



Received: 21-07-2026
Accepted: 01-09-2026

International Journal of Advanced Multidisciplinary Research and Studies

ISSN: 2583-049X

New Community Composition Resulting from Internal Migration Influencing Inter-Ethnic Tensions in Kajiado County, Kenya

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.62225/2583049X.2026.6.5.6861>

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Abstract

Internal migration has increasingly transformed the demographic and social composition of rapidly urbanizing areas in Kenya, particularly counties neighbouring major urban centres. Kajiado County has experienced substantial population influxes associated with its proximity to Nairobi City County, urban expansion and expanding socioeconomic opportunities, resulting in increasingly diverse communities. While such demographic transformation can promote economic and social interaction, it may also alter established community relations, intensify competition over land and other resources, and create conditions for inter-ethnic tensions. However, limited empirical evidence exists on the extent to which new community composition resulting from internal migration influences inter-ethnic tensions in Kajiado County. The study therefore sought to analyze the influence of new community composition resulting from internal migration on inter-ethnic tensions in Kajiado County, Kenya. The study was anchored on the Aspirations-Capabilities Framework of Migration and Structural Functionalism Theory and adopted a cross-sectional survey design. The target population comprised adult residents categorized into security agencies, village elders and the general public. The study area was clustered into selected

constituencies and wards, while security personnel and village elders were purposively selected and members of the general public were selected through systematic random sampling. Data were collected using questionnaires and one-on-one interviews and analyzed using descriptive statistics, multiple linear regression and thematic analysis. The findings established that new community composition resulting from internal migration significantly influenced inter-ethnic tensions in Kajiado County, with the regression model explaining 6.7% of the variation in inter-ethnic tensions ($R^2 = .067$, $F(7, 409) = 4.196$, $p < .001$). Although the relationship was statistically significant, the relatively low explanatory power indicates that inter-ethnic tensions are also shaped by other social, economic, political and institutional factors beyond changing community composition. The study concludes that migration-induced changes in community composition constitute a significant, though partial, factor in explaining inter-ethnic tensions in Kajiado County. It recommends inclusive local governance, community integration initiatives, equitable mechanisms for managing access to land and shared resources, and strengthened inter-community dialogue to enhance social cohesion within rapidly changing settlements.

Keywords: Internal Migration, Community Composition, Inter-Ethnic Tensions, Social Cohesion, Demographic Change, Resource Competition and Community Integration

1. Introduction

The freedom of movement within a country encompasses the right of individuals to travel from place to place and choose where to live without unnecessary restrictions. This freedom contributes to the movement of populations in response to economic, educational, employment and social opportunities. While internal population mobility can contribute to economic development, labour redistribution and social interaction, sustained migration into particular destinations can progressively alter the demographic and social composition of host communities. Such changes become particularly important where incoming and established communities differ in ethnic identity, livelihood systems, patterns of land use and access to socioeconomic resources. Consequently, internal migration is not only a demographic process but also a social process capable of reshaping relations among communities within destination areas.

According to McCollum *et al.* (2020) ^[34], internal migration denotes the relocation of individuals within a country's borders.

Similarly, Sharma and Ulrike (2019) ^[49] defined internal migration as a transition from one region to another within a specific time frame that necessitates a change of domicile. It therefore encompasses changes in the region of residence, including rural-to-urban, urban-to-urban and rural-to-rural movements. The decision to migrate internally is frequently associated with changes in individual and household circumstances, including completion of education, entry into the labour market, changes in employment status and family formation (Alvarez *et al.*, 2021) ^[3]. However, beyond changing population size, migration can transform the ethnic composition of destination communities by introducing new groups into areas historically associated with particular communities. The resulting community composition may influence patterns of interaction, belonging, resource access and perceptions between established residents and newcomers.

New community composition in this study refers to the demographic and social restructuring of local communities arising from the settlement and interaction of people from different ethnic and geographical backgrounds as a consequence of internal migration. Such transformation may increase social diversity and opportunities for inter-community exchange, but its effects are not necessarily uniform. Where integration mechanisms are effective and access to opportunities and resources is perceived as equitable, diversity may strengthen social interaction. Conversely, where demographic change coincides with competition over land, employment, political representation or other valued resources, ethnic identities may become increasingly salient and potentially contribute to inter-ethnic tensions. It is therefore necessary to examine the conditions under which migration-induced community transformation contributes to tension rather than assuming that ethnic diversity itself produces conflict.

Globally, internal migration has substantially transformed the composition of communities through rural-to-urban movement, suburbanization and movement towards economically productive regions. The United States, for instance, has historically experienced extensive internal population redistribution through westward expansion, industrialization, the Great Migration and subsequent movements towards areas offering improved economic opportunities (Derenoncourt, 2022) ^[16]. Such movements contributed to economic mobility and intergenerational opportunities (Chetty & Hendren, 2018) ^[13]. However, the effects of internal migration extend beyond economic outcomes because sustained population redistribution can alter neighbourhood composition and relations among social groups. The experience of highly mobile societies therefore demonstrates the importance of institutions, inclusive urban governance and social integration in managing relations within increasingly diverse communities.

Across Africa, population mobility towards urban and economically productive areas continues to reshape local demographic structures. Although international migration receives considerable attention, a substantial proportion of African mobility occurs within countries through rural-to-urban, rural-to-rural and urban-to-urban movements. These movements increasingly bring populations with different ethnic, cultural and livelihood backgrounds into shared settlements and economic spaces. South Africa, for example, experienced extensive internal population movement shaped by historical inequalities and employment

opportunities, with migration predominantly occurring from disadvantaged rural areas towards urban-industrial centres such as Gauteng and the Western Cape (Estifanos *et al.*, 2019; Musvoto, 2021) ^[21, 37]. Such movements have been associated with changing settlement patterns, inequality and pressure on urban systems (Fatima & Lee, 2018) ^[22]. Nevertheless, evidence that demographic diversity accompanies migration does not by itself establish that migration produces inter-group tension. The relevant analytical concern is whether changing community composition affects relations among groups through competition, exclusion, weak integration or other contextual mechanisms.

In Kenya, internal migration has historically contributed to population redistribution and the growth of urban and peri-urban settlements. The removal of colonial-era movement restrictions and subsequent socioeconomic transformation increased population mobility, while contemporary movements continue to be driven by employment, education, housing, business opportunities and access to services (Oucho, 2020) ^[44]. Internal migration has increasingly been characterized by movement towards Nairobi, Mombasa and other urban centres, as well as suburbanization into peripheral areas surrounding major cities. Muyonga *et al.* (2021) ^[41] observed that internal migration increasingly contributes to suburbanization, with secondary cities and peripheral urban areas attracting growing migrant populations. These processes have created increasingly heterogeneous settlements in which communities of different ethnic and geographical origins live and compete within common socioeconomic spaces.

The significance of these demographic changes extends beyond population growth. Kenya's ethnic identities have historically intersected with questions of land ownership, political representation, access to economic opportunities and community belonging. Where migration changes the numerical and socioeconomic composition of local populations, established understandings of community membership, access to resources and local influence may also change. However, migration-induced ethnic diversity should not automatically be interpreted as a source of conflict. What requires empirical investigation is whether and how the resulting community composition affects relations among ethnic groups and the circumstances under which those interactions generate tension.

Kajiado County provides an important setting for examining this relationship because of its proximity to Nairobi City County and the rapid expansion of urban and peri-urban settlements such as Kitengela, Ongata Rongai, Ngong and Kiserian. Population movement into these areas has progressively transformed settlements that were historically associated predominantly with the Maasai community into increasingly cosmopolitan communities comprising residents from different parts of Kenya. Urban expansion, land subdivision, property development and growing commercial activity have accompanied this demographic transformation, creating new patterns of interaction between long-established residents and incoming populations.

The changing community composition may generate both opportunities and challenges for inter-ethnic relations. Increased interaction can encourage economic interdependence and social integration, while competition over land, employment, business opportunities, political representation and access to local resources may create

perceptions of exclusion or displacement among particular groups. Changes in land ownership and settlement patterns may be especially significant where land possesses both economic and cultural importance. Consequently, understanding inter-ethnic tensions in Kajiado requires examining not simply the presence of different ethnic groups but how migration-induced demographic transformation affects relations, perceptions and competition among those groups.

Although existing studies have documented internal migration, urbanization and population redistribution in Kenya, limited empirical attention has specifically examined whether new community composition resulting from internal migration influences inter-ethnic tensions in rapidly transforming peri-urban counties. Much of the existing literature treats internal migration principally as a demographic, economic or urban-development phenomenon, leaving insufficient understanding of its implications for inter-community relations. This limitation is particularly important in Kajiado County, where rapid migration has produced increasingly diverse settlements alongside continuing contestation surrounding land, resources, identity and local belonging. The unresolved issue is therefore not simply whether internal migration occurs in Kajiado, but whether and to what extent the new community compositions it produces influence inter-ethnic tensions. It is this empirical relationship that the study sought to examine.

2. Statement of the Problem

Internal migration has increasingly transformed the demographic composition of Kajiado County, particularly within rapidly expanding urban and peri-urban areas such as Kitengela, Ongata Rongai, Ngong and Kiserian. The county's proximity to Nairobi City County, expanding residential development and growing economic opportunities have attracted populations from different parts of Kenya, progressively transforming previously less heterogeneous communities into increasingly cosmopolitan settlements. While this transformation has contributed to economic growth and social diversity, it has also changed established patterns of community interaction, land ownership, resource access and local belonging.

The increasing interaction between established and incoming communities occurs within a context where land, employment opportunities, political representation and access to socioeconomic resources may be contested. Such circumstances can potentially generate perceptions of exclusion, displacement, unequal access to opportunities and competition among ethnic groups. However, the existence of an ethnically diverse population does not necessarily result in inter-ethnic tension, making it necessary to establish empirically whether and how migration-induced changes in community composition affect relations among ethnic groups in Kajiado County.

Existing studies on internal migration in Kenya have largely emphasized population redistribution, urbanization, employment and socioeconomic development, with comparatively limited empirical attention to the relationship between migration-induced community composition and inter-ethnic tensions at the county level. Consequently, it remains insufficiently understood whether the changing ethnic and social composition of communities in Kajiado contributes significantly to inter-ethnic tensions and which

dimensions of this transformation are particularly consequential. Without such evidence, interventions aimed at promoting social cohesion risk addressing manifestations of tension without adequately understanding the demographic and social processes associated with them. The study therefore sought to analyze the influence of new community composition resulting from internal migration on inter-ethnic tensions in Kajiado County, Kenya.

3. Literature Review

Traditional cultural structures can play an important role in regulating relations between ethnic communities, particularly where different groups compete over resources and maintain distinct social identities. Within this perspective, a master's thesis by Ejere (2021) ^[19] examined cultural factors that enhance inter-ethnic conflict resolution in Laisamis Sub-County, Marsabit County, Kenya. The study investigated the role of traditional leadership, rites of passage, gender roles and the community livelihoods in promoting conflict resolution among the pastoral communities. Using a mixed-methods design, data were collected through questionnaires, interviews and focus group discussions. The findings revealed that, traditional cultural structures played a significant role in reducing inter-ethnic conflicts and promoting peaceful coexistence within the pastoral communities. These findings suggested that, the effects of ethnic diversity on inter-community relations may depend partly on the strength of the local institutions and culturally embedded mechanisms for regulating interactions between the different groups. However, the study did not establish whether such mechanisms remain equally effective when communities experience rapid demographic transformation resulting from the arrival of populations with different ethnic and cultural backgrounds. It therefore remained unclear under what conditions changing community composition resulting from internal migration promotes peaceful coexistence or contributes to inter-ethnic tensions. This provided a basis for examining how the new community compositions resulting from the internal migration can influence inter-ethnic tensions in Kajiado County, Kenya.

