

Towards Religio-Cultural Approach to Ethnic Conflict Peacebuilding: An Appraisal of The Luo-Nandi Ethnic Methods' Contribution to Community Peace in Africa.

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ABSTRACT

The vital contribution of religio-cultural methods in peacebuilding has been instrumental in community peace before, during and after conflicts. Traditional societies and cultures are vested with a body of wisdom in myths, riddles, and proverbs relevant to providing meaning, continuity, and stability to a community's social cohesion. This wisdom is propelled by values including restoration, community harmony, social cohesion, and shared life which are essential in healing broken relationships and enhancing community life. The potential nature of the Luo-Nandi religio-cultural methodology is embedded in their religion and culture as they deal with ethnic conflicts and peacebuilding. Matters of religious and cultural relationship-building are relevant to harmony, coexistence, and harmonious life as a community. The Luo-Nandi cultural approaches in peacebuilding consist of mediation and reconciliation, religious use of ethics and moral behaviour, religious rituals, and ceremonies, as well as the cultural wisdom in myths, proverbs, and wise sayings. Such actions incorporate principles of amicable solutions, negotiation, the consensus in decision-making, third-party principles, and interactivity of the process. The ultimate contribution of the Luo-Nandi religio-cultural methodology in peacebuilding is in enhancing mediation and reconciliation, religious rituals and ceremonies and moral and character transformation.

Keywords: Religio-cultural methods, Peacebuilding, Mediation, reconciliation, moral and character transformation

INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of ethnic community conflicts around the world has called for a methodological approach that can sustainably bring about peace in communities. The call for a more home-grown attempt has been precipitated by a sustained ethnic community conflict that has generated staggering destruction and loss of life. Examples of such loss of life and property have been seen in counties including Rwanda, Sudan, and Kenya (Kasomo 2010). In the countries mentioned above and many more, community relationships, injustices, hatred, injuries, and forceful displacements have been the norm. As such, communities have sought proper ways and means to build peace among themselves. Scholars in cultural and peace studies have affirmed the distinctive prominent activities of cultural communities in building peace during conflicts. Mpangala (2004) and Herrera (2013) stated that religio-cultural methodologies in peace propagation are instrumental in building relationships among communities at war. In determining the proper use of the community approach to peace, scholars of peace agreed that local communities in their religio-cultural methods have influenced community judgement, perceptions, and actions in taming ethnic community hostilities. These religio-cultural methods include the functions of elders in mediation and reconciliation, cultural moral norms, cultural principles of consensus in decision-making, restoration of human co-existence, and compensation designed to ensure ongoing mutual harmony in relationships. The principal methodologies used in the Luo-Nandi religion and culture are mediation and reconciliation through elders,

rituals and sacrifices, and social cohesion through the social function of morality and character. Such peacebuilding methods promote community cohesion, peace, and reconciliation, and restore communities. The basis of these actions is a community relationship with God. The crucial principles behind these actions include consensus, mutual harmony, repairing of harm, participation, forgiveness and compensation, and restorative justice. As advocated by Tarimo and Manwelo (2007) and Kasomo (2010), religio-cultural methods have a greater potential for intervening in ethnic conflicts. More importantly, the methodologies shown above have a greater impact and responsibility in promoting peace, justice, and harmony between ethnic communities. This paper, therefore, presents religio-cultural methods used in the Luo-Nandi peacebuilding agenda and their contribution towards community peace in Kenya. The paper is talking about the Luo-Nandi Religio-Cultural approaches in Ethnic community peacebuilding. The approaches include mediation and reconciliation, religious rituals and ceremonies and morality propagation. The paper is also presenting the contribution of the religio-cultural methodology of the Luo-Nandi approach to ethnic community peace. such contributions include aspects of methodology, moral values, and principles.

METHODOLOGY

The study investigated the religio-cultural approaches to ethnic community peacebuilding and their contribution to community peace between the Luo and the Nandi people. The study was qualitative research intended to explore the contribution of the Luo-Nandi religio-cultural approach that can mitigate the persistent nature of the conflict between the Luo and Nandi ethnic communities. The study was conducted among the Luo and the Nandi communities of the Muhoroni and Tinderet sub-counties. The method used was a descriptive examination to facilitate data gathering and assessment in describing the conflict situation through individual responses. The two study sites were Muhoroni and Tinderet sub-counties. The study used a non-probability sampling technique. Precisely, goal-directed and proportion sampling was used. The study used a full deviation in purposive sampling to achieve a broad array of viewpoints on the approaches. The data was collected from community elders, community members, civil society, and Non-Governmental Organizations. The study data was compiled as primary and secondary data through questionnaires and Library sources. The study employed several instruments, including questionnaires, an oral interview guide and a focused group discussions guide. The data from the questionnaires were coded and analysed using the Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21. Other data from FGD(s) and the interviews were transcribed according to the study's objective. The resultant data were synthesised and examined corresponding to the objective classification of the study. The aggregate data were analysed, reviewed, and explained consistently with the study's focus and the question.

