Initiatives and Strategies in Place by Stakeholders in Mitigating Resource Based Ethnic Conflicts in Baringo South, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

Extended periods of dry seasons and drought have the potential to spark resource-based conflicts over pasture and water among pastoralist societies. These ecologically induced disputes in most cases result in protracted ethnic conflicts between different communities sharing common natural resources. This study examined the initiatives and mitigation measures taken by various stakeholders to end resource based ethnic conflicts in Baringo South.Anchored on two complementary theories namely; legitimate domination theory and environmental insecurity theory, this study argued that environmental degradation and shrinking access to pasture and water resources as a result of changes in climatic conditions ignite resource-based disputes which take the form of ethnic conflicts among pastoralists communities. This study made use of primary and secondary data in achieving intended objectives. Questionnaires were administered to 300 men and women from the dominant pastoralist ethnic groups of the Pokot and the Tugen selected through probability sampling. Purposive and snowballing sampling techniques were used to select 20 lead respondents who included; politicians, women leaders, religious leaders and local administrators. Data collected was analyzed and interpreted both qualitatively and quantitatively.

Keywords: Resource based Conflicts, Climate Change, Conflict Resolution

INTRODUCTION

Froese and Schilling (2019) and Peters et al (2020) document of the link between climate change and resource based conflicts. It is noted that extreme weather and climate change act as threats to social, political, and economic stability by adding stressors, exposing weak spots, and amplifying their effects. Communities that are sensitive to climate change frequently experience food instability, water scarcity, changing disease patterns, community displacement, migration, population expansion, and human conflicts.

Waila et al. (2018) document that during period of drought; livestock raids are more intense among pastoral communities. Migration and herd mobility triggered by depletion of pasture and water resources complicate the situation. Consequently, drought-exacerbated disputes emerge among pastoralists groups. Opiyo et al (2012) attributes the cause of violent conflicts among pastoralists in Northern Kenya to numerous socio-cultural, economic, and political elements that reinforce one another by limiting the supply of, depleting, and restricting access to natural resource bases. Such conflicts occur between pastoralist communities as well as between pastoralists and other users of land resources.

According to Gakuria (2013) conflicts between pastoral communities have historically been linked to struggle for limited resources. Resource scarcity has been identified as the main factor contributing to conflict among

pastoral communities. Schilling et al. (2015) document of violent conflicts in form of cattle raids or control water and pasture resources in Turkana County. Wanjohi (2010) adds that the conflicts are particularly violent in southern Turkana where the Pokot from Kenya and Uganda raid the Turkana and vice versa. Conflicts have been proven to diminish capacities and capabilities to cope with existing consequences and expected hazards, increasing exposure and vulnerability to climate-related disasters. Such resource based conflicts make it more difficult for individuals to obtain chances for a living. This also increases their vulnerability to resource-driven calamities.

Several studies on drought and violent conflicts have focused on the pastoralist populations living in the dry plains of East Africa (Oba, 1992; Blench, 1996; Guyo et al., 2005; Mkutu, 2007). Scholars have equally undertaken studies on the inter-link between climate change and resource based conflicts among pastoral communities in Kenya (Wanjohi, 2010; Opiyo et al, 2012; Gakuria, 2013). The scholars establish a direct relation between climate change and resource based conflicts. This study examined the initiatives and mitigation measures taken by various stakeholders to end resource based ethnic conflicts in Baringo South.

Statement of the Problem

Extended periods of dry weather have the potential to ignite resource-based conflicts among pastoralists. This is especially the case in pastoral settings where grazing resources are shared among people. Resource-based disputes are violent and destructive particularly where local institutions are weak, communities' traditional roles in conflict resolution are disregarded, and interventions are undertaken without having enough information to address the fundamental causes of the issue.

In the absence of strong local institutions pastoral communities may become competitive and violent as they attempt to maximize their share of the limited grazing resources, especially during droughts. As a result, drought may not only cause conflict but also endanger livelihoods by causing suffering and shortages. Resource scarcity has the potential to propel society into a vicious cycle of violence, failed institutions, and societal breakdown. To address this gap in knowledge this study examined the initiatives and mitigation measures taken by various stakeholders to end resource based ethnic conflicts in Baringo South.