Competition over economic opportunities and community resources can become an important source of tension where different ethnic groups interact within the same social and economic environment. Against this background, Chavulimu and Mathews (2023) ^[12] investigated the effects of social and community issues associated with the inter-ethnic conflicts on economic growth in Muhoroni and Tinderet sub-counties in Kenya. Guided by Conflict Theory, the study employed a correlational research design to assess how the inter-ethnic conflicts affected economic development within the two regions. The findings established that, social tensions, community disputes and the ethnic conflicts negatively affected economic productivity and local development. These findings demonstrate that, deteriorating inter-ethnic relations can have wider socioeconomic consequences for affected communities. However, they provide limited explanation of the demographic and social conditions through which such tensions emerge. In particular, it remained unclear whether increasing ethnic diversity itself produced conflict or whether tensions emerge when changing community composition interacted with competition over employment, land, business opportunities, public services and political

representation. Understanding these conditions is particularly important within migrant-receiving areas where internal migration may simultaneously alter community composition and patterns of competition between established residents and incoming populations. This created a need to examine how such changing community compositions can influence the inter-ethnic tensions within Kajiado County.

Inter-ethnic relations are not necessarily characterized by conflict, as cooperation and trust may persist even among the communities with histories of ethnic confrontation. In examining this dimension, Barriga *et al.* (2023) ^[6] studied ethnic cooperation and conflict in Kenya by focusing on social capital, trust and cooperation between Luo and Kikuyu communities following the 2007/2008 post-election violence. Using experimental approaches, the study established that, exposure to ethnic violence did not necessarily erode inter-group cooperation and that social interactions between the ethnic groups could remain stable despite previous conflict experiences. These findings were important because they demonstrated that, ethnic differences and previous experiences of conflict do not automatically translate into persistent inter-group hostility. They instead raised the question of what conditions would enable ethnically diverse populations to maintain cooperation and social trust. While Barriga *et al.* (2023) ^[6] examined historically established ethnic relations within a post-conflict environment, less has been understood about newly constituted multi-ethnic communities resulting from continuous internal migration. Within such communities, trust, social interaction, perceptions of belonging and relations between established residents and newcomers may determine whether increasing ethnic diversity encourages integration or generates tension. Examining these conditions within Kajiado County may therefore provide a better understanding of how migration-induced changes in community composition influence inter-ethnic tensions.

Effective management of ethnic diversity can contribute to social stability, particularly where institutions possess adequate mechanisms for regulating emerging tensions between the different population groups. From this perspective, Nagaytsev *et al.* (2023) ^[42], in a sociological analysis conducted between 2018 and 2020, examined the inter-ethnic conflicts in local societies in Altai Krai, Siberia, focusing on the relationship between the ethnic tensions and social security. Through sociological surveys, the study found that, inter-ethnic conflicts were largely situational and manageable through effective social regulation and institutional intervention. The researchers concluded that, proper management of ethnic diversity contributes positively to social stability and security. These findings suggest that, ethnic diversity may not inherently undermine social security, but its consequences may depend on the capacity of institutions and communities to manage emerging differences and competing interests. Nevertheless, the study did not sufficiently establish how rapid changes in community composition affect the capacity of existing social and institutional structures to regulate relations between the established and incoming populations. This becomes particularly significant where internal migration occurs faster than the development of mechanisms for social integration, resource allocation and conflict management. It therefore remained uncertain whether weaknesses in such mechanisms can transform migration-induced demographic

diversity into inter-ethnic tensions within rapidly urbanizing settings such as Kajiado County.

Trust and group identity are important determinants of inter-group relations, particularly where social conditions encourage individuals to identify more strongly with their own groups than with other communities. In relation to this concern, Bertelli and Kurdi (2026) ^[7] investigated inter-group cooperation and conflict during the Yemen war by examining how prolonged conflict influences cooperation between rival and non-rival groups. Using survey data and mobile phone-based public good games, the study established that exposure to conflict increased in-group favoritism and reduced trust toward the rival groups. The findings demonstrated that, prolonged conflict may weaken social cohesion and intensify inter-group divisions. These findings demonstrated the importance of trust and group identification in shaping relations between different communities. However, the conditions examined developed within an environment of prolonged armed conflict, leaving uncertainty about whether similar patterns of in-group favoritism and declining inter-group trust can develop in relatively peaceful environments experiencing rapid demographic transformation. Internal migration may create distinctions between established residents and incoming populations even without armed conflict, particularly where communities perceive unequal access to economic opportunities, land, services or political influence. The relationship between such migration-induced group distinctions and inter-ethnic tensions therefore would require examination within the comparatively stable but rapidly diversifying context of Kajiado County.

Overall, the reviewed literature demonstrated that, changing ethnic composition does not necessarily produce either conflict or peaceful coexistence. Instead, the nature of inter-ethnic relations appears to depend on the conditions accompanying demographic change, including social trust, institutional capacity, mechanisms of integration, competition over resources and opportunities, group identity and relations between established and incoming populations. However, existing studies provided insufficient explanation of how these conditions can operate when internal migration rapidly transforms the ethnic composition of the migrant-receiving communities. Particularly unclear is whether increasing ethnic diversity itself contributes to the inter-ethnic tensions or whether tensions emerge when demographic changes interact with competition for resources, weak social integration, declining trust and perceptions of exclusion. This analytical and empirical gap was particularly relevant within rapidly urbanizing and diversifying areas of Kajiado County. The study therefore sought to examine the influence of new community compositions resulting from the internal migration on inter-ethnic tensions in Kajiado County, Kenya.

4. Materials and Methods

The study adopted a cross-sectional survey research design. According to Wang and Cheng (2020) ^[52], a cross-sectional survey design would enable a researcher to collect data from respondents at a single point in time in order to examine relationships between variables within a target population. The design was considered appropriate because the study sought to examine the influence of internal migration on national security by collecting data simultaneously from different categories of respondents, including police

officers, village elders and the members of the public within Kajiado County.

The design further enabled the researcher to collect both quantitative and qualitative data concerning inter-ethnic tensions, migrant unemployment, crime prevalence and urban insecurity associated with internal migration. The use of a cross-sectional survey design also enhanced the collection of diverse views and experiences from the respondents drawn from different social and administrative categories within the county. The data collected enabled the researcher to make inferences regarding the relationship between internal migration dynamics and national security within Kajiado County.

The research was carried out in Kajiado County, Kenya, which covers approximately 21,900.9 square kilometers (Kajiado County Assembly, 2024) ^[29]. The county is one of the 47 counties established under the Constitution of Kenya 2010 following the devolved system of government. According to Kajiado County Assembly (2024) ^[29] the county had a population of approximately 1,117,840 people as per the 2019 Kenya Population and Housing Census. The county borders Nairobi County to the north and the Republic of Tanzania to the south. Its headquarters are located in Kajiado Town, while major urban centers include Ongata Rongai, Kitengela, Ngong and Kiserian.

Kajiado County was selected because it has experienced rapid population growth, urban expansion and increased internal migration due to its proximity to Nairobi City County. The county has increasingly attracted migrants seeking employment opportunities, affordable housing, business opportunities and access to urban services. Consequently, the county has experienced rapid development of satellite towns and changing community compositions, making it suitable for examining the relationship between internal migration and national security. Kajiado county constitutes of five constituencies, which are, Kajiado Central having 5 wards (Purko, Ildamat, Dalalekutuk, Matapato North, Matapato South); Kajiado North having 5 wards (Olkeri, Ongata Rongai, Nkaimurunya, Oloolua, Ngong); Kajiado South having 5 wards (Entonet/Lenkisim, Mbirikani/Eselenkei, Kuku, Rombo, Kimana); Kajiado East having 5 wards (Kaputiei North, Kitengela, Oloosirkon/Sholinke, Kenyawa-Poka, Imaroro) and Kajiado West having 5 wards (Keekonyokie, Iloodokilani, Magadi, Ewuaso Oonkidong'i, Mosiro) (IEBC, 2022) ^[28].

The study specifically focused on Kajiado North and Kajiado East constituencies because the two constituencies have experienced high rates of urbanization, population influx and expansion of the cosmopolitan settlements associated with internal migration. The selected areas also have experienced increasing pressure on social services, infrastructure and security systems, thereby providing an appropriate context for investigating inter-ethnic tensions, crime prevalence and urban insecurity associated with migration dynamics.

The study targeted the National Police Service officers, village elders and the adult residents aged 18 years and above residing within the selected areas of Kajiado County. These groups were selected because they were directly affected by or involved in responding to internal migration dynamics and the associated national security challenges within the county.

According to Kajiado County Assembly (2024) ^[29], the

approximate number of adult residents aged 18 years and above within the selected study areas was 277,480 individuals. In addition, the study targeted chiefs, assistant chiefs, senior police officers, junior police officers and village elders because of their involvement in community administration, law enforcement and local security management. The target population was considered appropriate because it enabled the researcher to collect data from both security agencies and the community members regarding inter-ethnic tensions, migrant unemployment, crime prevalence and urban insecurity associated with the internal migration within Kajiado County.

The study employed the multistage sampling technique to select the study areas and the respondents. Multistage sampling was considered appropriate because it enabled the researcher to select the respondents through several stages while ensuring representation of the target population. In the first stage, Kajiado North and Kajiado East constituencies were purposively selected because they had experienced rapid urbanization, population growth and increased internal migration. The constituencies also contain major satellite towns such as Ongata Rongai, Ngong and Kitengela, which experience significant migration-related demographic changes.

In the second stage, four wards were purposively selected, namely Ongata Rongai and Ngong wards in Kajiado North Constituency and Kaputiei North and Kitengela wards in Kajiado East Constituency. The wards were selected because they were highly cosmopolitan and have experienced rapid population influx, urban expansion and increased settlement associated with internal migration.

In the third stage, the target population was categorized into three strata namely security officers, village elders and the members of the general public. Stratified sampling was used to ensure representation of each category of the respondents within the study.

The study adopted the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) ^[33] sample size determination table to determine the sample size for the general public population. Since the target population exceeded 100,000 respondents, a sample size of 384 respondents from the general public was considered adequate. In addition, purposive sampling was used to select chiefs, assistant chiefs, senior police officers and the village elders because of their knowledge and involvement in security administration and migration-related issues within the study area. The junior police officers were selected using simple random sampling to ensure equal chances of participation.

Table 1: Sampled Respondents

Respondents	Total	Sample
Chiefs and Sub-chiefs	31	7
Senior Police Officers	16	4
Junior Police Officers	254	51
Village elders	48	10
General Public	277,480	384
Total Sample	277,829	456

1. The national security officers were randomly samples as seven Chiefs and Sub-chiefs, four Senior Police Officers and fifty-one thirty police officers below the rank of an inspector. For both, they met the threshold for Gay & Diehl, (1992) ^[23] who recommended for smaller populations, 20% of an n (sample) compared to

the general N (target population).

2. Ten village elders were purposively sampled as respondents. This met Gay and Diehl's (1992) ^[23] recommendation of using a sample of 20% of the target population (n relative to N) for smaller populations.
3. A total of 384 general public members were systematically randomly sampled as respondents, selecting every 6th individual from the target population. Systematic random sampling is a method in which sample members from a study population are chosen based on a random initial point Nth number (Crossman, 2017) ^[15]. A total of 384 were needed for a huge population according to Krejcie & Morgan (1970) ^[33] sample size reference table (appendix I).

The study utilized a mixed methods approach, whereby both quantitative and qualitative data collection instruments were used. The questionnaires were used to collect quantitative data from junior police officers and the members of the general public, while interview guides were used to collect qualitative data from chiefs, assistant chiefs, senior police officers and the village elders. The use of the two instruments enabled the researcher to obtain comprehensive information regarding the influence of internal migration on national security within Kajiado County.

Questionnaires: The data were collected using structured and open-ended questionnaires administered to junior police officers and the members of the general public. The structured sections enabled the collection of quantitative data, while the open-ended sections allowed the respondents to provide additional views and explanations regarding internal migration and national security. The questionnaire items were developed in line with the study objectives and research questions to ensure adequate coverage of the variables under investigation. The research assistants assisted in administering the questionnaires to the respondents within the selected study areas. The respondents were allowed to complete the questionnaires independently to enhance confidentiality and encourage honest responses.