AFRICAN RELIGIO-CULTURAL APPROACHES TO COMMUNITY PEACE

Religio-cultural approaches in ethnic community peacebuilding are practical ways of dealing with conflicts that arise both among the community members as well as different ethnic communities. Such religio-cultural approaches in peacebuilding constitute systems of mediation and reconciliation, religious use of ethics and moral behaviour, religious rituals, and ceremonies, as well as cultural wisdom in myths, proverbs, and wise sayings. In more practical ways, Mbiti (1991) conceptualized that festivals, religious objects and places, values and morals, rituals and sacrifices, and religious leadership inform pragmatic practices that community religion and culture use to deal with conflicts. These religio-cultural approaches majorly inculcate religious beliefs, practices, and customs towards a better community living. These religious and cultural methods above are entrenched in African spirituality and religiosity, forming a conventional African Religio-cultural approach. Among African communities, the religio-cultural methodology in building peace has been effectively utilized. Snell (2005) and Tom (2006) have documented a comprehensive restorative justice and re-integration methodology in African traditional cultures, including *Gacaca* of Rwanda, *Mato Oput* of Uganda, *nga'do guok* of Luo, and Nandi *Orgoiyot* Elders of Kenya. Kasomo (2010) and Kinyanjui (2010) acknowledge the contribution of the African traditional judicial council of elders in promoting peace,

reconciliation, and harmony. As Magesa (1997) puts it, the responsibility of the council of elders is to ensure the bonding and realisation of wealth, health, security, and right relationships through forgiveness and reconciliation. These scholars embrace the religious function played by elders in the propagation of religious and cultural norms in restorative justice and reconciliation.

Such systems of community restoration are activated through ethical value systems, advocacy, and the practice of wisdom. The elders' capacity to negotiate and mediate peace at a community level in ethnic conflict informed the study on the contribution of religio-cultural approaches to peacebuilding. To understand this approach, it is vital to put religion and culture into perspective. In this approach, religion as a societal phenomenon constitutes the people's beliefs, practices, and authentic spirituality. The elements of religion in any society include the aspects of God, rituals, sacrifices, people, and places of worship (Shenk, 1997). Human relationships with the divine form communities' common worldview, behaviour, and practice (Mbiti 1991). Therefore, religion captures the totality of a people's way of life, including relationships, worldview, and resolution of societal problems. In a religious worldview, the practical organisation of a community's relations is a matter of divine command and obligation. In realistic ways, religious realities in relationships symbolised in practical actions of rituals and sacrifices are secret messages of spiritual truth. Religion's practices, teachings, and beliefs are based on stories of significant figures, events, people, and ideas from the past but focus on the future. Common to religion is belonging to the practice of sacred rituals and enforcing beliefs through rules and laws. There is a requirement for strict adherence to the rules and regulations governing such relationships among members. In this regard, interpretation of the past, focus on the future, and life today is related to the community's living in a cordial relationship. Hence, the significance of God, the power of sacred rituals, and belonging to a faith community are core aspects of human relations in societies. Culture is a fundamental factor in understanding social systems and their influence on norms, values, and the behaviour of groups in relationships. Lebron (2013) notes that culture in any society is a way of life that gives a sense of belonging with shared values and beliefs in that particular social order. As noted by Ezedike (2009), culture is a shared moral code, beliefs, practices, attitudes, and capabilities.

In this case, culture involves a shared life, symbols of identity, and a familiar story. In symbolic ways, architecture, identity banners, clothing, distinctive foods, and drinks are symbols of identity and cohesive living. Religion and culture speak to the deep-rooted concept of God, beliefs, practices, morality, symbols, and rituals. The religio-cultural spectrum links both the possibility of conflict and the creation of peace between communities. Bangura (1995) observes that the association of religion and culture exercises power and control in particular situations. Therefore, the religio-cultural approach is about pathways, beliefs, practices, and living patterns influenced by religious worldviews. In many African countries during the pre-colonial and post-colonial eras, peacebuilding activities in ethnic conflicts are linked to traditional mediation, justice, and restitution forums (Ajayi and Buhari 2014). This African religio-cultural peacebuilding methodology, decisively administered in African contexts, is founded on mediation and reconciliation. Such African religio-cultural methodology ensured the use of vital value concepts of consensus, restoration, and compensation. Tom (2003) and Nantulya (2001) have illustrated these values in their affirmation of traditional African peace-building mechanisms through *Gacaca* and *Igando* of Rwanda, *Mato Oput* of Uganda, *Lome* of Sierra Leone, and *Burukutu* of Nigeria. The religio-cultural approach is founded on the functions of beliefs and practices regarding building peace. This approach includes actions of the community elders and community members influenced by their religious beliefs and practices.