Research Objective

This study examined the initiatives and mitigation measures taken by various stakeholders to end resource based ethnic conflicts in Baringo South.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Lai and Waltman (2008) argue that conflict management and resolution are becoming increasingly challenging due to the rising demand for natural resources and the complexity of conflicts. But in a globalized world, there is also more motivation for states and groups to cooperate to impose peace. Natural resource depletion, environmental damage, and unsustainable consumption all contribute to or directly create violent conflict because they are essential for life and development. In addition to being handled, ethnic disputes over resources are frequently tried to be settled peacefully, which is a tough, complex, and a difficult assignment.

However, even attempting to end the dispute amicably calls for significant reforms to the laws governing the various ethnic groups. Nevertheless this concept requires a number of actions and cannot alter overnight. To come up with a solution to the persistent conflict over pasture and water between pastoral ethnic communities, this study will attempt to assess whether such conflicts existed in the pre-colonial era.

Oba (1992) emphasizes how natural resources themselves can be beneficial in resolving disputes. Accordingly cooperative acts by parties to a conflict can serve as stepping stones to further diplomatic engagement, which is required to reduce conflict and foster peace. Usually, attempts at cooperation, co-management, and conservation, the formation of norms and agreements, and successful management of natural resources are indicators of peace.

Kahl (2006), notes that external actors have shaped natural resource management through the deployment of a variety of strategies during and after conflicts. Many natural resources are valued based on global demand, hence third parties engage in the market for natural resources. The local market and governance are subject to influence by international organizations, foreign investors, and trading partners.

Alley (1999) posits that in conflict settings, collaboration from these important players is essential for the reduction of inappropriate natural resource usage that might intensify and sustain conflict. For instance, external parties have assisted in negotiations and agreements, proposed remedies like eco-parks or sustainable development and conservation mechanisms, pushed for adherence to international standards, and provided the necessary aid and financial incentives to make changes possible and aid in conflict resolution. Agreements and negotiations can be very effective in resolving resource based conflicts between different ethnic communities. However the biggest question would be the element of adherence to the terms of agreements and negotiations by the warring parties. Adherence to terms of agreements and negotiations by warring parties will be investigated in this study. Historical, cultural and political impediments to adhering to agreed terms in a negotiation will be interrogated.

Sundberg (1998) identifies de-politicization of shared natural resources through co-management as a strategy towards solving conflicts between neighboring communities. Co-management in this case involves the government, local community and other stakeholders. This author notes that this method was effective in Guatemala in solving a long history of political conflict over land disputes. This method can however be effective only if the government authorities initiate measures to incorporate ethnic communities in conflict resolution. Non-cooperation by some communities may hamper government efforts towards such a noble course.

According to Kruglanski (2004), projects for rapid socio-economic growth are necessary for long-lasting solutions to the ethno-political conflict. Without them, no progress will be made. The determination of common national goals and the provision of guarantees to each and every person against violence motivated by poverty and the dread of a hungry neighbor will come about as a result of social development and economic prosperity. The misery of the majority of the population cannot coexist with the state of law for the privileged. Kruglanski and Webster (1996) emphasize that if impacted communities continue to view ethnicities as determinants of an unfair order, then ongoing economic insecurity would inevitably result in physical insecurity.

Numerous studies from the local and international community have evaluated the role played by nations in the management of natural resource conflicts since it is a topic of interest. For instance, Kizito (2013) sought to determine the significance of institutional structures on the management of conflicts and area security among the affected communities in Kenya; the study highlighted how ASAL community members arm themselves for protection due to the limited government presence in the marginalized regions. Famine, severe drought, decreased irrigation and grazing lands, and other experiences common to these countries, might in certain circumstances exacerbate already terrible conflicts by inflaming competitiveness over basic social amenities.

Elsewhere Unruh, (2015), sought to determine the role of government in resolving water related conflicts in pastoral areas in South Sudan. The study used descriptive analysis to investigate the subject, from where 187 respondents took part in this survey. The study established that an effective system of leadership; presence of government structure will heighten security. Effective leadership result in the advancement of proper institutional policies to look into issues concerning natural resource and their subsequent utilization. This will also address proper exploitation of resources.