The Scheduled Interview Guide: Scheduled interview guides were used to collect qualitative data from chiefs, assistant chiefs, senior police officers and the village elders. The interviews enabled the researcher to obtain detailed information concerning migration patterns, inter-ethnic tensions, crime prevalence and urban insecurity within Kajiado County. The interview guides further enabled the researcher to seek clarification and conduct probing where necessary in order to obtain detailed responses relevant to the study objectives. The use of interviews was considered appropriate because the selected respondents possessed administrative and security-related knowledge relevant to the study.

The study utilized construct validity and content validity to determine the suitability of the research instruments. Construct validity was used to ensure that the research instruments accurately measured the variables intended in the study. This was achieved through proper operationalization of the independent and dependent variables, namely new community composition, migrant unemployment, rapid population influx, inter-ethnic tensions, crime prevalence and urban insecurity. The researcher ensured that the questionnaire and interview items corresponded with the study objectives and variables under investigation.

Content validity was used to determine the extent to which

the research instruments adequately covered the study objectives and areas of investigation (DeVon *et al.*, 2007) ^[17]. To achieve content validity, the research instruments were reviewed by academic supervisors and other experts familiar with migration and security studies. Their recommendations assisted the researcher in revising ambiguous, unclear and irrelevant items within the instruments. Additionally, triangulation of data from the questionnaires and interviews was conducted to enhance the credibility and comprehensiveness of the study findings. Reliability refers to the consistency of research instruments in measuring study variables over time (Wong *et al.*, 2012) ^[53]. The study used the test-retest method to determine the reliability of the research instruments. To achieve this, the researcher administered the questionnaires to the respondents with characteristics similar to those of the study population. The same instruments were administered again after a period of two weeks under similar conditions. The scores obtained from the first and second tests were correlated using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient to determine the reliability of the instruments. A reliability coefficient of 0.76 was obtained and considered acceptable for the study because it exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70 for the social science research (Hussey *et al.*, 2025) ^[27].

A pilot study was conducted in Machakos County using 50 respondents drawn from the security officers, village elders and the members of the general public. The pilot respondents were not included in the actual study but possessed characteristics similar to those of the target population. The pilot study was conducted to determine the suitability, clarity and reliability of the research instruments (Mutonyi, 2025) ^[38]. The findings from the pilot study enabled the researcher to identify and correct ambiguous questions, unclear statements and language inconsistencies within the instruments before the actual data collection process.

The study collected primary data from security officers, village elders and the members of the general public within the selected study areas in Kajiado County.

- **Questionnaires:** They were administered to junior police officers and members of the general public with the assistance of trained research assistants. The research assistants guided the respondents on how to complete the questionnaires where necessary while ensuring confidentiality and voluntary participation.
- **Interviews to be recorded:** One-on-one interviews were conducted with chiefs, assistant chiefs, senior police officers and village elders. The appointments for interviews were arranged through phone calls and physical visits to the respondents' offices or residences. During the interviews, the researcher recorded responses through note-taking and audio recording with the consent of the respondents. The audio recordings assisted the researcher in ensuring accuracy during transcription and analysis of qualitative data.

Qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis. The researcher organized the interview responses into themes and categories based on the study objectives. The recurring patterns and emerging issues related to internal migration and national security were identified, interpreted and presented narratively with the relevant verbatim quotations from the respondents.

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics.

Descriptive statistics included frequencies, percentages and averages, which were presented using tables and charts. Inferential statistics were employed, specifically, multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to determine the influence of the independent variables on the dependent variable, inter-ethnic tensions. The analysis enabled the study to establish the individual and combined effects of the seven indicators of new community compositions resulting from internal migration on inter-ethnic tensions in Kajiado County. The level of statistical significance was set at $\alpha = 0.05$. The analyzed qualitative and quantitative findings were triangulated during interpretation in order to enhance the comprehensiveness of the study findings.

5. Results and Discussion

Response Rate

The researcher distributed 435 questionnaires and conducted 21 interviews among the selected respondents comprising security officers, village elders and the members of the general public. The response rate is capture in the Table 2 below.

Table 2: Response Rate

	Response Rate
Successful	417
Unsuccessful	39
Total	456

Out of the targeted sample size of 456 respondents, 417 respondents successfully participated in the study, representing a response rate of 91.4%. According to Hagaman and Wutich (2017) [24], a high response rate enhances the adequacy and credibility of research findings by reducing non-response bias.

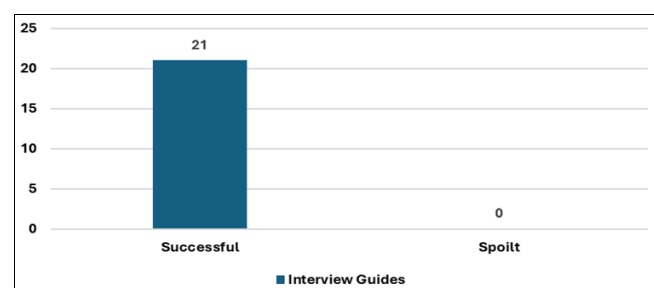


Fig 1: Interview Guide Responses

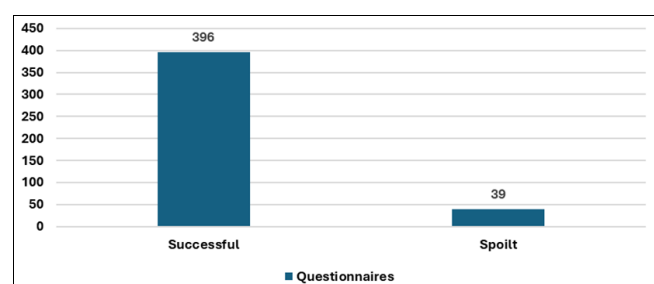


Fig 2: Questionnaires Responses

The number of total scheduled interview guides completed and returned were 21, representing 100% response rate of the total sample population for that particular tool as shown in Fig 1. The number of total questionnaires completed and returned were 396, with the remaining 39 being spoilt due to incomplete data representing 91% response rate of the total

questionnaires distributed as shown in Fig 2. This is more than the required sufficiency framework of between 33% and 66% as advised by Hagaman and Wutich (2017) [24]. According to Baguley (2004) [5], statistical power is enhanced when the sample size is increased. This high response rate enhances the study's reliability, minimizing non-response bias while ensuring robust representation of migration-security dynamics in Kajiado County. The adequate participation of respondents from different categories also enhanced the reliability of findings relating to inter-ethnic tensions, migrant unemployment and urban insecurity within the study area.

Demographic Data

The study had also targeted to find out the socio-demographic characteristics of those who were participating. It was imperative to understand these characteristics as they are known to influence the respondent's perceptions and attitudes (Robertson & Watts, 2016) [48]. In this regard, the socio-demographic characteristics that were measured included age, sex and the level of education.

Sex for the Respondents

The respondents were instructed to specify their sex by inserting a mark close to the applicable choice given (male or female). The answers are as shown below (Fig 3).

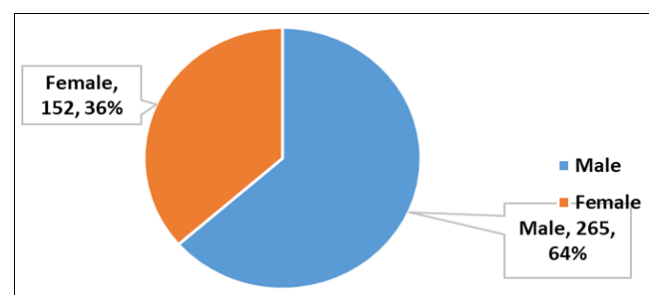


Fig 3: Sex of the Respondents

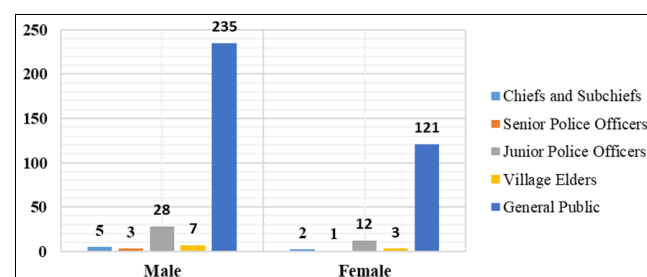


Fig 4: Sex of the Respondents in each Clusters of Respondents

The findings in Fig 3, indicated that 265 (63.5%) respondents were male while 152 (36.5%) were female. This implies that male respondents constituted the majority of the study participants.

Further analysis of respondent distribution within the various categories in Fig 4 above revealed that among chiefs and assistant chiefs, 5 (71.4%) were male while 2 (28.6%) were female. Among senior police officers, 3 (75.0%) were male while 1 (25.0%) was female. Among junior police officers, 28 (70.0%) were male while 12 (30.0%) were female. Village elders comprised 7 (70.0%) male respondents and 3 (30.0%) female respondents. Among members of the general public, 235 (66.0%) respondents were male while 121 (34.0%) were female.

The ratio of male to female in the clusters of Chiefs/Subchiefs, Senior Police Officers, Junior Police Officers and Village Elders was influenced by the fact that more males have taken up security-related duties than females. Also, society tends to give males more opportunities in security-related roles than females. Mutonyi *et al.*, (2020) ^[40] reiterated that security institutions and systems in Kenya have been characterized by maleness, not different from elsewhere, as the security space remains male-dominated.

The ratio of male to female amongst the general public respondents was influenced by the reason that internal migration patterns in Kajiado County often involve more male migrants seeking economic opportunities in urban dormitory towns, leading to higher male participation in security-related community discussions. Additionally, cultural norms in most African communities prioritize male respondents for public consultations on migration-security issues such as communal conflicts and crime prevalence. According to Owino and Mutonyi (2024) ^[46] security-focused research in such contexts risk capturing a skewed reality that reflects only the male-dominated public sphere, while overlooking the private-sphere vulnerabilities and perspectives that are essential for a holistic understanding of community insecurities.

Age for the Respondents

The respondents were requested to show their ages by putting a mark next to the applicable choice offered. The information was captured in the below (Fig 5).

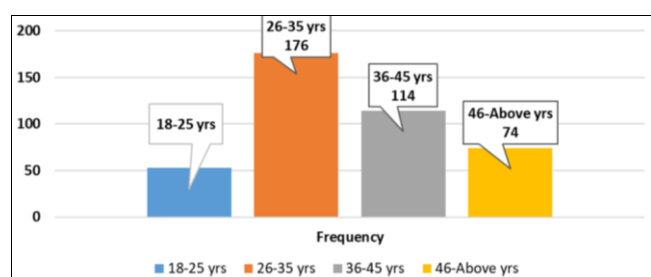


Fig 5: Age for the Respondents

From the results, the 26–35 years' age category was the highest with 176 (44.5%) of the respondents. Second was the 36–45 years age category with 114 (28.8%) of the respondents. Third was the 46+ years age category with 74 (18.7%) of the respondents. The least represented was the 18–25 years age category with 53 (13.4%) of the respondents.

The predominance of the 26–35 years age group likely reflects their active involvement in internal migration dynamics within Kajiado County, as this cohort constitutes the primary economic migrants moving to dormitory towns like Ongata Rongai and Kitengela for employment opportunities. Their heightened exposure to migration-security interfaces such as urban crime prevalence, communal resource conflicts and policing strains, made them key informants for this study. Additionally, their mobility in the formal/informal employment sectors increased their survey accessibility compared to the younger students and older retirees. As Kasegn and Tefera (2025) ^[30] argued that, individuals in that 26–35 age bracket possess the highest migration aspirations and capabilities, making them the defining demographic in rapid urbanization

processes and the most reliable informants on the resulting socio-economic and security pressures.

Levels of Education for Respondents

The respondents were instructed to specify their level of education by inserting a mark where the applicable selection was given. The data is captured in below (Fig 6).