The Luo-Nandi Religio-Cultural Approaches to Ethnic Community Peace

Among the Luo and the Nandi communities, there has been an existence of actions done in dealing with ethnic community peace in times of conflict. The study was informed that from time immemorial there have been activities including inter-community peace meetings, community policing, utilization of peace

ambassadors, moral propagation and ceremonies for peace. Figure 1.1 shows some of the ways peace had been built practically.

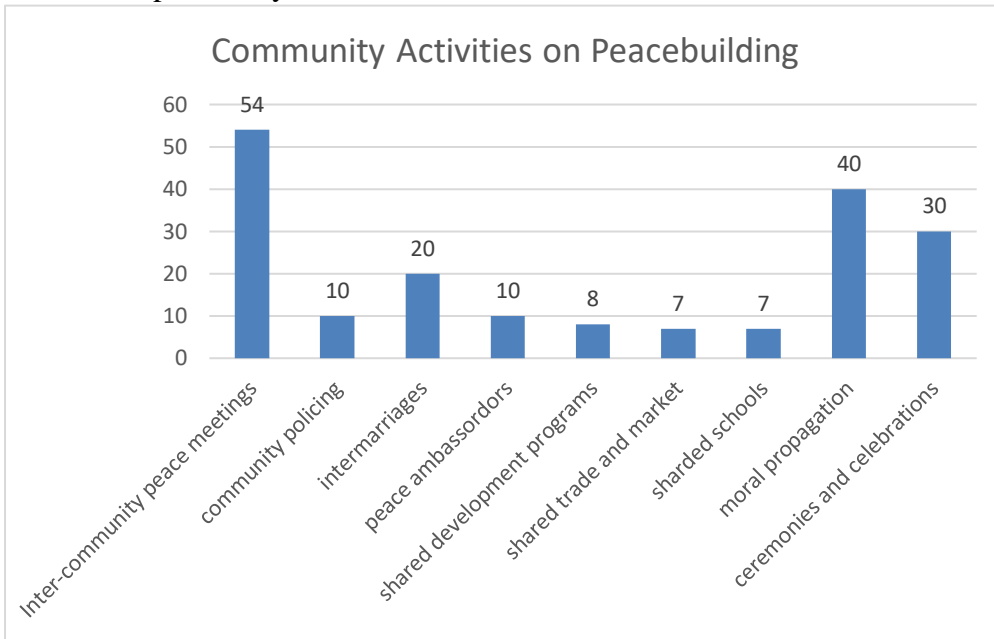


Figure 1.1 Community Response to Conflicts for Peacebuilding

Looking at specific community actions in Figure 1.1, a cluster of the target population threw weight on the conflict resolution and peacebuilding function of the religious communities. Further, the community members agreed that aspects of mediation and reconciliation were used through inter-community peace meetings, community policing and sending of peace ambassadors. On morality, the respondents argued that community elders were instrumental in propagating character and moral formation among the youth. Regarding reconciliation and restitution, the respondents observed that ceremonies with rituals and celebrations played a critical role in community restoration. Finally, the aspects of development through shared schools, trade, and the market contributed to harmonious living. The respondents identified activities that form the Luo-Nandi religio-cultural approach in ethnic community conflicts. Such activities include mediation and reconciliation, religious rituals and ceremonies and moral and character transformation. These actions are matters of religious relationship-building relevant to harmony, coexistence, and life as a community. Figure 1.2 shows how the two communities have engaged in mitigating conflicts, according to the respondents.