Ribot and Peluso (2003) note of the complexity of conflicts revolving around access to and control over natural water resources in Tanzania. (While trying to ascertain the factors underlying conflicts over land and water resources in Tanzania, the study established that water related conflicts, rarely occurred while community structures such as district and village councils were present. These bodies have the legal mandate with the responsibility to conduct dispute resolution steps within their jurisdictional area.

Theoretical Framework

The study was anchored on the concept of legitimate domination theory and the environmental conflict theory as postulated by different scholars contends that liberal democracies and economies are linked to the idea of the rule of law or legal-rational authority (Max Weber, 1968). The idea is pertinent to the current study in that it assumes that while resolving resource based ethnic conflicts, the local government will adhere to the laws and regulations (Morrison, 2006; Allan, 2010). This will ultimately result in peaceful existence in areas prone to resource based ethnic conflicts. Baringo South is such one area.

The environmental scarcity theory as put forward by Thomas Homer-Dixon who focused his theory on reduced availability of renewable natural resources. Homer-Dixon holds the view that resource shortage, through an intricate network of economic, political, and social procedures can result into severe conflicts in emerging states (Kizito, 2013). This theory will argue that resource scarcity is a result of the interaction of distributional injustices, resource degradation, and demographic pressure. The theory puts into perspective the challenges and problems brought about by scarcity and competition for natural resources. This theory guided the research in understanding the root cause of conflicts.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study was in the form of an exploratory research design. This study made use of primary and secondary data in achieving intended objectives. Questionnaires were administered to 300 men and women from the dominant pastoralist ethnic groups of the Pokot and the Tugen selected through probability sampling. Purposive and snowballing sampling techniques were used to select 20 lead respondents who included; politicians, women leaders, religious leaders and local administrators. Data collected was analyzed and interpreted both qualitatively and quantitatively

The main research instruments for this study comprised questionnaires and interviews schedules with both closed and open-ended questions. Interview guides comprised of open-ended questions to give the respondents room to respond to questions without much restriction. Questionnaires were semi-structured and composed of closed ended question. Focus Group Discussions (FDG) were formed comprising of 8 men and women to supplement primary information from the questionnaires and interview schedules. Data collected in this study was analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively. Out of the 300 men and women 253 filled in and returned the questionnaires indicating a response rate of 84.3%.

Study Findings

An Analysis of the Effectiveness of Initiatives and Strategies Put in Place by Various Stakeholders in Mitigating Resource Based Ethnic Conflicts

This study established a direct relation between resource-based ethnic conflicts and socio-economic development as postulated by the environmental conflict theory. The aspects of socio-economic development were found to have been negatively impacted on by resource-based ethnic conflicts include trade and investments, infrastructural development, health services, education and human security. This calls for mitigation measures to stop resource-based ethnic conflicts for socio-economic development to be achieved.

This study examined initiatives and mitigation measures taken to end resource based ethnic conflict in Baringo South sub-County. The strategies and initiatives by the following groups were interrogated;

(i) Initiatives taken by Community through Elders

(ii) Initiatives taken by Government

(iii) Peace Initiatives by NG

(iv) Initiatives taken by Religious Leaders

(v)   Initiatives taken by the Youth and Women

The effectiveness of these strategies was evaluated. Lastly the weaknesses of these strategies were addressed.

Initiatives taken by Community through Elders

Out of the total number of respondents interviewed 83.4% noted that initiatives taken by elders were effective out of which 84% were men while 83.1% were women. Secondly 9.5% stated that these strategies were fairly effective which included 9.3% of men and 10.2% of women. Thirdly 7.1% of those interviewed noted that initiatives by elders were ineffective. This comprised of 7.2 % of men and 6.8% of women interviewed. This is presented in table 4.16 below.