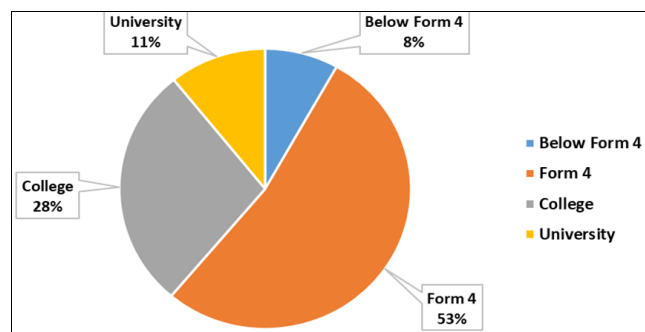


Fig 6: Education Demographic Data of the Respondents

In terms of highest educational levels attained, 34 (8.6%) respondents had below Form 4 education, 221 (55.9%) had Form 4 as their highest qualification, 117 (29.6%) held college diplomas and 45 (11.4%) possessed university degrees. This distribution indicated that, the respondents possessed sufficient literacy to engage meaningfully with complex migration-security issues like crime risks and policing strain in cosmopolitan wards such as Kitengela and Ongata Rongai.

The predominance of Form 4 completers aligns with secondary education serving as the employment threshold for migrant workers entering Kajiado's informal urban economies because Kitengela and Ongata Rongai's dominant informal sectors, trade, construction, horticulture and services, primarily recruit from secondary school graduates seeking entry-level jobs amid rapid urbanization and the migrant influx. This cohort dominates the working-age population actively experiencing migration-security tensions in these cosmopolitan wards. These finding align with Muema and Mwangi (2025) ^[36] who stated that, the concentration of secondary school graduates in high-density 'dormitory' towns can create a unique socio-economic profile where the pursuit of entry-level livelihoods frequently intersects with the county's escalating crime prevalence and institutional policing strain.

Objective of the Study

Having presented and analyzed the demographic features of participants, this section focused on presentation and analysis of the research objective: to analyze the influence of new community compositions from internal migration on inter-ethnic tensions in Kajiado County.

The Influence of New Community Compositions Resulting from Internal Migration on Inter-Ethnic Tensions in Kajiado County

This section presents analyzed and interpreted information in relation to the first objective. The cosmopolitan wards of Kajiado County, Ongata Rongai, Ngong, Kaputiei North and Kitengela, have undergone rapid demographic transformation due to internal migration, resulting in new community compositions blending Maasai pastoralists with diverse ethnic groups from Kenya's urban centers. This

influx has reshaped social fabrics, introducing inter-ethnic tensions over resources, land use and cultural norms amid escalating development pressures. This analysis examined how these evolving compositions influenced inter-ethnic tensions, linking migration patterns to security manifestations like communal conflicts previously highlighted in the study. To establish the influence of new community compositions resulting from internal migration on inter-ethnic tensions, the participants were asked on the various influences on inter-ethnic tensions in Kajiado County. The findings are displayed below (Fig 7):

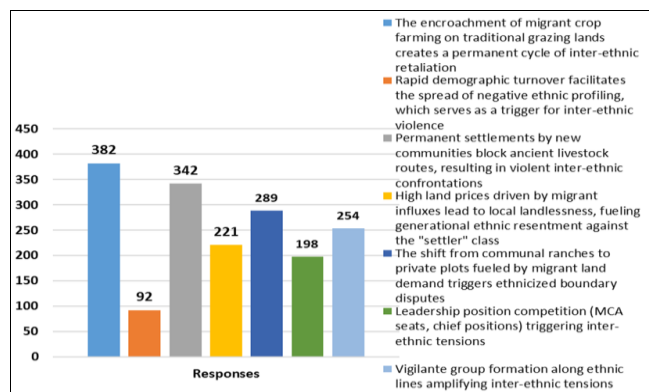


Fig 7: The Influence of New Community Compositions Resulting From Internal Migration on Inter-Ethnic Tensions in Kajiado County

As indicated in the graph above, the most significant influence of new community compositions on inter-ethnic tensions in Kajiado County was the encroachment of the migrant crop farming on the traditional grazing lands creating a permanent cycle of inter-ethnic retaliation over crop destruction and cattle encroachment, represented by 382 respondents (91.6%). This was followed by the permanent settlements by new communities blocking ancient livestock routes resulting in violent inter-ethnic confrontations during the drought seasons, represented by 342 respondents (82.0%). At the third position was the shift from the communal ranches to private plots fueled by the migrant land demand triggering ethnicized boundary disputes between indigenous groups and the new owners, represented by 289 respondents (69.3%). This was followed in the fourth position by the vigilante group formation along ethnic lines amplifying inter-ethnic tensions, represented by 254 respondents (60.9%). The high land prices driven by the migrant influxes leading to local landlessness fueling generational ethnic resentment against the "settler" class ranked fifth with 221 respondents (53.0%), while leadership position competition (MCA seats, chief positions) triggering inter-ethnic tensions was sixth with 198 respondents (47.5%). Lastly, the rapid demographic turnover facilitating negative ethnic profiling serving as a trigger for inter-ethnic violence during the high crime periods, represented by 92 respondents (22.1%). These findings are discussed in the subheadings below.

a. The Encroachment of Migrant Crop Farming on Traditional Grazing Lands Creates a Permanent Cycle of Inter-Ethnic Retaliation Over Crop Destruction and Cattle Encroachment

The expansion of crop farming by the newcomers onto longstanding grazing areas stood out as a key driver,

sparking persistent cycles of retaliation between cultivators and pastoralists over damaged fields and wandering livestock. This resource-based friction not only fuels recurrent clashes but also has entrenched broader communal mistrust in transitional rural settings. One of those Village elders interviewed explained...

"You see, these migrant farmers from upcountry keep coming with their hoes and seeds, clearing big patches of our ancestral Maasai grazing lands to plant maize, beans and potatoes right where our cattle have roamed freely for generations. When dry spells hit and our herds wander into their new shambas looking for grass, the farmers do not hesitate as they chase the cows. We cannot just sit; we go back at night, trample the crops or drive off their livestock, then they retaliate by burning our manyattas and it becomes this endless cycle every rainy and dry season, with no solution in sight because the land keeps shrinking and tempers keep flaring."

Senior Police Officer respondent had this to say...

"I have lost count of the reports like, the migrant farmers fencing off open rangeland, then pastoralists' herds destroy crops at night and next morning, it is machete fights and raided villages. We arrest a few, but tomorrow it is the same; this farming invasion has turned traditional migration routes into permanent war zones, pulling in youth from both sides."

The verbatim accounts from the Village elder and the Senior Police Officer revealed the depth of inter-ethnic tensions fueled by the land-use conflicts in Kajiado County. The Village elder described how the migrant farmers progressively encroached on the traditional grazing lands, transforming communal rangelands into crop fields, which set off retaliatory cycles whenever their livestock strayed. Similarly, the Senior Police Officer highlighted the operational strain of repeated crop destructions leading to machete clashes and the village raids, underscoring how these incidents normalized violence along the migration corridors. These narratives aligned with the study's finding that such resource competition represented the most cited influence of new community compositions resulting from internal migration on ethnic strife, as the respondents consistently emphasized the breakdown of the traditional land-sharing norms. This scenario aligns with observations by Medina *et al.*, (2023) [35], who noted that, the "metropolitan-fringe" geography of regions creates specific conflict hotspots along the major road corridors, where the density of both migrant farms and mobile herds peaks, resulting in predictable seasonal cycles of retributive violence.

Scenarios of incidents on the ground stated by a respondent in one of the questionnaires illustrated the immediacy and predictability of these tensions, drawing from patterns repeatedly reported in affected wards. According to the, during the prolonged dry seasons, large Maasai herds, desperate for sparse vegetation, breached makeshift fences into the newly planted maize and bean fields, prompting furious farmers to mobilize with sticks and chase the cattle back toward bomas while shouting threats of poisoning the water troughs. Such initial standoff often escalated by dusk,

as herders returned under cover of darkness to trample standing crops in revenge or scatter their livestock further into farmlands, leaving flattened patches visible at dawn. In high-traffic market routes like those linking Oloika to Nairobi, pastoralists retaliated against prior livestock chasings by deliberately driving herds through crop edges during peak planting, igniting farmer ambushes that involved stone-throwing and occasional crude weapons clashes, injuring dozens and halting weekly livestock trade for days. The post-rainy season peaks also saw intensified planting on former rangelands, where a single herd incursion could spark chain reactions whereby the farmers burning nearby manyattas, herders raiding granaries thereby trapping communities in weekly violence cycles that overwhelm the local barazas and leave economic losses in the thousands per incident.

The Village elder's testimony exposed underlying grievances over shrinking grazing areas, where economic desperation from the urban migrants drove relentless cultivation of the marginal, drought-prone lands long reserved for pastoral mobility and rotational grazing. This migration dynamic aligned with the theory of migration: the aspirations-capabilities framework, which advances that, individuals migrate when their aspirations for better livelihoods exceed their capabilities within origin areas, often leading to resource strains in destinations. Here, the migrants' unmet aspirations for stable farming clashed with the herders' capabilities to sustain mobile grazing, perpetuating disequilibrium in community functions. This encroachment not only has it fragmented the vital ecosystems thereby reducing fodder availability and forcing longer migrations, but also eroded the fragile social trust built on historical inter-ethnic pacts, as each group's defensive survival tactics, like livestock chasing or retaliatory burnings, hardened stereotypes of inherent aggression and territorial greed. The police perspective complemented this by quantifying enforcement breakdowns, where fleeting arrests after machete skirmishes or raid reports failed to deter recidivism, revealing how short jail terms or fines paled against the immediate economic imperatives of crop protection or herd sustenance. Together, these accounts illuminated how the demographic shifts amplified a zero-sum resource logic, turning brief land-use frictions into lasting ethnic fault lines that area authorities struggle to mediate.

Concerning the encroachment to the migrant crop farming on traditional grazing lands, a Local Pastoralist indicated that...

"When a cow eats a few maize stalks, the police arrive with handcuffs in an hour because that farmer has a title deed and the Chief's phone number. But when our grazing land is fenced off or our water is blocked, we are told to 'wait for a committee.' This is why we no longer report to the station; we solve it ourselves at night."

The study highlights a critical security vacuum where logistical failure and perceived institutional bias directly catalyze communal violence. The severe logistical barriers is validated by the verbatim's description of a police force stuck in the sand, illustrating a state absence that forces frustrated youth to arm themselves with runguns and fill the void. According to Brottem and McDonnell (2020) ^[10] this

transition from herders to vigilantes is fueled by a crisis of legitimacy, as pastoralists view the police as a shield for rich farmers with title deeds, a perception that paralyzes investigations and fosters non-cooperation. Ultimately, the law's inability to intervene within the critical hours exacerbated by hunger, heat and flash floods, allows minor resource disputes to escalate into "tribal wars," turning environmental stressors into triggers for calculated revenge attacks and deep-seated ethnic rifts.

And there were mitigations proposed that that were captured in the questionnaires that centered on community-mediated land-use zoning agreements. That is where the Village elders would facilitate participatory mapping to demarcate permanent crop blocks from the rotational grazing corridors, enforcing through communal signage and seasonal access calendars to any prevent overlaps. Then, the joint farmer-herder committees, drawing from the Nyumba Kumi elders and the youth representations, would be envisioned to oversee shared water points and the emergency fodder banks in settlements like Oloosirkon and Olekasasi, diffusing tensions via pre-arranged compensation formulas for verified damages rather than escalatory reprisals. This proposal aligns with the "Hybrid Peace" model advocated by Owino and Moi (2024) ^[45], which suggests that, incorporating the local Nyumba Kumi structures into the formal resource management committees would provide a more culturally resonant and effective framework for settling compensation claims than the formal court system. Such early-warning systems integrated mobile alerts and radio broadcasts to flag herd movements, would enable proactive diversions, while long-term strategies would emphasize capacity-building through cooperative agro-pastoral pilots offering herders drought-resistant fodder seeds and farmers rotational grazing leases, to lessen sole reliance on contested drylands. These layered approaches would aim to rebuild trust incrementally, prioritizing dialogue platforms over punitive raids to break the retaliation cycle at its communal roots.

b. Permanent settlements by new communities block ancient livestock routes, resulting in violent inter-ethnic confrontations during drought seasons

Permanent settlements by newcomers blocking longstanding livestock routes emerged as a key driver, triggering violent confrontations between groups during the drought periods when herds sought distant pastures. This obstruction not only sparked immediate clashes but also sustained underlying hostilities in transitional pastoral landscapes. In the words of a chief respondent...

