

Dialogue use and Land Conflict Resolution in Kajiado East Sub-County, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

Land conflicts in Kenya involve competing claims over ownership, boundaries, access, inheritance, land use and historical grievances. Dialogue is widely used within formal and community-based dispute-resolution processes, yet empirical evidence on how its distinct dimensions relate to perceived land conflict resolution remains limited in specific local contexts. This study examined negotiation, mediation, stakeholder participation and consensus-building dialogue in Kajiado East Sub-County and considered the implications of the findings for community peace education and participatory conflict transformation. The study used a convergent parallel mixed-methods approach within a correlational, cross-sectional design. The quantitative analysis was based on 142 usable questionnaires, supplemented by 43 key-informant interviews. Pearson correlation analysis indicated statistically significant positive associations between negotiation, mediation, stakeholder participation, consensus-building and perceived land conflict resolution. The multiple regression model explained 55.1% of the variation in perceived land conflict resolution, with stakeholder participation recording the largest standardized regression coefficient ($\beta = .426$, $p < .001$). Qualitative findings provided contextual insights into the role of dialogue in land conflict resolution. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson product-moment correlations and multiple linear regression. Qualitative data were analyzed thematically and integrated with the quantitative strand during interpretation. Instrument reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha. All four dialogue dimensions showed positive and statistically significant associations with land conflict resolution: negotiation ($r = .684$, $p < .001$), mediation ($r = .712$, $p < .001$), stakeholder participation ($r = .735$, $p < .001$), and consensus-building dialogue ($r = .758$, $p < .001$). The four predictors jointly explained 55.1% of the variance in land conflict resolution ($R^2 = .551$; $F(4,137) = 56.18$, $p < .001$). Stakeholder participation had the largest unique standardized coefficient ($\beta = .426$, $p < .001$). Qualitative findings converged with the quantitative results and highlighted trust, impartiality, reliable land information, institutional coordination, inclusive participation and implementation of agreements as important conditions shaping dialogue processes. Dialogue use was positively associated with perceived land conflict resolution in Kajiado East. The results suggest that meaningful participation, supported by credible institutions and informed facilitation, is especially important. For education, the findings support community peace-education approaches that develop dialogue, listening, negotiation, civic participation, consensus-building and collaborative problem-solving capacities. Because the design was cross-sectional and correlational, these relationships should not be interpreted as proof that dialogue dimensions cause resolution outcomes.

Keywords: dialogue; land conflict; negotiation; mediation; stakeholder participation; consensus-building; peace education; conflict transformation; Kajiado East; Kenya.

INTRODUCTION

Land is more than an economic asset. It provides livelihoods, supports social identity, structures settlement and inheritance, and shapes relationships between households, communities, institutions and the state. These overlapping functions make land disputes particularly difficult to address because disagreements may involve not only legal ownership but also access, use, historical claims, identity, social relationships and expectations about future development. In such contexts, a resolution process may need to do more than determine a legal entitlement. It may also need to create opportunities for disputants to communicate, clarify interests, hear

competing perspectives, rebuild working relationships and develop arrangements that affected actors regard as legitimate.

Kenya's land-governance environment reflects this complexity. Constitutional reforms, land legislation, alternative dispute-resolution mechanisms and the development of Alternative Justice Systems (AJS) have expanded the institutional repertoire available for managing disputes. At the same time, land conflicts remain associated with boundary disagreements, inheritance, subdivision, competing land uses, historical grievances, tenure insecurity and disputes involving customary and formal institutions. The coexistence of formal and informal institutions means that the effectiveness of a dialogue process can depend on both the quality of interaction among disputants and the institutional environment in which agreements are reached and implemented (Judiciary of Kenya, 2023; Kenya Land Alliance, 2022; Mutuku et al., 2022).

Dialogue is therefore important as both a conflict-resolution practice and a social-learning process. Negotiation allows disputants to engage directly around interests and possible settlements. Mediation introduces a third party who facilitates communication and assists parties to explore options without taking the decision away from them. Stakeholder participation expands the process beyond the immediate disputants to include actors whose knowledge, authority or interests may affect the dispute. Consensus-building emphasizes common interests, fairness, consideration of different perspectives and joint decision-making. These dimensions are conceptually distinct, but in practice they may operate sequentially or simultaneously.