Table 1.1 Initiatives taken by Community through Elders

	Total No	%	Effective	%	Fairly Effective	%	Not Effective	%
Men	194	76.7%	162	84%	18	9.3%	14	7.2%
Women	59	23.3%	49	83.1%	6	10.2%	4	6.8%
Total	253	100%	211	83.4%	24	9.5%	18	7.1%

Source: Research data, (2023)

The results of this study agree with those from a number of scholars. The role played by elders in conflict resolution has been widely tackled by scholars. Sayid (2022) notes that although elders have been instrumental in conflict resolutions among the Somali clans, they face a challenge in their inability to enforce agreements they arrive at. Kabelo (2010) notes of the instrumental role played by clan elders in resolving inter-ethnic conflicts among the Borana in Northern Kenya. Chapman and Kagaha (2009) document of the role the Akiriket and the Arriget.council of elders among the Karamojong and Teso communities in Uganda respectively in solving arising conflicts. They add that the challenge of elders in conflict resolution is that it only applies at the village level.

The findings support arguments by the .legitimated domination theory. It was argued that traditional leaders as an integral element of African society's cultural legacy derive their significance and power from regional traditional social institutions. These leaders have a crucial role in fostering community cohesion, harmony, and peace as well as in preventing and resolving problems. Elders have the power to make decisions and impose punishment on wrongdoers because they are respected members in the society. The traditional African structures that grant authority to the elderly because they are knowledgeable, experienced, and wise and are therefore qualified to make judgments are where elders receive this authority from.

This study noted that elders used mediation and negotiation in conflict resolution between rival groups. Elders arranged open-air or transparent gatherings where disputing parties may have their issues discussed after dialogue reached a resolution. Traditional techniques for resolving disputes and mediating parties relied on mutually agreed-upon decisions made by elders on both sides. The elders' main goal was to put an end to disputes and bring disputing parties to a negotiating table so they could settle their differences through traditional channels.

For justice, conflict resolution, and peace building, local elders used reconciliation, bargaining, and mediation. The development of peace was aided by the tight collaboration between local officials, security agencies, and elders. Elders were better able to comprehend the mechanics of the disagreements, which aided them in coming to a popularly supported solution. Elders first exchanged information about their neighborhoods and sought out appropriate measures to settle disputes.

Initiatives taken by Government

This study interrogated initiatives taken by government authorities to end resource based ethnic conflicts. Out of the total number of respondents interviewed 31.6% noted that initiatives taken by government were

effective out of which 31.9% were men while 30.5% were women. Out of the total number 49%% stated that these strategies were fairly effective which included 48.5% of men and 50.8% of women. The remaining 19.4% of those interviewed noted that initiatives by government were ineffective. This comprised of 19.6 % of men and 18.4% of women interviewed. This is presented in table 4.17 below.

Table 1.2 Initiatives taken by Government

	Total No	%	Effective	%	Fairly Effective	%	Not Effective	%
Men	194	76.7%	62	31.9%	94	48.5%	38	19.6%
Women	59	23.3%	18	30.5%	30	50.8%	11	18.4%
Total	253	100%	80	31.6%	124	49%	49	19.4%

Source: Research data, (2023)

The incidences and of intercommunity conflicts in the region have not decreased despite ongoing County and National government efforts to mediate them. Umuro (2017) examines the initiative made by government in conflict management and resolution among pastoralists' communities in Marsabit County in Kenya. Such initiatives include disarmament which according to the author has reduced cattle rustling in the region. This study noted that although the government has come up with a number of strategies to solve and manage ethnic conflicts, the efforts have not paid off. The national government has not put up enough efforts and resources in solving resource based conflicts in Baringo South. Respondents were of the opinion that the National and County government of Baringo should work in collaboration to find lasting solution to the endemic problem. Efforts should be made to establish and empower peace committees in the sub-County through funding and training on conflict resolution and management.

There was a general feeling among respondents that security personnel deployed in the region had underperformed in solving the security issue in the area. The National government through the use of security forces was more focused on prevention rather that solving the conflict between warring communities. National government security personnel were also treated with suspicion as it was seen as they only represented the interests of the National government in security matters as opposed to that of the locals. National government was accused of only appearing when conflicts emerged. This finding supports the report by Otieno (2015) which accused security personnel of non-responsiveness in situations of conflict and for biased intervention. It was the opinion of respondents that the only way for the security personnel to be effective was for them to be involved in the local conflict resolution mechanisms in the region.

