Spiritual Mediation Model provides a practical pathway for strengthening conflict resolution, restoring trust, reducing violence and promoting sustainable peaceful coexistence among pastoral communities. The model demonstrates that elders-led spiritual mediation should not be replaced by formal systems but should be strengthened as a complementary, culturally grounded and spiritually informed mechanism within broader ADR and peacebuilding frameworks.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: Ethical Clearance Certificate

Mount Kenya University

REF: **MKU/ISERC/6436** Date: 15 June 2026

TO: **M'MUBUU, DOUGLAS GITONGA**

REG: **External**

Dear Sir/Madam,

RE: ELDERS-LED SPIRITUAL MEDIATION AS AN ALTERNATIVE DISPUTE RESOLUTION (ADR) MECHANISM IN CONFLICT BETWEEN SAMBURU EAST SUB-COUNTY AND TURKANA COMMUNITY IN ISIOLO COUNTY, KENYA.

This is to inform you that **Mount Kenya University** has reviewed and approved your above research proposal. Your application approval number is **5157.** The approval period is **15/06/2026 - 14/06/2027.**

This approval is subject to compliance with the following requirements;

i. Only approved documents including informed consents, study instruments, MTA will be used
ii. All changes including amendments, deviations and violations are submitted for review and approval by **Mount Kenya University**
iii. Death and life-threatening problems and serious adverse events or unexpected adverse events whether related or unrelated to the study must be reported to **Mount Kenya University** within 72 hours of notification
iv. Any changes, anticipated or otherwise that may increase the risks or affect the safety or welfare of study participants and others or affect the integrity of the research must be reported to **Mount Kenya University** within 72 hours
v. Clearance for export of biological specimens must be obtained from relevant institutions
vi. Submission of a request for renewal of approval at least 60 days prior to expiry of the approval period. Attach a comprehensive progress report to support the renewal
vii. Submission of an executive summary report within 90 days upon completion of the study to **Mount Kenya University**

Prior to commencing your study, you will be expected to obtain a research license from National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) https://research-portal.nacosti.go.ke and also obtain other clearances needed.

Yours sincerely,

MOUNT KENYA UNIVERSITY ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE P.O. Box 342-01000, THIKA

Dr. Alfred Owino, PhD
Chairman, Mount Kenya University ISERC

Main Campus, General Kago Road, P.O. Box 342-01000 Thika.
Tel: +254 20 287 8000, Cell: +254 709 153 000
Email: info@mku.ac.ke, Web: www.mku.ac.ke
Unlocking Infinite Possibilities

APPENDIX B: Authority Letter for Data Collection

The Catholic University of Eastern Africa
Consecrate them in the truth

P. O. BOX 00200 62157, KENYA

P. O. BOX 123456

Department of Religious Studies

7-5- 2026

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

RE: PERMISSION TO COLLECT DATA

By this letter, I wish to inform you that **M'Mubuu, Douglas Gitonga (Registration No. 1065506)**, is a student pursuing doctor of Philosophy in religious studies at the Catholic University of Eastern Africa, in the Department of Religious Studies. He successfully defended his proposal. The topic of the Dissertation is; "***Elders-Led Spiritual Mediation as an Alternative Dispute Resolution Mechanism (ADR) in Conflict Between Samburu East Sub-County and Turkana Community in Isiolo County, Kenya***". The candidate has since effected corrections made by the panel of examiners to the satisfaction of his supervisors. To this end, the department recommends him to the next step which is data collection. In this connection, I kindly request you to accord him the kind of assistance he needs to enable him accomplish this research task amicably.

Your kind assistance to this candidate will be highly appreciated by the department.

Yours faithfully



Dr. Mwita James
Head of Department
Email: jmwita@cuea.edu
+254720679880

APPENDIX C: NACOSTI Research Permit

REPUBLIC OF KENYA

NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE,TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION

Ref No: **599467**

Date of Issue: **16/June/2026**

RESEARCH LICENSE



This is to Certify that Mr.. DOUGLAS GITONGA M'MUBUU of Catholic University of Eastern Africa, has been licensed to conduct research as per the provision of the Science, Technology and Innovation Act, 2013 (Rev.2014) in Isiolo, Samburu, Turkana on the topic: ELDERS-LED SPIRITUAL MEDIATION AS AN ALTERNATIVE DISPUTE RESOLUTION MECHANISM (ADR) IN CONFLICTS BETWEEN SAMBURU EAST SUB-COUNTY AND TURKANA COMMUNITY IN ISIOLO COUNTY, KENYA. for the period ending : 16/June/2027.