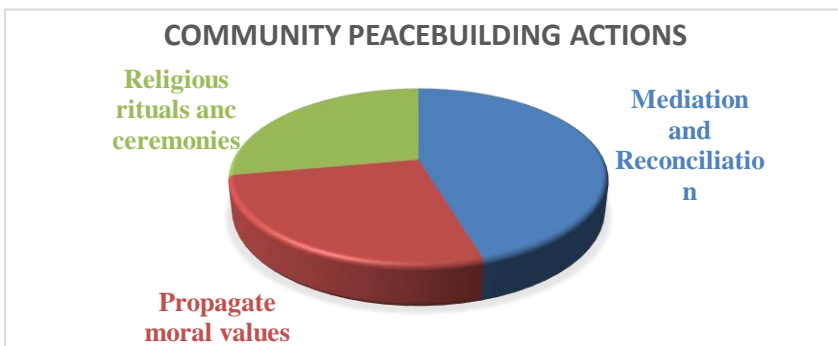


Figure 1.2 Luo-Nandi Community Approach to Ethnic Conflict

Figure 1.2 on the community approach shows that mediation and negotiating for peace (44%), propagation of values and character formation among their community members (26%), and religious ritual and ceremonies (27%) are actions undertaken in these ethnic conflicts. The study notes that the community, including elders, played an important role in peace mediation and dialogue, propagation of values towards

character formation, and administering reconciliation through religious rituals and sacrifices. A thematic look at Figure 1.1 shows that the communities' main actions, included: community mediation and reconciliation activities, moral value and character transformation, and religious rituals and ceremonies. Below are the analytical study of the approaches.

Community Mediation and Reconciliation in Peacebuilding

In community mediation and reconciliation (Figure 1.2), respondents showed its utilisation in ethnic conflicts. Mediation and reconciliation are recognised methodologies in the peacebuilding efforts of the Luo and the Nandi religious communities. In an interview with the NGOs (OI. 09.11.2017), there was a strong feeling that mediation and reconciliation actions were instrumental in bringing peace to these conflicts. Further, most civil servants (FGD.09.10.2016) affirmed the relevance of mediation and reconciliation activities in conflicts. From the community members, the respondents noted that communities had done some practical things to mitigate these conflicts such as peace meetings by the elders. From the international perspective, the United Nations (UN) charter (2015) recognises mediation as one of the ways of conflict resolution. Bercovitch (2009) defines mediation as a conflict resolution process that involves a third party, voluntary and non-coercive intervention. In the traditional African method, traditional mediation and reconciliation embraced the traditional judicial system of the elders' council as well as the community's designated people. Elders or the council of elders is a socio-political institution tasked to bring about and maintain justice, peace and reconciliation. Elders are people elected or appointed by the community based on their social consciousness and thorough knowledge of the people's social relationships. Elders must be people of integrity who can hear the people's voices and are not self-interested. Traditional Luo and Nandi communities entrust elders with elderly guidance and custodian of community justice and moral and ritual practice.

Both Luo and Nandi communities have embraced elders' critical function in dealing with conflicts. Elders are vital individuals entrusted with administering justice, reconciliation, custodian of law and morals, and bringing about peace. Mediation and reconciliation activities were done among the Nandi community by the council of elders. According to the Nandi sub-group, distinct social units of the elders holding a judicial position as a headman are called *Kiruongindet or boyot* (the presiding elder). These elders were judges, economic leaders, and war leaders in defence control. According to an FGD (FGD, 05.09.207), the Nandi people recognise the existence and the function of the council of elders responsible for the judicial system and general administration of the community. Apart from the council of elders, there was *Orkoiyot*, a prophet responsible for magical rites in the community. To be an elder in the Nandi community, one advanced through warrior grades and then entered the elder state. Similarly, the elders (FGD 09.04.2017) note that a traditional Luo *ogendni* (communities) had its *Ruoth* (chief) responsible for the justice and politics of the people. Each *Ruoth* had *Buch Piny* (a council) consisting of *jaduong' dhoot* (clan elder), *Ogaye* (peacemaker), and *Osumba Mirwayi* (War leader). These people formed the council of elders in the traditional Luo community responsible for matters affecting the community. The elders further declared that at both *Buch Piny* and *doho*, cases were adjudicated amicably, and decisions regarding the cases were pronounced. A typical example among the Luo that resembles the Nandi judicial process indicates that men of age and seniority mostly handled the process. The senior age grade (*Jodong Ngaga*) were judges (*jobura*). The retired senior warrior becomes an *Ogulumama* (police) in a case setup.

Such people were known for their wisdom and knowledge in settling disputes. In a community misconduct case, the elders interrogate the case using common sense, community norms, values, and customs to determine the judgment. Parts of the case are subjected to wisdom from the wise sayings, proverbs, riddles, and judgments of similar past cases. After thorough consultations, the elders' court will pass judgment that may include punishment, repayment, or pardon. The central ethical norm of the communities is that the offenders are obligated to comply with the judgment for restitution or reconciliation. The idea was

restorative justice to restore the community to harmony and coexistence. The respondents noted that reconciliation was central among the elders (FGD.03.11.2016). Both communities have a system of returning offenders to broken relationships. The *Ogaye* (peacemaker) would call a meeting for both the offender and the offended families among the Luo. A meal would be prepared whereby forgiveness is pronounced and the offender welcomed back to the community.