Initiatives taken by NGOs

The initiatives taken by NGOs to end resource based ethnic conflicts were examined. Out of the total number of respondents interviewed 11.9% noted that initiatives taken by NGOs were effective out of which 11.3% were men while 13.6% were women. Second 27.2% stated that these strategies were fairly effective which included 28.9% of men and 22% of women. The remaining 60.9% of those interviewed noted that initiatives by NGOs were ineffective. This comprised of 59.8 % of men and 64.4% of women interviewed. This is presented in table 4.18 below.

Table 1.3 Peace Initiatives by NGOs

	Total No	%	Effective	%	Fairly Effective	%	Not Effective	%
Men	194	76.7%	22	11.3%	56	28.9%	116	59.8%
Women	59	23.3%	8	13.6%	13	22 %	38	64.4%
Total	253	100%	30	11.9%	69	27.2%	154	60.9%

Source: Research data, (2023)

Respondents noted that peace initiatives by NGOs in the region have been fairly successful in resolving and managing conflicts. These peace initiatives have been mostly driven by national and international NGOS

working with neighborhood CBOs. The lack of support from local and national governments was identified as the key factor preventing the peace initiatives from being highly effective. They added that a comprehensive strategy that involves the two levels of government, NGOs, CBOs, and community representatives is required for long-term conflict resolution in the region.

The majority of respondents said that the county's programs for conflict resolution should engage the locals. Local participation will make a significant contribution to achieving long-term conflict resolution. The elitist approach, wherein only the elite, leaders, and representatives of NGOs/CBOs are involved in conflict resolution programs, is the reason why conflict resolution has proved evasive. Therefore, a new strategy is required in which all parties, regardless of their position in society, participate in conflict resolution.

Initiatives taken by Religious Leaders

Initiatives taken by religious leaders to end resource based ethnic conflicts were examined. Out of the total number of respondents interviewed 8.3% noted that initiatives taken by religious leaders were effective out of which 8.3% were men while 8.5% were women. Out of the total number 41.5% stated that these strategies were fairly effective which included 41.2% of men and 42.3% of women. Lastly 50.2% of those interviewed noted that initiatives by religious leaders were ineffective. This comprised of 50.5 % of men and 49.2% of women interviewed. This is presented in table 4.19 below.

Table 1.4 Initiatives taken by Religious Leaders

	Total No	%	Effective	%	Fairly Effective	%	Not Effective	%
Men	194	76.7%	16	8.3%	60	30.9%	118	60.8%
Women	59	23.3%	5	8.5%	18	30.5%	36	61%
Total	253	100%	21	8.3%	78	30.8%	154	60.9%

Source: Research data, (2023)

According to Otieno (2015) religious organizations are known for playing an intermediary role in initiating peace dialogues among warring parties .Chepkorir (2019) in study of religious approaches to peace building and reconciliation in Kuresoi North in Kenya indicates that religious methods which include convening workshops, negotiations and mediations can be very effective in conflict resolution and management.

Religion, with its normative justifications that go beyond the purview of conventional diplomacy, represents important sources and resources for preventing war or putting an end to interethnic strife. It has been said to be helpful in fostering peace in locations where there are ethnic conflicts. This is due to the fact that religious peacemakers have a sizable audience to influence.

On the contrary the results from the study noted that efforts by religious leaders were not effective (60.9%) in resolving and managing emerging conflicts. This could be attributed to the fact that a majority of pastoralist groups are still engrained in traditional religion and worship. Such groups have been minimally influenced by Christianity hence they do not give much audience to religious leaders.

Initiatives taken by the Youth and Women

Lastly this study examined the initiatives taken by the youth and women in bringing to end resource based ethnic conflicts. Out of the total number of respondents interviewed 11.9% noted that initiatives taken by elders were effective out of which 11.9% were men while 11.9% were women. Second 38.7% stated that these strategies were fairly effective which included 38.7% of men and 39% of women interviewed. The remaining 27.2% of those interviewed noted that initiatives by elders were ineffective. This comprised of 28.9 % of men and 22% of women interviewed. This is presented in table 4.20 below.