License No: **NACOSTI/P/26/4189481**

599467

Applicant Identification Number

Ag. Director General
NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE,TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION

Verification QR Code

NOTE: This is a computer generated License. To verify the authenticity of this document, Scan the QR Code using QR scanner application.

See overleaf for conditions

APPENDIX D: Cover Letter to Respondents

Subject: Request for Participation in Research Study

Dear Respondents,

I hope you are well. My name is Douglas Gitonga M'mubuu, a researcher undertaking a study on Elders-Led Spiritual Mediation as an Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) Mechanism in Conflicts between Samburu East Sub-County and Turkana Community in Isiolo County, Kenya.

The study seeks to examine the role of elders-led spiritual mediation, including dialogue processes, the role of elders, and spiritual reconciliation practices in resolving land-related disputes and promoting sustainable peace.

You are kindly invited to participate by completing a questionnaire and/or taking part in an interview. Your responses will be treated with strict confidentiality and used strictly for academic purposes.

Participation is voluntary and you may withdraw at any time without any consequence.

I sincerely appreciate your time and support, which will contribute to strengthening understanding of culturally grounded conflict resolution approaches.

Thank you for your support.

Sincerely,

M'mubuu, Douglas Gitonga

APPENDIX E: Informed Consent Form

I have read and understood the information provided above. I have had the opportunity to seek clarification concerning the study. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason.

I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

Participant Code: .....

Signature/Thumbprint: .....

Date: .....

Please feel free to contact me:

M’mubuu, Douglas Gitonga.

Mobile 0722461717

APPENDIX F: Research Questionnaire

Section A: Demographic Information

1. Age group:

   ☐ 18–25 ☐ 26–35 ☐ 36–45 ☐ 46–55 ☐ 56 years and above

2. Gender:

   ☐ Male ☐ Female ☐ Prefer not to say

3. Marital status:

   ☐ Single ☐ Married ☐ Widowed ☐ Separated or divorced

4. Highest level of education:

   ☐ No formal education ☐ Primary ☐ Secondary ☐ Certificate or diploma ☐ Bachelor's degree or above

5. Community affiliation:

   ☐ Samburu ☐ Turkana ☐ Other: _____

6. Area of residence:

   ☐ Archers Post ☐ Wamba ☐ Serolipi ☐ Marti ☐ Ngaremara ☐ Daaba ☐ LMD ☐ Mlango

7. Length of residence in the area:

   ☐ Less than 5 years ☐ 5–10 years ☐ Above 10 years

8. Occupation or community role:

   ☐ Community elder ☐ Religious or spiritual leader ☐ Government official ☐ Women representative ☐ Youth representative ☐ Affected landowner or household head ☐ Other: _____

Section B: Nature of Inter-Communal Land Conflicts

Please indicate your level of agreement with each statement using the scale: 5 = Strongly Agree, 4 = Agree, 3 = Neutral, 2 = Disagree, 1 = Strongly Disagree.

Statement	5	4	3	2	1
9. Competition over grazing land is a major cause of conflict between the two communities					
10. Water scarcity contributes significantly to inter-communal land conflicts					
11. Livestock theft and grazing encroachment are major sources of conflict					
12. Disagreements over territorial boundaries generate conflict between the communities					
13. Political influence contributes to the occurrence of land disputes					

14. In your view, what other factors contribute to land conflicts between the two communities?

Section C: Existing Mediation and Conflict Resolution Approaches

Statement	**5**	**4**	**3**	**2**	**1**
15. Elders-led mediation is effective in resolving land conflicts					
16. Traditional reconciliation ceremonies contribute to the settlement of disputes					
17. Community dialogue forums help to resolve land conflicts					
18. Alternative dispute resolution procedures are applied in addressing land conflicts					
19. Government-led mediation programmes are effective in resolving land conflicts					

20. Which approach do you consider most effective, and why?

Section D: Elders-Led Spiritual Mediation in Conflict Resolution

Statement	5	4	3	2	1
21. Elders facilitate dialogue effectively between the conflicting communities					
22. The community respects the authority of elders during mediation					
23. Traditional mediation promotes forgiveness between the communities					
24. Spiritual rituals contribute meaningfully to reconciliation					
25. Elders are impartial in mediating land disputes					
26. Community members comply with the decisions reached by elders					

27. What challenges affect the work of elders in mediating land conflicts?

Section E: Strategies for Integrating Elders-Led Spiritual Mediation into ADR Frameworks

Statement	5	4	3	2	1
28. Elders should be formally recognised within alternative dispute resolution frameworks					
29. Collaboration between elders and government and security agencies would strengthen mediation					
30. Training of elders in mediation and ADR processes would improve conflict resolution					
31. The inclusion of youth and women in mediation would improve its outcomes					
32. County government support through policy and resource allocation would strengthen elders-led mediation					

33. What measures would you propose to strengthen elders-led spiritual mediation in this area?

Section F: General Recommendations

34. What recommendations would you make for improving the resolution of land conflicts between the two communities?

Thank you for your participation.