"Our ancient livestock routes that have served generations are now blocked by the permanent houses and fences from the new settlers. During droughts, when we must move herds long distances to find pasture and water, these blockages force us into their compounds, sparking fights with crudes weapons as they defend their homes while we protect our only wealth. This endless problem divides our communities further during each dry season."

Another Village Elder respondent had this to say...

"These newcomers build settlements right across the old migration paths our ancestors marked with sacred

stones. In dry seasons, the herders have no choice but to pass through, but the settlers chase them off violently, leading to clashes that leave blood on the routes and deepen hatred between our communities every time the drought strikes. Without these routes open, peace remains just a distant hope."

The verbatim accounts from the Chief and Village Elder underscored the acute inter-ethnic tensions arising from the permanent settlements obstructing livestock routes in Kajiado County. The Chief emphasized how, the generational migration paths, essential for herd survival, faced blockages from new housing and fencing, igniting drought-season confrontations. The Village Elder highlighted the cultural desecration of sacred route markers, which compelled the herders into forced passages and violent defenses by settlers. These responses corroborated the study's finding that, such obstructions ranked as the second most cited influence of shifting community compositions on ethnic strife, as the participants repeatedly lamented the loss of mobility critical to pastoral livelihoods. This is consistent with Kaua (2023) ^[31], who found that, the loss of traditional "mobility corridors" due to private land enclosures has normally been the primary driver of violent livestock-related confrontations in Kenya's peri-urban pastoral counties.

The Chief's narrative revealed deeper systemic pressures, where unchecked settlement expansion prioritized static land claims over dynamic pastoral needs, fracturing the historical coexistence pacts that once allowed seasonal passage rights. This Elder corroborated by invoking ancestral markers, illustrating how cultural erosion has amplified emotional stakes, turning practical route disputes into symbols of communal dispossession. This systemic breakdown was best explained by the Structural-Functionalism theory, which posits that a society is an integrated system of interdependent parts that must function in harmony to maintain social equilibrium. In this context, the obstruction of traditional routes represents a "social dysfunction" where the rapid change in land use severs the vital linkages between the pastoral and the sedentary "organs" of the county, leading to a state of instability and more systemic conflict. Together, the accounts exposed how demographic influxes rigidified land uses, transforming fluid drought coping mechanisms into flashpoints that the local customary systems struggled to contain amid rising populations.

Data captured from the study participants provided a vivid depiction of the volatility of blockages occurring within the localities of Rangau and Maasai Lodge, particularly during drought peaks. One respondent in an interview detailed a recurring scenario where herders, driving thousands of cattle along increasingly narrowed routes, encounter sudden barricades erected by settler homesteads at the Maasai Lodge areas. This friction reportedly prompted desperate diversions that trampled boundary crops and thereby provoked immediate and violent confrontations that involved the use of crude weapons.

The qualitative feedback further highlighted a pattern of nighttime violence, where migrations to distant water points clashed with the settlers' night guards in the Rangau localities, escalating into arrow shooting and retaliatory fires that resulted in injuries and the destruction of temporary shelters. Along the major corridors leading to the trading

centers, the respondents noted that blocked paths frequently forced the herds through peri-urban peripheries whereby in these zones, the youthful settlers had been known to stage ambushes with stones. These accounts described day-long standoffs that not only halt livestock movement but also disrupt markets and leave livestock stranded without fodder, illustrating the profound impact of these localized blockages on both communal security and the regional economy in Ongata Rongai Ward.

But some challenge with this is that as captured in some questionnaire, encompassed jurisdictional overlaps between the administrative chiefs and the traditional elders, which diluted unified enforcement of route easements and allowed the settlers to exploit legal ambiguities in land titles, often citing individual deeds against communal pathways. Scarce drought surveillance strained herder-settler dialogues, as water scarcity heightened tempers and the youth radicalization has filled mediation gaps with the vigilante patrols that at times escalate minor blockages into armed standoffs. And as enforcement hurdles persist due to poor route mapping, they leave disputes reactive rather than preempted, while economic disparities then fuel settler resistance to concessions on "owned" plots, perpetuating cycles of mistrust and non-compliance.

But some respondents in both the questionnaires and interview geode proposed ways to improve to mitigate against the violent inter-ethnic confrontations during drought seasons. They included the collaborative route restoration through chief-elder alliances mapping and gazetting livestock corridors with physical markers and legal protections for cases like Enkasiti, ensuring clear signage and penalties for any obstructions. Also mentioned were the community peace barazas during wet seasons established drought protocols, like paid passage fees or shared grazing reserves, while the youth training in non-violent herding fostered de-escalation roles during the peak tensions. There can also be a long-term, county-led land-use plans integrated settler compensation for easements, thereby promoting hybrid agro-pastoral zones to accommodate both groups and avert seasonal violence cycles, alongside the mobile app-based alerts for real-time route monitoring. This proposal aligns with the integrated land management strategies advocated by Sulieman (2026) ^[50], who suggested that, negotiated easements and shared-use zoning can be more effective at maintaining peace in ASAL regions than purely the exclusionary land titles.

c. The shift from communal ranches to private plots fueled by migrant land demand triggers ethnicized boundary disputes between indigenous groups and new owners

The transition from the communal ranches to private land holdings, driven by the external demand, surfaced as a major catalyst, igniting disputes over boundaries between the original inhabitants and the incoming owners. This tenure shifts not only have provoked immediate conflicts but also entrenched divisions in mixed rural settings. A local chief respondent said this...

"When our communal ranches started breaking into private plots, the outsiders came buying up the best pieces with cash from the city, putting up fences where we used to graze freely together. Now every boundary becomes a fight as our people say it is their ancestral

share, while the new owners show out the title deeds and call the police. These disputes have turned neighbors into enemies overnight. Without the old ranch unity, trust has vanished and small arguments grow into lasting hatreds."

A village elder respondent said this...

"The old ranch system kept peace because land belonged to all of us, but selling has brought strangers who grabbed plots without respecting our ways. When drought comes and cattle cross what they call 'their' lines, it sparks accusations of trespassing, beatings and even court battles that divide families and clans we once shared milk and meat with. This endless grabbing leaves our young warriors ready to defend every fence line with force."

The narration from the Chief and Village Elder illuminated the profound inter-ethnic tensions stemming from the privatization of communal ranches in Kajiado County. The Chief detailed how the external buyers fragmented shared grazing lands into fenced plots, transforming cooperative resource use into contested boundaries marked by title deeds and police interventions. This transition is best explained by the theory of migration: the aspirations-capabilities framework, which posits that, migration is driven by the desire for socio-economic advancement and the financial means to actualize it. In Kajiado, the influx of the migrants with the capability to purchase land for private ownership directly undermines the aspirations of the indigenous community to preserve communal rangelands, resulting in a fundamental collision of economic interests and cultural values. These testimonies reinforced the study's finding that this tenure shift ranked third among influences of new community compositions on ethnic conflicts, as the respondents highlighted the erosion of traditional unity. Such narratives underscored the human cost of rapid land markets, where economic opportunities for some bred insecurity for many others.

The Chief's account exposed how the market-driven land sales disrupted equitable subdivision promises, privileging cash-rich migrants over the indigenous members and igniting claims of dispossession. This perspective aligned with the Elder's cultural critique, where privatization severed the intergenerational bonds of reciprocity, replacing fluid access with rigid exclusion that amplified scarcity perceptions. Collectively, these narratives demonstrated how tenure changes weaponized ethnicity, converting economic transactions into the symbols of communal betrayal that customary forums could no longer resolve. The shift also strained kinship networks, as the internal ranch divisions pitted relatives against each other in court over perceived unequal allotments.

Data gathered from the study participants provided a vivid depiction of the raw intensity of boundary disputes, with one respondent in an interview detailing a specific flashpoint where a herder crossing a newly fenced plot in Ololua to reach water triggered a violent standoff. The account described how the arrival of an absentee owner with surveyors led to fistfights and livestock impoundments that effectively halted Ololua's community markets for days. This scenario captured in the field research aligned with observations by Olanrewaju *et al.*, (2025) ^[43], who noted

that, the land markets near expanding cities often triggered violent confrontations between the wealthy land buyers and the traditional cattle herders over critical resources like water and access paths.

The qualitative feedback further highlighted that during dry spells, overlapping claims frequently lead to indigenous groups dismantling fences at night, while new owners retaliate by digging trenches. According to the respondents, these actions have escalated into spear-wielding confrontations that recently resulted in the injury of a kinsman from a neighboring ranch in Ilkeek Lemedungi areas. The participants also noted that, the local adjudication meetings frequently dissolve into shouting matches over stolen shares, prompting the youth from both sides to form patrols that transform routine grazing into armed territorial defenses. These episodes, which the respondents observed would often peak during the market days, have created a significant economic fallout that ripples across the entire ward, undermining both social cohesion and the local commerce.

As stated by some respondents during the interviews, challenges encountered involved overlapping legal frameworks, where statutory titles clashed with unwritten ranch agreements, creating confusion that courts exploited for delays while disputes festered. This challenge mirrored findings by Pendle (2021) ^[47], who established that, the plurality of authority between the state-enforced land titles and traditional customary norms often created a legal vacuum that allows powerful interests to override communal claims. This mistrust between the original members and buyers has hindered mediation, as literacy gaps has left elders vulnerable to forged documents and the youth impatience fueling preemptive fence destructions. Also mentioned were the remote plot locations compounded enforcement issues, with under-resourced chiefs facing threats from the politically backed investors who dismissed traditional authority.

The questionnaire results identified several community-led mitigations aimed at resolving the friction between the private titles and communal grazing. The respondents emphasized the adoption of hybrid tenure models like at Milimani and Noonkopir, where the local chiefs would oversee phased subdivisions while ensuring that mandatory communal grazing enclaves were preserved through enforceable county by-laws. This grassroots proposal would align with the integrated land management strategies advocated by Augustinus and Tempra (2021) ^[4], who suggest that, negotiated easements and shared-use zoning were more effective at maintaining peace in ASAL regions than purely exclusionary land titles.

Furthermore, the feedback from the participants in the questionnaires suggested the institutionalization of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) forums, which would integrate the traditional elders with official land registrars to increase transparency in claim verification. To prevent exploitative land deals that often trigger violence, the respondents highlighted the need for awareness campaigns focused on legal sale consents. Over the long term, the data indicated a preference for cooperative ranching models that offer revenue-sharing leases to the newcomers, thereby balancing individual private gains with the collective access to resources. Finally, the qualitative responses pointed toward capacity-building workshops designed to equip the local youth with surveying and demarcation skills, fostering

a sense of ownership in fair land division and ensuring that the inter-communal dialogue continues beyond periods of immediate crisis.

d. Vigilante group formation along ethnic lines amplifying inter-ethnic tensions

The emergence of the vigilante groups organized along ethnic affiliations stood out as a significant driver, amplifying mistrust and readiness for confrontation between communities. This pattern not only heightened localized insecurity but also perpetuated cycles of retaliation in diverse rural settlements. A Senior Police Officer respondent had this to say...