Religio-cultural Morality and Peacebuilding in Ethnic Conflict

The community respondents indicated that one of the functions of the elders is to propagate morality as custodians of the moral law of the community. Morality is a principle that concerns right and wrong in human behaviour. These normative principles and beliefs are relevant in building peace among communities in conflict. The elders (FGD 07.08.2016) point out that the uncodified rules of social control are principles that form the content of legal cases and justice. These uncodified rules verbalise social control that enables societies to relate and coexist. In the African religious worldview and social life, morality has a divine origin. Mbiti (1969) has considered God as the moral lawgiver concerned with humanity's moral life. Human character derives its nature from the very nature of God, who is considered good, perfect, and pure. This belief aligns with major African traditions, including African Religion, Christianity, and Islam. According to Snell (2005), in the Nandi customary law, the ultimate moral good was *Asis* (God), and human conduct is defined by the appropriateness and preservation instinct of the community. Among the Luo community, *Nyasaye or Were* (God) was responsible for providing moral laws that govern community ethics and affairs. Therefore, morality was a God-given gift to humankind for their daily well-being and relationship-building. The traditional educational system called *Kamuratanet* among the Nandi community has been known to have developed morality among the various sectors of the community (Chemitai, 2017). Among the Luo community, three main education centres propagated morality. They were the *Duol* (boys' and fathers' meeting place), *Siwidhe* (girls' and mothers' meeting place), and *Simba* (boys' alone meeting and sleeping hat). These education centres were instrumental in propagating morality, which was considered life-long learning (Ocholla-Ayayo, 1976). Thus, the African traditional religious mindset gives African morality unchallenged authority to deal with human behaviour and character.

Majorly, African religious morals emphasise social conduct that keeps society alive and harmonious. Ocholla-Ayayo (1976) and Snell (2005) argue that the Luo and the Nandi religious way of life include moral regulations that form a human character. These regulations foster smooth coexistence and harmony among human beings. In this cultural religiosity, warfare and conflict are a disastrous breakdown of a community's moral accord. The study established through an NGO (OI 03.05.2017) interview that social regulations produce good character expressed in such areas as hospitality, generosity, kindness, justice, truth, avoiding stealing, taking care of the poor, giving honour, and avoiding hypocrisy. Therefore, the norm for the ethnic neighbourhood was harmonious coexistence and peace towards each other regardless of ethnic background. Moreover, one of the functions of the elders was to propagate community morality. Propagating morals in many African societies is done for character formation and community living. Rodger (2006) argues that character formation establishes internalized patterns of values and attitudes through natural and regular education. Arguing from the perspective of community character, Mbiti (1991) observes that character guides community members in doing good and embracing virtues that keep society united.

Therefore, character enables reconciliation and the building of peace between the neighbouring communities, given its associated virtues of community, cohesion, honesty, and trust. African traditional religious values deal with many issues of social dialogue, forgiveness, justice, and peace. Katola (2014) observes that the education system in Africa embraces traditional values authoritative in matters that advance peace. Both the Luo and the Nandi communities' elders agreed that moral laws that form character have the authority to recover the rights of the offended and a duty on the offender to comply with the decision to restore relationships. Therefore, the African religious, indigenous justice system employs

restorative and transformative moral value principles in peacebuilding. This transformation takes place at the character level. Character forms the ethical standard that drives the peacebuilding approach between ethnic communities in conflict. Victims, offenders, and the entire community participate in the definition of harm and search for resolutions acceptable to all stakeholders.

Religio-cultural Rituals as Ceremonies in Ethnic Peacebuilding

Among the other activities in the religio-cultural approach are religious rituals and ceremonies. Figure 1.2 shows that the respondents believed rituals and ceremonies are critical actions the communities have used to build peace. Ritual is the performance of a ceremonial act prescribed by formal agreement (Encyclopaedia Britannica). In religious circles, rituals express a significant relationship with the sacred. This relationship means that rituals are connected to society's belief system with the divine. The primary understanding of the community elders (FGD 02.05.2017) was that rituals have evident characteristics, including the feeling of respect, awe, and fear. Rituals depend on the belief systems expressed in the community's myths. Therefore, rituals and ceremonies are significant avenues through which African communities enhance harmony and ethnic coexistence. African traditional spirituality and ritual culture are core to determining the problem of ethnic conflicts and addressing resolutions. For example, the primary concern of the Nandi community in their ritual culture was to preserve, prolong, and transmit life. All life within the Nandi traditional culture is ritualized from birth to death. It is the same in the Luo culture that much of the happenings in human life are ritualized from birth to death.