The educational dimension of such processes is often underdeveloped in empirical discussions of land conflict. Peace education is not limited to classroom instruction; it can also involve community-based learning through which people develop capacities for non-violent communication, perspective-taking, negotiation, participation, collaborative problem-solving and peaceful coexistence. When community members participate in dialogue, they may learn procedural norms, develop confidence in expressing concerns, understand other perspectives and acquire practical competencies for managing disagreement. The present article therefore interprets the study findings not as evidence that the research measured educational outcomes, but as evidence with implications for community peace education and participatory learning.

Kajiado East Sub-County provides a useful context for examining these relationships. The area contains complex land-governance and socio-economic dynamics, including changing land-use patterns, subdivision, competing claims and interactions between formal institutions and community-based structures. Previous studies in Kenya and elsewhere have examined negotiation, mediation, participation or consensus-building, but the literature reviewed for the thesis did not sufficiently integrate the four dimensions within one empirical model focused on Kajiado East.

Although the present study focuses on dialogue use and land conflict resolution, its findings also have implications for community peace education. The dialogue practices examined, particularly negotiation, mediation, stakeholder participation and consensus-building, involve competencies that may be incorporated into community-based peace education and civic learning initiatives. These competencies include constructive communication, active listening, inclusive participation and collaborative problem-solving. By identifying the dialogue dimensions associated with perceived land conflict resolution, the study provides a basis for considering how community learning initiatives could complement existing land-governance and conflict-resolution mechanisms. However, the study did not evaluate an educational intervention or measure educational outcomes.

Research Gap and Study Rationale

The study addressed four related gaps. First, a conceptual gap existed because dialogue was frequently discussed as a broad process, while the present study operationalized it through four dimensions: negotiation, mediation, stakeholder participation and consensus-building. Second, a contextual gap remained because findings from other counties or countries cannot automatically be transferred to Kajiado East, where land governance and social relations have their own institutional and socio-economic characteristics. Third, a methodological gap concerned the limited integration of statistical relationships with the lived and institutional experiences of actors involved in land conflict resolution. Fourth, a geographical gap arose from the relative scarcity of empirical evidence specifically focused on Kajiado East.

The rationale for the study was consequently not to establish a universal causal effect of dialogue, but to generate location-specific evidence about statistical relationships and contextual conditions. Such evidence can inform land-governance institutions, peace committees, community leaders, civic-education actors and other stakeholders seeking to strengthen dialogue-based approaches. It can also contribute to peace-education practice by identifying competencies and participatory conditions that are relevant to community-level conflict transformation.

Research Question and Objectives

The overarching research question was: What is the relationship between dialogue use and land conflict resolution in Kajiado East Sub-County, Kenya? Four specific objectives guided the study: (1) to examine the relationship between negotiation and land conflict resolution; (2) to assess the relationship between mediation and land conflict resolution; (3) to determine the relationship between stakeholder participation in dialogue processes and land conflict resolution; and (4) to examine the relationship between consensus-building dialogue and land conflict resolution.

The corresponding analytical expectation was that each dialogue dimension would be positively associated with land conflict resolution. These expectations were assessed using Pearson correlation and multiple regression rather than experimental tests. The distinction matters because the design permits analysis of association and predictive contribution, but it does not establish that a dialogue practice caused a particular resolution outcome.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Research on dialogue and conflict resolution commonly emphasises communication, negotiation, third-party facilitation, participation and collaborative decision-making. In land disputes, these processes are particularly relevant because the object of disagreement is embedded in social relationships and institutional arrangements. Negotiation literature stresses the importance of identifying interests and developing mutually acceptable arrangements, while mediation literature highlights neutral facilitation, communication and voluntary agreement. Participation scholarship focuses on legitimacy, representation and ownership, and consensus-building literature emphasises shared interests and joint problem-solving (Amanor & Ubink, 2022; Memon & Abdulrahman, 2021; Moore & Woodrow, 2021; Susskind & Cruikshank, 2021).