"These days every small quarrel turns into ethnic squads forming overnight, youth from the migrant ethnic groups arming with rungu to guard shambas, Maasai morans patrolling with spears for cattle routes. We respond to one raid, three more pop up as they have turned community policing into tribal warfare that keeps us chasing shadows across the wards. Night after night, we get calls about ambushes where these groups attack each other over old grudges, pulling in more fighters and making our stations overflow with those injured from both sides."

A chief responded as following...

"New faces brought fear, so our boys formed protection groups along clan lines, but now every other community does the same, watching each other like enemies ready to strike. What started as neighborhood watches have become vigilante armies clashing over every foot of land or stray animal, making peace impossible in mixed villages. I have called barazas to disarm them, but the leaders from each side claim the others started it first, turning my office into a battlefield of accusations that never ends."

The verbatim accounts from the Senior Police Officer and Chief exposed the escalating inter-ethnic tensions driven by the vigilante group formation in Kajiado County. The Senior Police Officer described how minor disputes rapidly generated ethnically aligned groups armed with traditional weapons, transforming informal policing into widespread tribal confrontations that overwhelms the security responses. The Chief recounted the shift from protective neighborhood watches to rival armies fueled by mutual suspicion among the new communities, rendering mediation efforts futile amid constant accusations. These responses aligned with the study's finding that, vigilante mobilization ranked fourth among the influences of changing community compositions on ethnic strife, as participants stressed how fear bred parallel security structures. And it can be observed that in Kenya's pastoral-urban interfaces, the breakdown of the formal security guarantees frequently forces residents to resort to ethnic self-help mechanisms, creating a landscape of competing vigilante groups that deepen communal fissures. And also, rapid urbanization in peri-urban wards speeds this fragmentation further.

Data collected from the questionnaire respondents vividly illustrated the chaotic spiral of vigilante clashes within mixed settlements, specifically highlighting how minor

logistical frictions rapidly escalate into organized communal violence. One specific scenario captured in the field reports detailed nighttime cattle straying incident where one ethnic group's youth patrol confronted another guarding crop edges in Kisaju, an encounter that reportedly erupted into rungu beatings and triggered a series of revenge ambushes the following evening. The respondents further noted that, these territorial tensions spill over into commercial activities during the market days, with the rival squads frequently clashing over parking disputes at ward boundaries.

These accounts described the youth wielding spears and clubs in full view of traders, a level of volatility that reportedly halts local commerce and forces the police into prolonged standoffs, underscoring the respondents' concerns that routine economic interactions remain highly susceptible to ethnicized vigilante interference. This scenario is consistent with Hantalo and Dube (2023) ^[25] who noted that, rapidly expanding urban fringes provide a vacuum for the emergence of informal youth groups, which transform routine logistical frictions into broader ethnic conflicts to assert their dominance over specific territories. The roadblocks erected by self-styled protectors to check outsiders often degenerated into vehicle burnings and lootings, pulling the neutral residents into ethnic allegiances overnight. These events frequently spilled into residential estates during the weekends.

The Senior Police Officer's operational frustrations revealed how the vigilante proliferation inverted the state authority, with groups exploiting security vacuums to enforce parochial justice that deepened divides. From the perspective of the Structural-Functionalism, the emergence of ethnic vigilantes signifies a profound social dysfunction where the specialized organs of the state fail to maintain equilibrium, forcing the community to develop parallel, poorly adjusted structures to perform the protective function. This systemic breakdown occurs when rapid demographic changes outpace the adaptive capacity of the formal security institutions, resulting in a fractured social order where the parts no longer work in show for the collective good. The Chief's mediation failures illustrated the breakdown of unified community oversight, where ethnic loyalty trumped collective peace, amplifying small grievances into protracted feuds. Together, these accounts demonstrated how demographic mixing without integration fostered defensive arming, turning shared spaces into contested territories patrolled by parallel powers.

The questionnaire responses identified several systemic challenges that have hindered the effectiveness of community-led security initiatives. A primary concern raised by the respondents in Noonkopir was the blurred lines between the legitimate Nyumba Kumi units and ethnic vigilantes, a factor that reportedly allowed armed groups to masquerade as official security organs while evading any disbandment orders. This specific challenge mirrors the research of Owino and Moi (2024) ^[45], who argued that, the blurring of lines between state-sanctioned community policing and the ethnic vigilantism in Kenya often allowed local strongmen to co-opt Nyumba Kumi structures for parochial and sometimes criminal interests. Furthermore, participants highlighted that, severe resource constraints leave the police physically unable to dismantle dispersed criminal cells operating across the porous ward borders.

The data further revealed that, informant fears continue to stifle the flow of actionable intelligence regarding planned

raids, leaving security forces reactive rather than proactive. The respondents also cited political patronage as a major bottleneck, noting that the local leaders often shielded protectors from arrest, which causes disarmament talks to collapse into unproductive blame games. Additionally, the qualitative feedback pointed to communication gaps between the rural outposts as a barrier to coordinated responses, while the high rate of youth unemployment was identified by a majority of the respondents as a primary driver providing a steady supply of the vigilante foot soldiers.

The questionnaire responses yielded several strategic mitigations aimed at professionalizing the local security and curbing ethnic vigilantism. A primary recommendation from the respondents in Muigai Estate centered on the establishment of unified command structures, which would merge the local chiefs, elders and the police officers into formal oversight committees. The participants suggested that, these committees should be responsible for vetting and training community patrols using strict ethnic-neutral rosters to prevent parochial interests from co-opting security functions. This grassroots approach to oversight would align with the broader framework of Community-Based Policing (CBP), which emphasizes that local legitimacy is best maintained through multi-stakeholder accountability mechanisms.

Furthermore, the data highlighted a strong preference for disarmament pardons paired with targeted youth employment schemes. The respondents noted that, providing economic alternatives was a critical mitigation for redirecting idle recruits into formal security backups or other productive sectors. To address the ideological roots of conflict, the qualitative feedback emphasized the role of the public sensitizations via barazas, which aim to reframe protection as a collective rather than tribal duty. Over the long term, the participants advocated for the creation of conflict early-warning desks at the sub-county level to track vigilante mobilization triggers, thereby enabling proactive dialogues before flashpoints ignite.

e. High land prices driven by migrant influxes lead to local landlessness, fueling generational ethnic resentment against the "settler" class

Surging land prices from the incoming populations can render local land ownership unattainable, creating widespread dispossession among the younger generations. This economic exclusion can not only breed resentment toward established newcomers but can also sustain multi-generational divides in transitional rural communities. A Village Elder respondent had this to say...

"Land prices shot up when the outsiders started buying and now our young men cannot afford even a single acre of their fathers' inheritance as everything goes for city money leaving us landless on our own soil. They call these buyers 'settlers' and curse them daily, saying strangers stole what generations fought for and this bitterness passes to their sons who see no future here. Every baraza echoes with these complaints, yet nothing changes as more plots vanish to the highest bidder"

General Public Member's had this response...

"Before the migrants came with cash, we could subdivide ranches for every son, but now high prices lock us out while they build mansions on our grazing lands. Our boys just wander jobless as they blame the settlers for taking everything and you can hear them plotting at night about chasing them away as their anger grows hotter each year with no land left for us the locals. The old men shake their heads, warning that without land for the youth, violence will consume the whole county soon."

The verbatim accounts from the village elder and a general public member highlighted the deepening inter-ethnic tensions arising from skyrocketing land prices in Kajiado County. The village elder articulated how the migrant-driven demand rendered ancestral lands unaffordable for the local youth, fostering a narrative of dispossession that branded the newcomers as settlers and perpetuated inherited grudges. The general public member in Yukos area echoed this frustration, contrasting the past equitable subdivisions with the current exclusion that left jobless youth harboring vengeful plots against the outsiders. These perspectives supported the study's finding that economic landlessness ranked fifth among the influences of new community compositions on ethnic conflicts, as the respondents linked market forces to simmering generational alienation. This dynamic mirrored broader peri-urban pressures where proximity to Nairobi accelerated speculative buying. This is consistent with Kimaru, *et al.*, (2021) ^[32], who noted that, the metropolitan spillover from Nairobi into Kajiado has triggered hyper-inflation in land values, effectively pricing out the indigenous populations and creating a permanent state of economic friction.

Data captured from the study participants provided a vivid depiction of how the localized resentments over land subdivision manifest in everyday social struggles. One respondent in an interview detailed a recurring scenario in New Valley neighborhood where the youth gather at roadside tea stalls openly debate the eviction of the settler families from subdivided ranches, an atmosphere that reportedly leads to slashing tires as warnings and occasionally escalates into stone-throwing chases. These field findings illustrated a growing volatility within the communal spaces where the presence of new land owners is viewed with open hostility by the local youth.

The qualitative feedback further highlighted the intensity of these disputes during formal inheritance barazas, where the landless sons have been observed confronting the elders for selling ancestral land to outsiders. These accounts described incidents of smashing survey pegs and vows of retaliation that manifest as nighttime fence cuttings on the neighboring plots in Matasia. The respondents also noted that, even private family gatherings have turned tense when returning migrants showcase new property purchases, prompting heated accusations of betrayal that spill into public confrontations between the youth and those perceived as sellouts. According to the participants, these flare-ups often coincide with market cycles, effectively amplifying economic grievances across the wards and transforming the

routine commercial days into periods of heightened communal risk.

The Village Elder's emphasis on vanishing inheritances revealed how price inflation have severed cultural continuity, positioning land as a zero-sum contest where the locals in Merisho settlements viewed migrant wealth as predatory. This resonated with the public member's warning of impending violence, illustrating how joblessness amplified the perceptions of settler dominance over vital grazing resources. This friction is best understood through the theory of migration: the aspirations-capabilities framework, which highlights the social inequality generated when a migrant group possesses high economic capability to actualize their ownership aspirations, while the host community experiences a capability trap where they can no longer afford to occupy their ancestral lands. In this context, migration becomes a source of insecurity because the capability of the newcomer effectively cancels out the aspirations of the local youth, leading to a profound sense of relative deprivation and ethnic resentment. Collectively, these voices exposed the paradox of market liberalization, where opportunities for some, gets to crystallize the exclusion for others, transforming economic envy into ethnic narratives that strained social cohesion. This finding aligns with Bhanye (2025) ^[9] who argued that, the transition from communal moral economies to individualistic land markets in pastoral regions fundamentally weaponizes ethnic identity as a tool for economic defense.

The questionnaire results identified several systemic challenges that have exacerbated land-based tensions in the study area. A primary concern raised by the respondents was the influence of speculative land cartels, which reportedly inflate prices beyond the reach of the local residents and manipulate auctions to favor the external bidders, effectively disempowering the indigenous negotiators. The participants indicated that, this economic exclusion has created a vacuum in which youth radicalization thrives, as high unemployment rates fuel recruitment into anti-settler rhetoric without the traditional elder oversight. These findings are consistent with the research of Bhanye (2024) ^[8] who established that, institutional weakness in land administration acts as a conflict multiplier in migration zones, where administrative errors are frequently interpreted as deliberate acts of ethnic exclusion. Furthermore, the data revealed that weak land registries have enabled frequent double allocations, a factor cited by the respondents as a major driver pitting communities against each other. Qualitative feedback also highlighted significant regulatory gaps that allow for unchecked land sales, leaving the local chiefs overwhelmed by petitions they lack the legal authority to halt.

The questionnaire results identified a robust set of community-led mitigations aimed at safeguarding land accessibility and promoting intergenerational stewardship. A primary recommendation from the respondents focused on the establishment of affordability safeguards, such as county-level land banks that would reserve specific plots for the local residents at subsidized rates. This proactive approach to land accessibility aligns with the broader right to land frameworks, which emphasizes that local tenure security is a prerequisite for long-term regional stability (Adéchian & Baco, 2025) ^[2]. Furthermore, qualitative feedback emphasized the role of joint monitoring committees comprising both the traditional elders and the

official land registrars to curb illicit sales and foster intergenerational dialogues.

f. Leadership position competition (MCA seats, chief positions) triggering inter-ethnic tensions

Competition for leadership roles, such as elected and administrative positions, emerged as a notable trigger, pitting groups against each other in bids for representation and control. This rivalry not only sparked electoral disputes but also deepened divisions in the politically diverse settlements. A chief respondent had this to say...