The ritual and ceremonial nature of peacebuilding in African societies are associated with a traditional belief in God. Kibicho (1972) noted that the spiritual acts of social justice and restoration are established in African societies by God. Hence, God sanctions many rituals and ceremonies for interpersonal harmony. The primary function of the rituals and ceremonies is concerned with the sanctity and protection of life. Therefore, rituals preserve life as enshrined in God's agenda for humanity. Sacrificial covenant celebrations also institute traditional African systems in peacebuilding. These covenant meetings are for re-establishing relationships that have been affected by conflict. In these meetings, sacrifices, eating, and sharing form the climax of the African covenant ceremonies (Shenk, 1997). For example, in an interview (OI. 03.07.2017), a ritual was performed in the meetings between the Luo and Nandi people at Kibigori Market along the Kisumu-Nandi border. In this respect, the community sharing of a meal is sacramental and a sign of life-giving harmony. It was a reconciling gesture that removes enmity and dreadful relationships between enemies. Such sharing of a meal as a community-preserving mechanism arises from a belief that eating together eliminates antagonism and hostility towards each other. This form of covenant ritual is a profound expression of the quest for peace between the Luo and Nandi communities along the border. Such restorative actions of the rituals and the sacrificial systems can deal with trauma and prejudice between the warring parties. In his Conflict Transformation Theory, Lederach (1997) anticipates local and community leaders' approach to dealing with ethnic conflict by acting toward eliminating trauma and discrimination. The religio-cultural approach is summarized as shown in Table 1.1. The table outlines the main ideas inherent in the Luo-Nandi religio-cultural approach to peacebuilding.

Table 1.1 Main Ideas in the Religio-cultural Approach to Peacebuilding

Main ideas	Explanation
Religio-cultural Approach	Major activities committed to mediating and reconciling communities in conflicts. These are majorly done by the community elders and the community members
Major themes	Community mediation and reconciliation; Moral and character transformation; and religious rituals and ceremonies.
Actions linked to	Traditional cultural laws govern traditional judicial systems and social relations.

Rationale	To sustain life and unite communities. Engrave strong values relevant to the communities' cohesion and coexistence.
Main Values	Community, justice, restitution, consensus, restoration, and compassion.

In the study's findings on the religio-cultural approach, three main themes stood out. Community mediation and reconciliation, moral and character transformation, and religious rituals and ceremonies. The community members and their actions are instrumental in mediation and reconciliation. The traditional judicial systems and social relations governed by traditional cultural laws are among those actions by the community. The principal rationale for such actions of mediation and reconciliation is to sustain life and unite communities. The central values of religio-cultural actions include community, justice, restitution, consensus, restoration, and compassion. The main agenda for morality and character formation is to engrave strong values relevant to community cohesion and coexistence. The actors must work hard to propagate community moral laws through events, wise sayings, riddles, ceremonies, proverbs, and education. Among the Luo community, *Siwidhi* and *Simba* existed for learning and moral training. While among the Nandi people, rituals before and after rites of passage were instrumental in the upbringing of the young people.

THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE RELIGIO-CULTURAL APPROACH TO ETHNIC COMMUNITY PEACE

The main findings on the religio-cultural approach show that it has the potential to contribute to community peace. Actions discussed include mediation and reconciliation, moral reconstruction, and restorative justice systems of ceremonies and rituals. This discovery demonstrates that African traditional religious and cultural communities have had methods, principles, and values critical to community peacebuilding. Mpangala (2004) and Herrera (2013) affirm that every African culture has religio-cultural moral values in building peace through restoration, enhancing dialogue, and building relationships. Such mechanisms embrace principles of participation, culture appropriation, and sustainability (Ginty, (2008). Tale 1.2 illustrates the principles relevant to religio-cultural methodologies in community peace.

Table 1.2 Summary of the Critical Contributions of the Religio-cultural Approach

Items	Potential
Home-grown methodology	Mediating conflicting parties, bringing social cohesion, safeguarding community life, and transforming character.
Function of elders	Promotion of cohesion and peace, reconciling and restoring communities, custodian of morals and law, administering rituals and ceremonies
Principles	Consensus, mutual harmony, repairing of harm, participation, forgiveness and compensation as well as restorative justice
Actors	Elders, community members, women, and youth
Linked to	God, spirituality, community riddles and proverbs or wise sayings
Major contribution areas	Methods of mediation; ritual function of community cohesion; character reconstruction; and basic value principles.