APPENDIX G: Key Informant Interview Guide

Introduction

My name is M'mubuu, Douglas Gitonga, a researcher undertaking a study on Elders-Led Spiritual Mediation as an Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) Mechanism in Conflicts between Samburu East Sub-County and Turkana Community in Isiolo County, Kenya, at the Catholic University of Eastern Africa. You have been approached because of your role in the conduct of mediation in this area. Participation is voluntary, you may decline to answer any question, and you may withdraw at any time without giving any reason. Your responses will be treated with strict confidentiality and used strictly for academic purposes, and no participant will be identified by name in any report arising from this study. With your permission, the interview will be audio-recorded to ensure that your responses are captured accurately.

Participant Details *(for researcher's use; no names recorded)*

Interview code: KII ____

Category: ☐ Community elder ☐ Government official ☐ Member of land or peace committee

Community affiliation: ☐ Samburu ☐ Turkana ☐ Other: _____

Sex: ☐ Male ☐ Female

Age: _____

Study site: ☐ Archers Post ☐ Wamba ☐ Serolipi ☐ Marti ☐ Ngaremara ☐ Daaba ☐ LMD ☐ Mlango

Years of involvement in mediation: _____

Date of interview: _____ Language of interview: _____

Section A: Nature of Inter-Communal Land Conflicts

1. From your experience, what are the principal causes of land conflicts between the Samburu and Turkana communities in this area?
2. How do competition over grazing land and access to water contribute to these conflicts? *Probe: seasonal patterns, drought, movement of livestock.*
3. What role do livestock theft and grazing encroachment play in the occurrence of conflict?
4. How do disagreements over territorial boundaries arise, and how are they expressed?
5. In what ways, if any, does political influence contribute to land disputes in this area? *Probe: electoral periods, mobilisation of youth, allocation of resources.*
6. Have the causes of conflict changed over the period you have been involved in mediation? If so, in what way?

Section B: Existing Mediation and Conflict Resolution Approaches

7. What approaches are currently used to resolve land conflicts between the two communities?
8. How effective is elders-led mediation in resolving these conflicts?
9. What part do traditional reconciliation ceremonies play in settling disputes?
10. How effective are community dialogue forums and alternative dispute resolution procedures?
11. What is your assessment of government-led mediation programmes in this area? *Probe: peace committees, administrative interventions, security responses.*
12. Where do the customary and formal approaches work together, and where do they come into conflict?

Section C: Elders-Led Spiritual Mediation

13. Describe how elders conduct mediation when a land dispute arises. *Probe: who convenes, sequence of proceedings, who may speak, how decisions are reached.*
14. On what basis do elders hold authority in mediation, and how is that authority recognised by the community?
15. What spiritual practices are used during mediation and reconciliation? *Probe: blessings, prayers, oath-taking, curses, ritual slaughter, ceremonies.*
16. How do these practices contribute to reconciliation between the parties?
17. How is compensation determined and administered where it forms part of a settlement?
18. In your experience, do communities comply with the decisions reached by elders? What happens where they do not?
19. Are elders regarded as impartial in mediating disputes? What affects that perception?
20. What challenges limit the effectiveness of elders-led spiritual mediation in this area? *Probe: authority of elders among the youth, resources, insecurity, recognition by the state.*

Section D: Strategies for Integrating Elders-Led Spiritual Mediation into ADR Frameworks

21. Should elders be formally recognised within alternative dispute resolution frameworks? What would such recognition involve?
22. How could elders work more closely with government and security agencies in resolving land conflicts?
23. What training would assist elders in conducting mediation more effectively?

24. What is your view on including youth and women in mediation processes? *Probe: current level of participation, resistance, benefits.*
25. What support would the county government need to provide for elders-led mediation to be sustained?
26. What obstacles would stand in the way of integrating elders-led spiritual mediation into formal dispute resolution frameworks?

Section E: Closing

27. What measures would you recommend for achieving lasting peace between the two communities?
28. Is there anything further you would wish to add that has not been covered in this interview?

Thank you for your time and for the information you have shared.