Kenyan studies similarly show that alternative dispute-resolution processes can provide spaces for addressing land conflicts outside conventional litigation. Justin (2021) reported the relevance of negotiation in sustainable conflict management, while Mburu and Kinyua (2024) examined court-annexed mediation in Kenyan land disputes. Musyoka and Wambua (2024) highlighted stakeholder participation in community land disputes in Machakos County. Kariuki and Muriithi (2024) reported the relevance of consensus-building in Narok County. These studies provide important contextual evidence, but the present study extends the discussion by examining four dimensions together and by integrating quantitative relationships with qualitative accounts.

The literature also indicates that dialogue does not operate in a vacuum. Land records, institutional authority, political conditions, trust, cultural norms, resource availability and implementation mechanisms can shape whether dialogue processes are credible and whether agreements are followed. Kenya Land Alliance (2022) and Mutuku et al. (2022) draw attention to governance and institutional dimensions of land conflict. Klaus (2021) and Klopp (2020) illustrate how historical and institutional structures can continue to shape land-related contestation. These insights are important for interpreting the present findings because a positive statistical association between dialogue and perceived resolution does not imply uniform success across disputes.

Conflict Transformation Theory

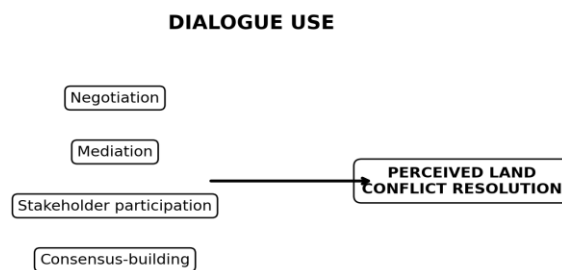
The principal theoretical foundation was Conflict Transformation Theory associated with Lederach (1995). Rather than treating conflict only as a problem requiring settlement, conflict transformation emphasises relationships, structures, patterns of interaction and underlying conditions. Dialogue is relevant because it can create opportunities for parties to communicate, recognise each other's perspectives, address grievances and develop relationships capable of supporting longer-term peace. Miall (2022) similarly emphasises transformation as a process that reaches beyond immediate settlement.

The four dimensions of the present study map onto this theoretical perspective. Negotiation creates a structured opportunity for disputants to articulate interests; mediation can improve communication and reduce destructive interaction; stakeholder participation can broaden the social base of decision-making; and consensus-building can foster shared ownership. The theory therefore helps explain why dialogue may be associated with both settlement-related outcomes and relational outcomes such as trust, acceptance and peaceful coexistence. From a peace-education perspective, these processes also create opportunities for learning practical competencies such as listening, perspective-taking, respectful disagreement and collaborative problem-solving.

Institutional Theory

Institutional Theory, particularly the work of North (1990), complements the conflict-transformation perspective by focusing on the rules, norms and organizational arrangements that structure social action. Land disputes in Kajiado East are handled within an institutional ecology that includes government agencies, the National Land Commission, county structures, courts, local administration, community elders, religious leaders, peace committees and civil society organizations. Formal rules may establish rights and procedures, while informal norms may influence legitimacy, participation and compliance.

The integration of the two theories is important. Conflict Transformation Theory explains the relational and participatory logic of dialogue, while Institutional Theory explains the conditions under which dialogue is enabled, constrained or translated into implementation. The qualitative findings support this integrated view: respondents discussed the importance of credible land information, impartial facilitation, institutional coordination and implementation of agreements alongside the value of dialogue itself.



Contextual conditions: institutional capacity • credible land information • trust • political neutrality • implementation of agreements

Figure 1. Conceptual model linking four dimensions of dialogue use with perceived land conflict resolution, within contextual institutional and social conditions.