African Religio-cultural Method in Peacebuilding

From the respondents' perspective, the study observed three principal methodologies used by the religio-cultural mechanisms. They include mediation through elders, rituals and sacrifices by elders and community members, and social cohesion through the social function of morality and character. The methodology points out actions that foster mediating conflicting parties, bringing social cohesion, safeguarding community life, and transforming character. Such peacebuilding methods promote community cohesion,

peace, and reconciliation, and restore communities. The basis of these actions is a community relationship with God. The crucial principles behind these actions include consensus, mutual harmony, repairing of harm, participation, forgiveness and compensation, and restorative justice. Researchers argue that there are tremendous avenues within African societies influential in peacebuilding known as traditional mechanisms or indigenous democracy (Pkalya and Adan, 2004; Chapman and Kagaha, 2009). Other researchers concur that the African religio-cultural methods have potential modalities for interventions in crime and conflict (Kinyanjui, 2010; Tarimo & Manwelo, 2007). The African religio-cultural methodology of the council of elders has been famous in peace scholarship to have had an impact and responsibility in promoting peace, justice, and harmony (Kasomo, 2010). These elders are entrusted with peace negotiations and reconciliation of communities in conflict. Further, the elders have also been the custodian of the moral laws of the community. Subsequently, they have also been entrusted with the propagation of the same.

The religio-cultural method, therefore, is founded on the spiritual function of elders and the philosophy of home-grown mechanisms in ethnic conflict. Such a method propagates trust and genuine community engagement for a sustainable solution to the problem. More importantly, resolutions where communities are involved in the search for causes of conflict, identification of the solutions, and participation in the resolution enable truth-telling, confession, and reconciliation of conflicting parties. The African religio-cultural authority given to women in conflict negotiation, prevention, and sustainability has been considered necessary by many scholars in religious studies (Chepkwony, 2013). Tinkasiimire (2010) also acknowledges women's negotiating power in community peacebuilding. Many peace-building initiatives and actions depend on women's motherly virtues of calmness, assurance, and support. Chepkwony (2013) depicts the acceptability of women in matters of peace in neighbourhood conflicts. Hence, women's capability is demonstrated through the informal education of children and the embracing heart of others in marriages.

In many instances within African community settings, intermarriages became the solution to many protracted conflicts. The social function of women's methodology facilitates a long-term coexistence in marriage relationships and moral behaviour cultivation through progressive learning in a home setting. This women's function, especially in the intermarriage concept has been embraced in the Luo-Nandi religio-cultural methodology. Several examples were identified along the borders of the Muhoroni and Tinderet sub-counties regarding intermarriages between the Luo and the Nandi communities. Therefore, peacebuilding in African societies is associated with an ongoing holistic approach that engages methods of home-grown mediation and reconciliation through the function of the elders. It incorporates the social function of women through long-term informal education and continued community relations. Hence, achieving just social order leads to respectful co-existence, renewed relations, and commitments that ensure the integrity and spiritual health of the community. In this study, the aspect of home-grown mediation and reconciliation, long-term informal education and principles of participation and amicability in problem-solving are the vital contribution that religio-cultural methods are presenting to the ethnic community peace.

African Religio-cultural Moral Values in Peacebuilding

Religious methodologies significantly contribute to peacebuilding in the enhancement of values and the facilitation of reconciliation. Religio-cultural approaches to peacebuilding relate to significant reconciliation aspects of attitude and character change. Religio-cultural approaches to peacebuilding evolve on restoring social harmony and reconciling conflicting societies through moral reconstruction. Obaji and Swart (2015) affirm that aspects of religio-cultural morality aim at restoring social harmony and reconciliation. God is featured in many African societies and religions as the subject of moral values of justice, peace, and reconciliation. African traditional religion embraces the belief in a supreme God who is the God of social justice and peace (Kibicho, 1972). Scholars in religious studies argue that God has sanctioned and established moral tenets of justice, truth, peace, and reconciliation among the traditional world communities and African communities. The study identified the belief and practice of the moral values established by

God as vital in peacebuilding between the Luo and the Nandi communities. Traditional African religions and cultures value life and have placed a responsibility on the community to safeguard it as a blessed obligation. Life is considered sacred, and its protection is a divine reality.