APPENDIX H: Focus Group Discussion Guide

Introduction

My name is M'mubuu, Douglas Gitonga, a researcher undertaking a study on Elders-Led Spiritual Mediation as an Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) Mechanism in Conflicts between Samburu East Sub-County and Turkana Community in Isiolo County, Kenya, at the Catholic University of Eastern Africa. You have been invited to take part in this discussion because of your direct experience of land-related conflict in this area. Participation is voluntary, you may decline to answer any question, and you may withdraw at any time without giving any reason. Your responses will be treated with strict confidentiality and used strictly for academic purposes, and no participant will be identified by name in any report arising from this study.

Ground rules

There are no right or wrong answers, and disagreement among participants is welcome. Only one person should speak at a time so that each contribution is recorded accurately. What is said in this discussion should not be repeated outside the group. With the agreement of all participants, the discussion will be audio-recorded to ensure that responses are captured accurately.

Discussion Details *(for researcher's use; no names recorded)*

Discussion code: FGD ____

Participant category: ☐ Women representatives ☐ Youth representatives

Community affiliation: ☐ Samburu ☐ Turkana ☐ Mixed

Study site: ☐ Archers Post ☐ Wamba ☐ Serolipi ☐ Marti ☐ Ngaremara ☐ Daaba ☐ LMD ☐ Mlango

Number of participants: _____

Date of discussion: _____ Language of discussion: _____

Moderator: _____ Note-taker: _____

Section A: Nature of Inter-Communal Land Conflicts

1. In your experience, what causes conflict over land between the two communities in this area?
2. How does competition over grazing land and water affect relations between the communities?

   Probe: dry seasons, movement of livestock in search of pasture, shared water points.
3. What part do livestock theft and raiding play in the conflicts you have witnessed?

   Probe: who participates, what motivates participation, how communities respond.
4. How do disputes over boundaries between the communities arise?
5. Do you consider that politics contributes to conflict in this area? In what way?

   Probe: election periods, promises made to communities, mobilisation of young people.
6. How has conflict affected your households and your daily lives?

   Probe: displacement, loss of livestock, restricted movement, schooling, insecurity.

Section B: Existing Mediation and Conflict Resolution Approaches

7. When conflict occurs, who is called upon to resolve it and how?
8. In your view, how well does mediation by elders work in settling these disputes?
9. What happens during traditional reconciliation ceremonies, and what do they achieve?
10. Have community dialogue meetings been held in this area? What came of them?
11. What has been your experience of government efforts to resolve conflict here?

    Probe: peace committees, chiefs and administrators, security operations.
12. Which of these approaches do participants consider most effective, and why?

Section C: Elders-Led Spiritual Mediation

13. What is your view of the way elders conduct mediation in this community?
14. Do people in this community respect the authority of the elders? Has this changed over time?

    Probe: attitudes among younger people, standing of elders today compared with the past.
15. What spiritual practices accompany mediation and reconciliation in this area? *Probe: blessings, prayers, oath-taking, curses, ceremonies.*
16. Do these practices help people to forgive and to live together again? In what way?
17. When elders reach a decision, do people abide by it? What happens where they do not?
18. Are elders seen as fair to both sides when they mediate? What affects that view?
19. What difficulties do elders face in resolving land conflicts today?

Section D: Strategies for Integrating Elders-Led Spiritual Mediation into ADR Frameworks

20. Should elders be formally recognised by government in resolving land disputes? What difference would that make?
21. How could elders and government officers work together more effectively?
22. Would training for elders in mediation improve the outcomes of their work?
23. Are women and young people involved in mediation in this area? Should they be, and in what way?
24. *Probe: what currently prevents their participation, what would change if they took part.*
25. What support should the county government provide so that this form of mediation continues?

Section E: Closing

25. What would you recommend for achieving lasting peace between the two communities?
26. Is there anything further the group wishes to add that has not been discussed?

Thank you for your time and for taking part in this discussion.

APPENDIX I: Study Timelines

Activity	**Start date**	**End date**	**Duration**
Concept generation and defense	April 2024	June 2024	3 months
Proposal development and defense	July 2024	April 2025	10 months
Data collection	June 2025	November 2025	6 months
Data analysis	December 2025	January 2026	2 months
Report writing	February 2026	May 2026	4 months
Submission and oral defense	June 2026	July 2026	2 months
Corrections and final submission	August 2026	September 2026	2 months