Implications for Community Peace Education

The study did not measure peace-education outcomes directly, and the article does not reinterpret its dependent variable as an educational construct. Nevertheless, the findings have a defensible educational implication. Community dialogue processes can function as sites of experiential learning. Participants learn how to communicate claims, listen to other parties, assess information, negotiate, deliberate, participate in collective decisions and work toward agreements. Peace education therefore provides a useful interpretive bridge between conflict-resolution practice and education without changing the original research question.

This framing is especially relevant to the Education Special Issue because it highlights education as a process embedded in community institutions rather than restricting learning to formal classrooms. The article consequently positions the empirical findings as evidence informing the design of community-based peace-education activities, facilitator training, civic participation programs and local learning spaces. This interpretation remains bounded by the original data: the study establishes relationships among dialogue variables and perceived land conflict resolution; it does not test whether a specific peace-education intervention produces those relationships.

METHODS

The study used a convergent parallel mixed-methods approach within a cross-sectional correlational research design. The quantitative and qualitative strands were treated as complementary sources of evidence. Quantitative analysis was used to estimate the direction and strength of relationships and the unique predictive contribution of each dialogue dimension. Qualitative interviews were used to understand how participants experienced dialogue, what conditions facilitated or constrained it, and why particular statistical patterns might occur. The strands were analyzed separately and integrated during interpretation.

Study Population, Sampling and Participants

The thesis defined a target population of 720, comprising 600 eligible residents and 120 key informants. Using Yamane's formula at a 5% level of precision, the planned sample was 257, allocated as 214 residents and 43 key informants. Residents were approached through stratified random sampling across the study area, while key informants were selected purposively because of their specialized roles in land governance, administration, peacebuilding or community dispute resolution. The qualitative group included community leaders, county land officials, National Land Commission representatives, chiefs and assistant chiefs, religious leaders, peace committee members and civil society representatives.

A total of 214 questionnaires were distributed to the sampled residents, of which 200 were returned. Following data screening, 58 returned questionnaires were excluded because they were incomplete, resulting in 142 usable questionnaires for quantitative analysis. This represents a questionnaire return rate of 93.5% and a usable response rate of 66.4% relative to the questionnaires distributed. The qualitative component comprised 43 key-informant interviews. The distinction between returned and usable questionnaires is important because the quantitative findings are based on the 142 complete and usable responses rather than all questionnaires returned.

Table 1

Response Rate and Usability

Instrument outcome	n	% of distributed
Distributed questionnaires	214	100.0
Returned questionnaires	200	93.5
Usable questionnaires	142	66.4
Incomplete/excluded	58	27.1

The exclusion of incomplete questionnaires reduced the quantitative sample from 200 returned questionnaires to 142 usable cases. Although the questionnaire return rate was high, the exclusion of incomplete responses may have introduced complete-case bias if respondents whose questionnaires were excluded differed systematically from those retained in the analysis. The available analysis did not establish whether such differences existed. Consequently, the possibility of non-response bias cannot be ruled out and is acknowledged as a limitation of the study.

Data Collection and Measurement

Quantitative data were collected using a structured questionnaire organised around the four dialogue dimensions and land conflict resolution. The questionnaire used Likert-type response categories. Qualitative data were collected using semi-structured interview guides addressing negotiation, mediation, stakeholder participation and consensus-building. The interview questions also examined practical challenges, institutional conditions and recommendations for improving dialogue. Instruments were reviewed for content and face validity, and the thesis reports translation/back-translation procedures where necessary to accommodate local language use.

The study treated negotiation, mediation, stakeholder participation and consensus-building as independent constructs and land conflict resolution as the dependent construct. Land conflict resolution was operationalized through indicators relating to reduced disputes, timely settlement, social cohesion, compliance with agreements and sustainable peace. Because these were perception measures, the resulting dependent variable represents perceived resolution rather than independently verified administrative case outcomes.

Reliability and Analytical Procedures

Internal consistency was assessed using Cronbach's alpha. The coefficients were .842 for negotiation, .856 for mediation, .879 for stakeholder participation, .892 for consensus-building dialogue and .885 for land conflict resolution. These values indicate satisfactory internal consistency of the item sets; they should not be interpreted as proof of construct validity.