The principal value in the African traditional religious perspective is that humanity must value existence, and any action that results in the elimination of life must be avoided. Shenk (1997) correctly affirms that killing violates God's intention. The implication of being at peace and protecting life is advocated for. The concept of the sacredness of life can dispel actions, plans, and practices that eliminate, sabotage, destroy, and are negative towards its well-being. African traditional religious worldview relates the worship lifestyle of the people to their God. The concept of worship relates to the values relevant to the community and individual dedicated life to God and humanity. Shenk (1997) observed that such dedication can dispel evil founded on malice and selfishness towards humanity. The religious view expects adherence to a positive lifestyle devoid of envy, malice, anger, selfishness, pride, and arrogance. Such lifestyles resist life-destroying attitudes and are considered works of the evil one. African religious values of relationship building are established through reconciliation and restoration of community coexistence through rituals and sacrifices concerning peace.

Jeffrey (1997) concurs that relationship building is demonstrated by restorative justice in covenant and sacrificial meetings of the community in conflict. In most African societies, the sacrificial systems in the eating and sharing form the climax of the covenant ceremonies that provide restitution and bonding of communities at war. Therefore, the function of the covenant is to unite these two communities in a bond of peace. The principle behind the moral demand is to deal with the vices and impunity capable of breaking down the order and security of the community members. The study identified that religio-cultural methodology embraces the character and its formation in the likeness of God. Mbiti (1969) elaborates that character in the image of God is expressed in hospitality, kindness, justice, and harmony. He argues that a formed character fosters coexistence and community harmony. The such divine capability gives morality authority to determine behaviour and practice in the African traditional religious worldview. The traditional African religious view of morality emphasizes the community's social conduct, which is associated with community cohesion, honesty, and trust in God and humanity (Nel, 2009). In that regard, the religio-cultural methodology is instrumental in its advocacy for morality and character formation. It is about value-building and a worship worldview.

Figures African Religio-Cultural Principles in Peacebuilding

Traditional dispute resolution and peacebuilding involve consensus in decision-making, restoration of human co-existence, and compensation designed to ensure ongoing mutual harmony in relationships. The power behind traditional African methodology is founded on its aim and principles of restoration and transformation. The Luo-Nandi traditional cultural justice systems in peacebuilding focus on repairing the community's harm caused by crime. The primary outcome of the significant rituals and sacrificial systems of the religio-cultural methodology is to deal with human restoration and reconciliation. In addition, the concept of character propagation deals with human transformation. Lederach (1997) projected such an outcome in his Conflict Transformation Theory whereby the local leaders endeavour to bring post-war psychosocial and trauma change. African religio-cultural justice system appreciates participatory and transformative principles in conflict peacebuilding.

The elders (FGD: 12:04:2017) emphasized the involvement of victims, offenders, and the entire community in the definition of harm and the search for resolutions. Borrowing from the *Gacaca* participatory principle, the study noted that both communities have the same idea of enabling communities in conflict to find opportunities to participate in resolving the conflict. Such principles provide a better atmosphere for proper negotiation and mediation of the warring communities. The varied principles available in these traditional peace-building mechanisms include amicable solutions, good negotiation skills, the consensus in decision-

making, third-party principles, and interactivity of the process. These principles and actions emphasize reconciliation and restoring social harmony rather than punishment for the conflicting parties.

In dealing with ethnic conflicts and mitigation by the elders, vital principles form their viability, including respectability, corruption blemishes, wisdom and knowledge, persuasiveness, and eloquence. These principles in mediation and reconciliation form the basis for the dependability of the justice system among the community members. The idea of compensation or recompense in African religious and ritual methodology is vital in peacebuilding, especially in dealing with the recurring nature of ethnic conflict. Snell (2005) on the Nandi customary law notes that compensation and payment of fines among the community were critical principles in dealing with aspects of theft and crime. Among the Luo, recompense was practised to dispense justice and build equilibrium. The study discovered that the laxity in compensation for the destruction of livelihood encouraged the offended to seek retaliation against the offender.

CONCLUSIONS

The paper focused on assessing the Luo-Nandi religio-cultural methodologies towards community peace. It also attempted in finding out and discussing the contributions of the methodologies to the whole idea of community peace before, during and after conflicts. The paper illustrated that the Luo-Nandi communities have had activities geared towards mediation, values propagation and restoration through ceremonies and rituals. Such actions above became instrumental in community cohesion, coexistence, and harmony. The paper established that inherent in the methodologies are important methods, values, and principles relevant to sustaining community peace. The methods of mediation and reconciliation, the values of the community and the principles of participation, restoration and reconciliation became so important to establishing a community that is coherent and harmonious.

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