"When chief or MCA positions open up, every ethnic group pushes their own candidate hard, claiming it is their turn to control development funds and security decisions. Rallies turn into shouting matches or fistfights between the rival supporters, with accusations flying that outsiders want to dominate our county leadership. This competition splits settlement areas that once cooperated, leaving lasting grudges long after elections end."

A general public member's response was...

"Every election season, MCA seats become ethnic battlegrounds as the Maasai say it's their land so their leader, the newcomers demand numbers mean their representative, turning campaign meetings into tribal standoffs. The youth from the different groups clash at rallies over who deserves the position, blocking roads and burning tires until the police come. We have seen friends become enemies overnight because their communities backed different candidates for the same seat."

The verbatim accounts from the Chief and General Public member laid bare the corrosive impact of leadership competition on inter-ethnic harmony in Kajiado County, positioning it as the second-to-last most cited influence of shifting community compositions on tensions. The Chief captured the raw mechanics of how openings for administrative roles like chiefs triggered fierce ethnic lobbying, with groups asserting entitlement to control over funds and security, often devolving into physical confrontations that fractured prior cooperation. Complementing this, the General Public member's narrative vividly portrayed MCA elections as tribal arenas, where numerical claims by the newcomers clashed with indigenous land-based assertions, mobilizing youth into violent rallies that severed longstanding friendships. This transition aligns with Di Matteo (2021) ^[18] who argued that, the decentralization of power in Kenya has inadvertently turned administrative appointments into high-stakes ethnic competitions, where the capture of a Chief's office is seen as essential for communal security and resource control. Such firsthand testimonies resonated deeply with the study's broader findings, illustrating how political stakes weaponized demographic diversity, transforming aspirational contests into enduring communal rifts that undermined county-wide cohesion.

Data captured from the study participants provided a stark depiction of how the leadership rivalries ignite real-time chaos across the wards especially in the localities of Kandisi and Ngong Town Centre, often escalating from verbal

sparring to outright mayhem. One respondent in an interview detailed a typical pre-election flare-up where supporters of rival MCA aspirants from different ethnic blocs converged on a ward development meeting. The account described how accusations of outsider domination led to the hurling of stones and the uprooting of campaign posters, an incident that reportedly forced chiefs to flee and left trading centers deserted for days amid threats of reprisal. The qualitative feedback further highlighted a recurrent pattern during chief appointment announcements, where kin of displaced candidates were observed blockading sub-county offices with burning tires. The participants described these groups in Ngong Town Centre chanting ethnic slogans and clashing with the police using whips and catapults, actions that resulted in arrests which only fueled narratives of biased state favoritism toward specific communities. This scenario captured in the field research aligns with the findings of Ullah *et al.* (2020) ^[51], who noted that in rapidly urbanizing regions, the voter-migration phenomenon creates deep insecurity as indigenous communities perceive the numerical strength of newcomers as a direct threat to their traditional political dominance.

The Chief's insights exposed the structural irony of devolution, where the intended empowerment through local positions instead amplified zero-sum ethnic arithmetic, as groups calculated representation based on population influxes rather than merit or unity. This aligned seamlessly with the public member's observation of youth radicalization, where campaign zeal converted economic frustrations into tribal loyalty tests, eroding the social fabric that once buffered political contests with cross-community alliances. This systemic friction may also be interpreted through the lens of Institutional Theory, which posits that organizational stability depends on the perceived legitimacy of its formal rules and representative structures. In Kajiado, the failure to institutionalize power-sharing norms has created a legitimacy crisis where administrative and political offices are viewed as tribal assets rather than neutral public institutions, thereby turning every leadership vacancy into a destabilizing ethnic contest. Critically, these accounts can create a vicious feedback loop of electoral violence deterred moderate candidates, elevating hardliners who would thrive on division, while post-election patronage networks would reward ethnic kingmakers, perpetuating insecurity as losers' supporters harbor grudges that can manifest in service boycotts or sabotage of rival-led projects.

The questionnaire results indicated that, campaign financing disparities heavily favor well-funded ethnic patrons, facilitating vote-buying sprees that incite desperate counter-mobilizations among marginalized groups. Furthermore, respondents highlighted that in Kitengela Ward (Kajiado East constituency) weak electoral oversight allows inflammatory rhetoric to go unchecked, frequently culminating in unpunished rally violence. These observations reflect the research by Abdullayev *et al.* (2023) ^[1] who established that, the lack of robust institutional oversight at the grassroots level allows local political aspirants to exploit ethnic grievances with impunity.

g. Rapid demographic turnover facilitates the spread of negative ethnic profiling, which serves as a trigger for inter-ethnic violence during periods of high crime

Rapid demographic changes fostered negative ethnic stereotyping, which ignited violence during crime spikes as

communities pointed fingers across group lines. This profiling pattern not only accelerated mistrust but also prolonged unrest in fluid urban-rural interfaces. A Senior Police Officer respondent had this to say...

"With so many new faces moving in and out fast, any theft or break-in immediately gets blamed on those people from upcountry or the Maasai boys, turning simple crime reports into mob demands for ethnic roundups. During busy crime periods like market days, one stolen goat sparks finger-pointing that leads to beatings between groups before we even investigate. This profiling makes our work harder as everyone suspects their neighbors first, not the real culprits."

A general public member's response was...

"The newcomers come and go so quickly that we do not know who is who anymore, so when something gets stolen, everyone says it must be the Kikuyu traders or Kamba workers causing trouble. Crime waves make it worse as the youth start patrolling and attacking anyone from other tribes, claiming they are behind it all. This constant blaming has made trust disappear, turning our mixed neighborhood into a place where everyone watches each other like enemies."

The verbatim accounts from the Senior Police Officer and General Public member illuminated the delicate yet harmful role of rapid demographic turnover in fueling negative ethnic profiling as the least cited influence of evolving community compositions on the inter-ethnic tensions in Kajiado County. The Senior Police Officer explained that, the movement of people into certain communities made residents start blaming whole ethnic groups for crimes. This turned normal crime reports into calls to punish entire groups, which made investigations difficult and led to early outbreaks of violence. The General Public member captured the erosion of social trust, where unfamiliar faces during crime surges prompted vigilante patrols targeting "outsiders," effectively turning neighborhoods into suspicion zones. This finding aligns with Ceccato and Abraham (2022) ^[11], who observed that in Kenya's rapidly changing peri-urban zones, the loss of social familiarity due to high migration turnover frequently led to the "othering" of new arrivals, where ethnic identity becomes a proxy for criminal suspicion. These narratives aligned with the study's findings, underscoring how high mobility disrupted social learning curves, allowing stereotypes to flourish unchecked and convert minor incidents into ethnic frequent flashpoints.

Data captured from the study participants provided a vivid depiction of how profiling and localized crime waves can ignite widespread unrest, often escalating from communal whispers to open violence in Olekasasi and Kibiku settlements. One respondent in an interview detailed a typical flashpoint during a bustling market day where a reported phone theft prompted the youth from one community to barricade exit routes and assault traders from a rival ethnic group. The account described a scene where several individuals were beaten unconscious before the elders and subchiefs intervened, leaving stalls looted and daily commerce paralyzed for hours.

The qualitative feedback further highlighted a dangerous trend in the residential estates with high tenant turnover, where a string of burglaries led residents to label all newcomers from specific tribes as automatic culprits. The participants described midnight raids where some individuals were dragged from their homes for public floggings, actions that frequently drew counter-mobs and resulted in retaliatory house burnings. This scenario captured in the field research is consistent with the findings of Estevens (2022) ^[20], who noted that, metropolitan-fringe estates often experience a breakdown in social cohesion where the lack of tenant longevity prevents the formation of cross-ethnic security alliances, making these areas prone to mob justice based on tribal profiling.

Additionally, the respondents noted that post-harvest crime spikes in peri-urban fringes have amplified these patterns of mutual suspicion. According to the feedback, the pastoralists frequently accuse crop farmers of stock theft, while the urban migrants blame herders for residential break-ins. These conflicting narratives have reportedly culminated in street battles that hospitalized dozens, illustrating a profound collapse of communal trust. As described by the participants, the absence of verified reporting mechanisms has allowed ethnic profiling to become the default response to insecurity, turning every petty crime into a potential catalyst for inter-group warfare.

The Senior Police Officer's frustration highlighted an operational paradox where the demographic fluidity handicapped evidence-based policing, as public pressure for swift ethnic targeting undermined forensic processes and perpetuated impunity for the actual offenders. This merged with the public member's lament over vanished trust, revealing how profiling served as a cognitive shortcut in high-mobility settings, where lack of enduring interactions allowed biases to harden into self-fulfilling violence cycles. This breakdown of social oversight findings resonate with the Routine Activity Theory, which posits that, crime and social disorder flourish when demographic fluidity weakens the capable guardian in this case, the collective community vigilance that depends on mutual recognition and shared social norms. In high-turnover wards, the absence of stable relationships creates a guardianship void, where the resulting anonymity allows both the actual offenders to operate undetected and the fearful residents to resort to misguided ethnic profiling as a substitute for genuine security. Critically, these accounts exposed the multiplier effect of turnover that is, the short-term residents lacked incentives for restraint, while long-timers weaponized stereotypes to assert their territorial dominance. Despite this finding, questionnaire results identified a significant set of challenges stemming from the high rate of human mobility and the digital spread of misinformation. A primary concern raised by respondents was the overwhelmed policing capacity in the transient zones, where the constant influxes of people have reportedly strained official identification processes. The participants indicated that, this fluidity has enabled perpetrators to blend into new arrivals, effectively evading accountability for cross-border or communal crimes. Furthermore, data from the qualitative responses highlighted that, community feedback loops have become a source of instability, specifically, unverified social media rumors during crime peaks were cited as triggers for

self-reinforcing mob actions that occur before official facts can be established.

These field observations directly reflect the research by Coscia and Rossi (2022) ^[14], who argued that, the intersection of digital misinformation and ethnic polarization creates a volatile intelligence environment where police struggle to separate legitimate security tips from biased accusations designed to settle communal scores. The respondents in Chuna Estate and Airport View further noted that, linguistic and cultural barriers frequently hinder witness cooperation across the different ethnic and national groups, creating gaps in criminal investigations. Additionally, the feedback pointed to political exploitation as a compounding factor, with the respondents observing that, the local leaders often invoke profiling narratives to rally their bases during election cycles. This tactic was reported to further polarize already fluid demographics, ultimately rendering neutral mediation platforms ineffective when they are needed most.

To mitigate these vulnerabilities, questionnaire responses identified several strategic mitigations aimed at enhancing social cohesion and professionalizing crime reporting in some highly transient zones. A primary recommendation from the respondents at Kibiku and Acacia rural ranch settlements focused on the implementation of community integration accelerators, such as mandatory newcomer registration drives paired with regular intercultural barazas. The participants indicated that, these platforms were essential for building familiarity and dispelling ethnic stereotypes preemptively before they escalated into conflict. This grassroots approach to integration may also be interpreted through the lens of the broader Social Contact Theory frameworks, which suggests that structured, positive interactions between the diverse groups can significantly reduce prejudice and communal tension (Holland, Masuda & Robinson, 2022) ^[26].