Table 2

Internal Consistency of Study Constructs

Construct	Items	Cronbach's α
Negotiation	5	.842
Mediation	5	.856
Stakeholder participation	6	.879
Consensus-building dialogue	6	.892
Land conflict resolution	5	.885

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson product-moment correlation and multiple linear regression. Descriptive statistics summarized respondent ratings; Pearson correlation assessed bivariate relationships; and multiple regression estimated the unique predictive contribution of each dialogue dimension while controlling for the other three. Qualitative interviews were analyzed thematically. Integration occurred by comparing the direction and relative strength of quantitative findings with recurring qualitative themes, thereby identifying convergence, complementarity and contextual qualifications.

Objective-to-Analysis Matrix

Table 3 Alignment of study objectives with analysis and mixed-methods integration.

Objective	Main variable	Quantitative analysis	Qualitative integration
Negotiation and LCR	Negotiation $\rightarrow$ LCR	Mean, Pearson r , regression β	Experiences, constraints and conditions
Mediation and LCR	Mediation $\rightarrow$ LCR	Mean, Pearson r , regression β	Facilitation, neutrality and implementation
Stakeholder participation and LCR	Participation $\rightarrow$ LCR	Mean, Pearson r , regression β	Inclusion, ownership, representation and accountability
Consensus-building and LCR	Consensus $\rightarrow$ LCR	Mean, Pearson r , regression β	Fairness, shared interests and joint decisions

RESULTS

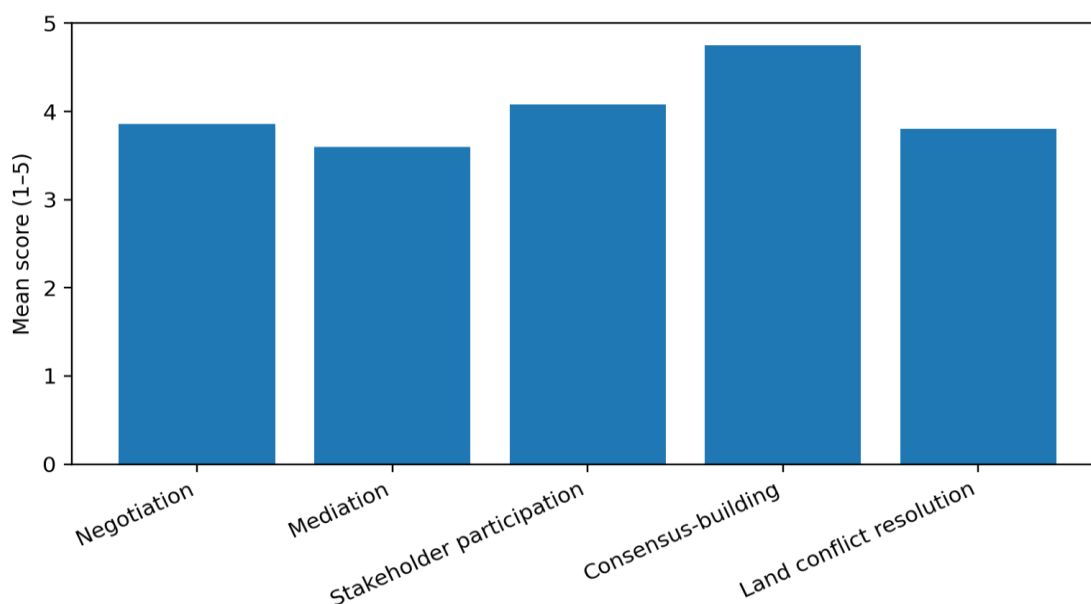
The results are presented in a compact form suitable for journal publication. The emphasis is on construct-level findings, key inferential statistics and integrated themes rather than reproducing the full set of thesis tables. This approach preserves the empirical evidence while reducing repetition.

Descriptive Findings

Table 4. Summary of construct-level descriptive statistics.