Table 1.5 Initiatives taken by the Youth and Women

	Total No	%	Effective	%	Fairly Effective	%	Not Effective	%
Men	194	76.7%	23	11.9%	75	38.7%	96	49.4%
Women	59	23.3%	7	11.9%	23	39%	29	49.1%
Total	253	100%	30	11.9%	98	38.7%	125	49.4%

Source: Research data, (2023)

Women in pastoralist ethnic communities have received both criticism and appreciation in equal measure when it comes to inciting pastoral disputes and also leading initiatives to promote peace. The various roles played by women in praising invaders after successful attacks have been described by authors (Bollig & Österle 2007). Women have also led the way in making fun of their sons, even writing songs to mock young men who are thought to be fearful and cowardly when confronted by the enemy (Masinde et al 2004). However, other scholars have also defended the beneficial role that women from these arid and semi-arid regions of Kenya have performed (Juma, 2000). According to Ndegwa (2001), the success of the WPDC in Wajir which resulted in the cessation of hostilities depended on the involvement of women in peace-building initiatives. Akabwai (2001) uses the Alokita Peace Crusades to demonstrate the special role that women have in averting disputes among the Turkana, Dodoth, Jie, and Toposa communities.

In the same way as women, the youth have been blamed for instigating violence and at the same time promoting peace initiatives. The youth by virtue of their numerical power are the greatest victims and at the same time the greatest beneficiaries of peace and stability. Consequently the function they play in conflict resolution and management must be stressed (Okumu, et al, 2017).

The youth have the power to bridge gaps between people of diverse racial and cultural backgrounds. By popularizing shared ideals, shared cultures, and shared customs. Young people can also participate in peace awareness campaigns, push for changes to foster peace, or even get personally involved in peace building projects (Hendrickson et al ,1998).

Results from the study did not concur with the above on the role of women and the youth in peace building as data indicated that their efforts had failed. This could be due to the cultural beliefs that give preference to elders in negotiating peace on behalf of the community. Women and the youth are excluded in such matters.

This study found that women and young people are excluded from both traditional and modern peace organizations, despite the fact that both groups are crucial in the escalation of conflict. For peace initiatives to succeed community ownership of the peace processes should be encouraged. All organizations should value the contributions of women and young people and make use of them to promote peace initiatives in the region.

Summary of Initiatives taken by Different Actors in Mitigating Resource Based Ethnic Conflict

Table 1.6 Summary of Initiatives taken by Different Actors in Mitigating Resource Based Ethnic Conflicts

	Total No	Effective	%	Fairly Effective	%	Not Effective	%
Elders	253	211	83.4%	24	9.5%	18	7.1%
Government	253	80	31.6%	124	49%	49	19.4%
NGOs	253	30	11.9%	69	27.2%	154	60.9%
Youth and Women	253	30	11.9%	98	38.7%	125	49.4%
Religious Leaders	253	21	8.3%	78	30.8%	154	60.9%
Total	1265	372	29.4%	393	31.1%	500	39.5%