APPENDIX J: Study Area Map

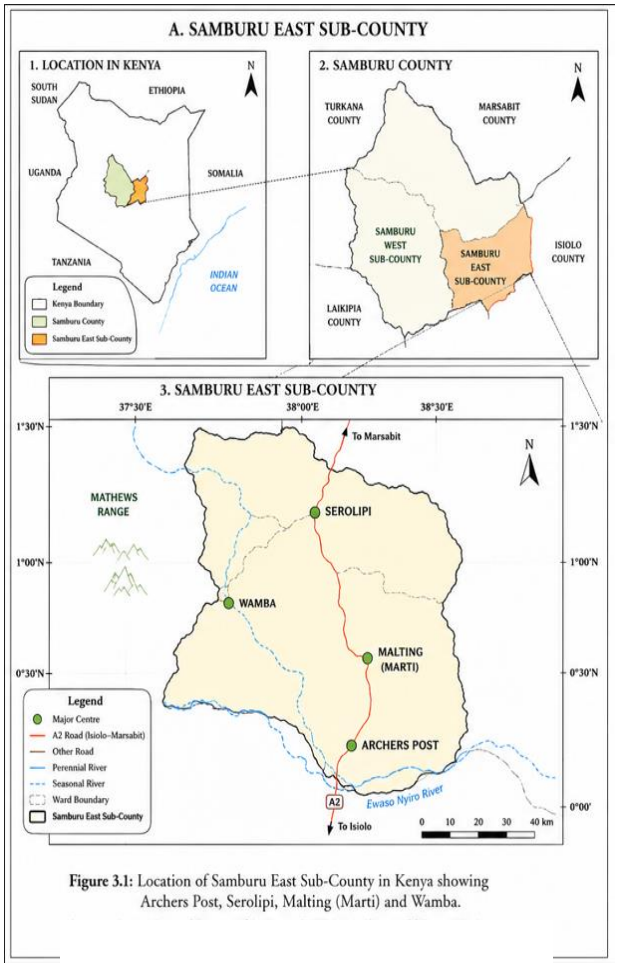


Figure 3.1: Location of Samburu East Sub-County in Kenya showing Archers Post, Serolipi, Malting (Marti) and Wamba.

Figure J.1 Location of Samburu East Sub-County in Kenya showing Archers Post, Sereolipi, Malting (Marti) and Wamba.

Source: Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS, 2019) & Field Data, 2024.

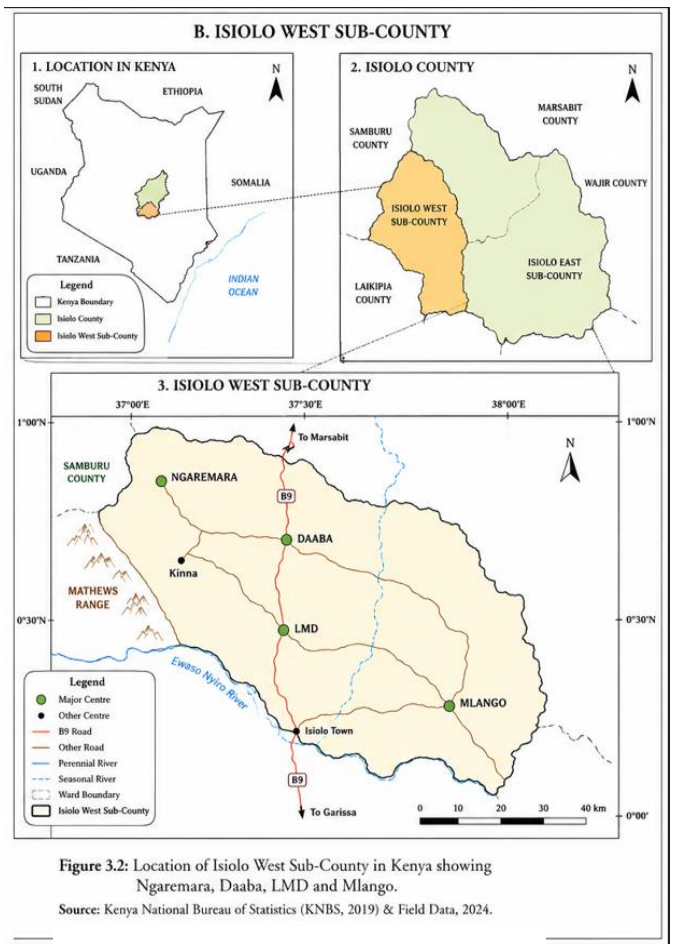


Figure 3.2: Location of Isiolo West Sub-County in Kenya showing Ngaremara, Daaba, LMD and Mlango.
Source: Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS, 2019) & Field Data, 2024.

Figure J.2 Location of Isiolo West Sub-County in Kenya showing Ngaremara, Daaba, LMD and Mlango.
Source: Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS, 2019) & Field Data, 2024.