Furthermore, in response to the challenges, the data from the respondents highlighted a strong preference for the police-led crime reporting hotlines featuring anonymous ethnic-blind triage systems. The respondents noted that such mechanisms would be critical for reducing the influence of mob demands and ensuring that security tips were evaluated on merit rather than tribal affiliation. In Ilkeek Lemedungi areas of Kaputiei North Ward, the introduction of an anonymous police-led reporting mechanism reportedly improved the flow of credible security information by reducing fear of ethnic profiling and mob pressure, which allowed the officers to assess reports on their operational value and intervene before tensions escalated. Over the long term, the participants advocated for urban planning interventions that incorporated trust-building designs, such as shared recreational spaces in high-turnover wards. According to the feedback, these shared spaces would foster the organic interactions necessary to counter profiling instincts and restore neighborhood vigilance as a collective communal asset rather than an ethnic tool.

h. Regression of the Influence of New Community Compositions Resulting from Internal Migration on Inter-Ethnic Tensions

A multiple linear regression analysis was also performed to complement and summarize the findings obtained from the

descriptive analysis. The researcher used the seven indicators of new community compositions resulting from internal migration, namely encroachment of migrant crop farming on traditional grazing lands, permanent settlements by new communities blocking ancient livestock routes, the shift from communal ranches to private plots fueled by migrant land demand, vigilante group formation along ethnic lines, high land prices driven by migrant influxes

leading to local landlessness and generational ethnic resentment, leadership position competition (MCA seats and chief positions) and the rapid demographic turnover facilitating negative ethnic profiling, as the independent variables in the regression model to determine how each influenced the dependent variable, inter-ethnic tensions in Kajiado County. The results of the multiple regression analysis are presented in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Model Summary^b

Model Summary ^b					
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.259 ^a	.067	.051	1.230	1.912
a. Predictors: (Constant), Encroachment of migrant crop farming on traditional grazing lands, Permanent settlements by new communities blocking ancient livestock routes, Shift from communal ranches to private plots fuelled by migrant land demand, Vigilante group formation along ethnic lines, High land prices driven by migrant influxes leading to local landlessness and generational ethnic resentment, Leadership position competition (MCA seats, chief positions) and Rapid demographic turnover facilitating negative ethnic profiling.					
b. Dependent Variable: Inter-Ethnic Tensions					

Table 4: ANOVA table

ANOVA ^a						
	Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	44.408	7	6.344	4.196	.000 ^b
	Residual	618.392	409	1.512		
	Total	662.800	416			
a. Dependent Variable: Inter-Ethnic Tensions						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Encroachment of migrant crop farming on traditional grazing lands, Permanent settlements by new communities blocking ancient livestock routes, Shift from communal ranches to private plots fueled by migrant land demand, Vigilante group formation along ethnic lines, High land prices driven by migrant influxes leading to local landlessness and generational ethnic resentment, Leadership position competition (MCA seats, chief positions) and Rapid demographic turnover facilitating negative ethnic profiling						

ANOVA table (test using alpha .05)

Table 5: A Multiple Linear Regression Analysis of the Influence of New Community Compositions on Inter-Ethnic Tensions

Coefficients ^a								
	Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	1.288	.544		2.367	.018		
	Encroachment of migrant crop farming on traditional grazing lands	.260	.096	.135	2.720	.007	.999	1.001
	Permanent settlements by new communities blocking ancient livestock routes	.229	.052	.224	4.367	.000	.938	1.066
	Shift from communal ranches to private plots fueled by migrant land demand	.108	.046	.118	2.378	.018	.995	1.006
	Vigilante group formation along ethnic lines	.147	.058	.129	2.534	.012	.964	1.037
	High land prices driven by migrant influxes leading to local landlessness and generational ethnic resentment	.174	.061	.156	2.852	.005	.972	1.029
	Leadership position competition (MCA seats, chief positions)	.036	.022	.084	1.633	.103	.938	1.066
	Rapid demographic turnover facilitating negative ethnic profiling	.042	.035	.061	1.201	.231	.981	1.019
a. Dependent Variable: Inter-Ethnic Tensions								

From the ANOVA Table 4, the **P (Sig.) value is .000**, which is less than the significance level of **.05**, indicating that the multiple linear regression model is statistically significant. This implies that the seven indicators of new community compositions resulting from internal migration jointly explain a significant proportion of the variation in inter-ethnic tensions in Kajiado County.

The overall regression model was statistically significant, **F(7, 409) = 4.196, p < .001**, indicating that the predictor variables, when considered together, significantly predict inter-ethnic tensions. The corresponding **R² value of .067** from the Model Summary (Table 3) shows that, the model explains **6.7%** of the variation in inter-ethnic tensions. Consequently, the regression results provide sufficient statistical evidence that new community compositions resulting from internal migration significantly influence

inter-ethnic tensions in Kajiado County.

The individual predictors were examined further and indicated that, encroachment of migrant crop farming on traditional grazing lands had a significant contribution to inter-ethnic tensions (Table 5 above). Encroachment of migrant crop farming on traditional grazing lands positively influenced inter-ethnic tensions (**B = .260, β = .135, P = .007**). Therefore, encroachment of migrant crop farming on traditional grazing lands contributes **26.0 percent** of the **6.7 percent** that new community compositions resulting from the internal migration contribute to inter-ethnic tensions.

The **P-value** is **.007**, which is less than the standard alpha of **.05**, suggesting that, the relationship between encroachment of migrant crop farming on traditional grazing lands and inter-ethnic tensions is positive. For every one standard deviation unit increase in encroachment of migrant crop

farming on traditional grazing lands, a corresponding **0.135 standard deviation unit increase** in inter-ethnic tensions would be expected. Therefore, encroachment of migrant crop farming on the traditional grazing lands is a significant predictor of inter-ethnic tensions.

The results for the permanent settlements by new communities blocking ancient livestock routes showed that, they had a significant contribution to inter-ethnic tensions ($B = .229$, $\beta = .224$, $P = .000$). Therefore, permanent settlements by new communities blocking ancient livestock routes contribute **22.9 percent** of the **6.7 percent** that the new community compositions resulting from internal migration contribute to inter-ethnic tensions. The **P-value** is **.000**, which is less than the standard alpha of **.05**, indicating a statistically significant positive relationship. For every one standard deviation unit increase in permanent settlements blocking ancient livestock routes, a corresponding **0.224 standard deviation unit increase** in inter-ethnic tensions would be expected. Therefore, permanent settlements by the new communities blocking ancient livestock routes constitute the strongest predictor of inter-ethnic tensions among the variables examined.

The results for the shift from communal ranches to private plots fueled by migrant land demand showed that, it had a significant contribution to inter-ethnic tensions ($B = .108$, $\beta = .118$, $P = .018$). Therefore, the shift from communal ranches to private plots contributes **10.8 percent** of the **6.7 percent** that new community compositions resulting from internal migration contribute to inter-ethnic tensions. Since the **P-value** is **.018**, which is less than **.05**, the relationship is statistically significant. For every one standard deviation unit increase in the shift from communal ranches to private plots, a corresponding **0.118 standard deviation unit increase** in the inter-ethnic tensions would be expected. Therefore, the shift from communal ranches to the private plots is a significant predictor of inter-ethnic tensions.

The results for the vigilante group formation along ethnic lines showed that, it had a significant contribution to the inter-ethnic tensions ($B = .147$, $\beta = .129$, $P = .012$). Therefore, vigilante group formation along ethnic lines contributes **14.7 percent** of the **6.7 percent** that the new community compositions resulting from internal migration contribute to inter-ethnic tensions. The **P-value** is **.012**, which is below the standard alpha level of **.05**, indicating that, the relationship is statistically significant. For every one standard deviation unit increase in vigilante group formation along the ethnic lines, a corresponding **0.129 standard deviation unit increase** in the inter-ethnic tensions would be expected. Therefore, the vigilante group formation along the ethnic lines is a significant predictor of inter-ethnic tensions.

The results for the high land prices driven by migrant influxes leading to local landlessness and generational ethnic resentment showed that, they had a significant contribution to the inter-ethnic tensions ($B = .174$, $\beta = .156$, $P = .005$). Therefore, high land prices driven by the migrant influxes contribute **17.4 percent** of the **6.7 percent** that the new community compositions resulting from internal migration contribute to the inter-ethnic tensions. Since the **P-value** is **.005**, which is less than **.05**, the relationship is statistically significant. For every one standard deviation unit increase in high land prices driven by the migrant influxes, a corresponding **0.156 standard deviation unit increase** in inter-ethnic tensions would be expected.

Therefore, high land prices driven by the migrant influxes are a significant predictor of inter-ethnic tensions.

The results for the leadership position competition (MCA seats and chief positions) showed that, it did not have a statistically significant contribution to the inter-ethnic tensions ($B = .036$, $\beta = .084$, $P = .103$). Since the **P-value** is greater than the standard alpha level of **.05**, leadership position competition was not a significant predictor of the inter-ethnic tensions. Although the relationship was positive, the findings suggest that, the competition for leadership positions did not independently explain variations in the inter-ethnic tensions after controlling for the other predictors in the regression model.

Similarly, the results for the rapid demographic turnover facilitating negative ethnic profiling indicated that it did not have a statistically significant contribution to the inter-ethnic tensions ($B = .042$, $\beta = .061$, $P = .231$). Since the **P-value** exceeded the standard alpha level of **.05**, rapid demographic turnover facilitating the negative ethnic profiling was not a significant predictor of inter-ethnic tensions. Although demographic changes may contribute to the ethnic profiling, the findings suggest that, this factor did not independently influence the inter-ethnic tensions after controlling for the other migration-related factors included in the model.

5.1 Summary for Findings

The findings showed that, the most significant driver was the encroachment of the migrant crop farming on the traditional grazing lands, which triggered recurring retaliatory conflicts between the farmers and the pastoralists. This was followed by the blockage of livestock routes by permanent settlements, leading to violent confrontations during drought periods. The shift from the communal ranches to private land ownership has further fueled boundary disputes, while the formation of ethnically aligned vigilante groups intensifying insecurity and cycles of retaliation.

Additionally, the rising land prices driven by migrant influxes had contributed to the local landlessness, fostering generational resentment against perceived settler communities. The competition for leadership positions such as the MCA and chief's roles also has heightened ethnic divisions, as groups have mobilized along ethnic lines to secure political control. Lastly, the rapid demographic turnover has encouraged negative ethnic profiling, particularly during crime spikes, which often escalated into violence.

Overall, the findings indicated that, resource competition, land tenure changes, security gaps, economic exclusion, political rivalry and social mistrust collectively exacerbate inter-ethnic tensions. The proposed mitigations included community-based land-use zoning, restoration of livestock corridors, hybrid land tenure systems, structured community policing, land affordability safeguards, inclusive governance mechanisms and the integration programs to promote cohesion and reduce conflict.

The findings from the multiple linear regression analysis established that encroachment of migrant crop farming on traditional grazing lands, permanent settlements blocking ancient livestock routes, the shift from communal ranches to private plots, vigilante group formation along ethnic lines and the high land prices significantly influenced inter-ethnic tensions. However, leadership position competition and rapid demographic turnover facilitating negative ethnic

profiling did not significantly influence inter-ethnic tensions.

6. Recommendations

The study recommends that, the Kajiado County Government, National Government Administrative Officers (NGAO), community leaders and other relevant stakeholders strengthen community integration and inclusive governance mechanisms in areas experiencing rapid demographic change resulting from internal migration. Particular attention should be given to participatory land-use planning, protection and restoration of livestock corridors, transparent regulation of land transactions, and strengthening community-based conflict resolution and inter-ethnic dialogue mechanisms. These interventions should promote interaction between established and incoming communities, address mistrust and competition over shared resources, and strengthen peaceful inter-ethnic coexistence in Kajiado County.

7. Further Research

The study was limited to examining the influence of new community composition resulting from internal migration on inter-ethnic tensions in Kajiado County, Kenya. Further studies should examine this relationship in other rapidly urbanizing and migration-receiving counties in Kenya to establish whether the patterns observed in Kajiado County are context-specific or applicable across different social, demographic and economic settings. Such comparative studies would provide a broader understanding of the conditions under which migration-induced changes in community composition contribute to inter-ethnic tensions in Kenya.

8. Acknowledgement

I appreciate my mentor Dr. Gerald Mutonyi, of the Department of Security, Diplomacy and Peace Studies, at Kenyatta University for his mentorship. I also acknowledge the whole fraternity of the school of law, arts and social sciences at Kenyatta University for their effort in modelling security studies.

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