Figure 1.1 Summary of Initiatives taken by Different Actors in Mitigating Resource Based Ethnic Conflicts
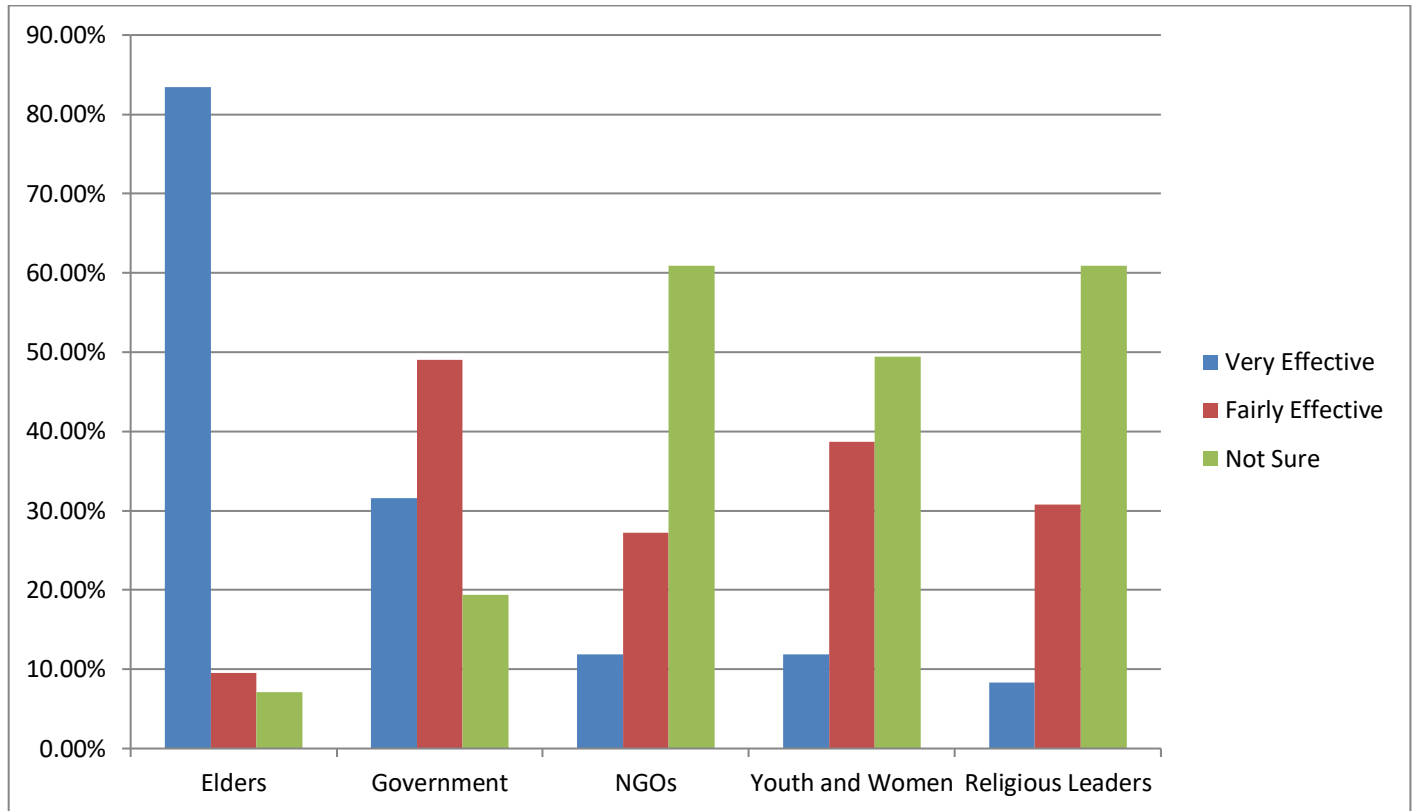
Source: Research data, (2024)

The legitimate domination theory holds that legal-rational authority, in contrast to the other two i.e. traditional and charismatic- this type of authority is predictable since there is an observable, legally sanctioned order or law to which everyone is subject. Scholars have documented on initiatives and mitigation measures taken by communities and government authorities to contain resource-based ethnic conflicts among pastoralists. Lai and Waltman (2008) document of the growing challenges faced by conflict management and resolution due to the increasing competition for natural resources occasioned by climate change. This motivates neighboring communities towards cooperation to maintain peaceful coexistence. Natural resource depletion, environmental harm, and unsustainable land use all add to or directly cause violent conflict because they are necessary for life and development. Governments and local communities have therefore attempted to peacefully settle ethnic conflicts over shared resources.

According to Oba (1992) conflicts over natural resources can be solved through cooperative acts of cooperation by conflicting parties themselves on how such resources should be maintained and shared. This is made possible through acts of cooperation, co-management, and conservation, the formation of norms and agreements. This being the case then the proper management of natural resources promotes peace. In the same thinking Sundberg (1998) argues that shared natural resources should not be politicized. Co-management that involves local community and other stakeholders should be encouraged to avoid resource based ethnic conflicts. However the effectiveness of this approach depends on the cooperation and incorporation of neighboring communities in the conflict resolution.

Some scholars have documented on the role of played by governments in the management and resolution of natural resource based conflicts. Unruh (2015) notes that in South Sudan the government established an effective structure of leadership that brought to an end water related conflicts in pastoral areas. Ribot and Peluso (2003) documents that of the effectiveness of District and village councils in dispute resolution over land and water resources in rural Tanzania. Kizito (2013) addresses the significance of governments on conflicts management among communities in ASAL in Kenya in the face of competition for diminishing pasture and water resources.

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