Construct	N	M	SD	Interpretation
Negotiation	142	3.86	1.147	Moderate agreement
Mediation	142	3.60	1.332	Moderate agreement
Stakeholder participation	142	4.08	1.194	Agreement
Consensus-building dialogue	142	4.75	1.336	Strong agreement
Land conflict resolution	142	3.80	1.240	Moderate agreement

Figure 1 Mean ratings for the four dialogue dimensions and perceived land conflict resolution.



Consensus-building had the highest descriptive rating ($M = 4.75$), followed by stakeholder participation ($M = 4.08$), negotiation ($M = 3.86$) and mediation ($M = 3.60$). The mean for perceived land conflict resolution was 3.80. The descriptive pattern indicates that respondents generally viewed dialogue processes positively, but it should not be read as a ranking of effectiveness because the constructs capture different dimensions of the dialogue process.

Negotiation and Land Conflict Resolution

Negotiation recorded a mean of 3.86 ($SD = 1.147$). At the indicator level, respondents rated expressing and explaining interests/positions ($M = 4.16$) and developing mutually acceptable agreements ($M = 4.12$) relatively highly, while direct discussion of land-related concerns received a lower mean ($M = 3.29$). The bivariate relationship between negotiation and land conflict resolution was positive and statistically significant ($r = .684$, $p < .001$). In the regression model, negotiation had a positive unique coefficient ($\beta = .301$, $p < .001$).

Qualitative evidence helps explain the pattern. Key informants described negotiation as an important entry mechanism because it allows parties to state claims and explore areas of agreement. However, incomplete land records, overlapping claims, historical grievances, political interference, misinformation and unwillingness to compromise were identified as constraints. One National Land Commission official emphasized that missing or incomplete records can make ownership difficult to verify and negotiations difficult to advance. The quantitative association is therefore consistent with a context in which negotiation is useful but dependent on reliable information and credible institutional support.

Mediation and Land Conflict Resolution

Mediation had the lowest overall dialogue mean ($M = 3.60$, $SD = 1.332$), but it nevertheless showed a positive and statistically significant association with land conflict resolution ($r = .712$, $p < .001$) and a significant unique regression coefficient ($\beta = .254$, $p = .004$). Respondents rated the mediator's opportunity for each party to present concerns ($M = 4.26$) and the facilitation of communication ($M = 4.24$) relatively highly. By contrast, the item concerning a structured process for land disagreements recorded a lower mean of 2.39, suggesting weaker perceptions of procedural structure.

The interviews indicated that mediation was valued for improving communication, preserving relationships and providing an alternative to adversarial court processes. At the same time, informants identified delayed land records, limited resources, political interference, lack of cooperation and non-compliance with agreements as challenges. A land administrator noted that mediation becomes difficult when ownership cannot be verified and when political interference affects the process. These findings suggest that mediation capacity includes more than interpersonal facilitation; it also depends on information, institutional coordination and post-agreement implementation.

Stakeholder Participation and Land Conflict Resolution

Stakeholder participation recorded a mean of 4.08 ($SD = 1.194$) and a strong positive correlation with land conflict resolution ($r = .735$, $p < .001$). In the regression model, it had the largest standardized coefficient of the four dimensions ($\beta = .426$, $p < .001$). Respondents rated equal opportunities to express views and involvement of relevant community groups/organisations at $M = 4.68$ each. Community members' active involvement received a lower mean of 3.28, indicating that formal inclusion of stakeholder categories does not necessarily mean that all participants experience the process as equally active.

The qualitative findings provided particularly strong convergence. Key informants repeatedly emphasised the involvement of affected residents, elders, women, youth, chiefs, government officials, religious leaders, civil society organisations and peace committees. Participation was associated in their accounts with transparency, ownership, accountability and confidence. A county land officer explained that when all stakeholders participate, the process becomes more transparent and people feel ownership of the outcome. The significance of this finding lies in the distinction between stakeholder presence and meaningful participation: the latter requires opportunities to influence discussion and decisions, access to information and recognition of different interests.

Consensus-Building Dialogue and Land Conflict Resolution

Consensus-building received the highest descriptive mean ($M = 4.75$, $SD = 1.336$) and the strongest bivariate correlation with land conflict resolution ($r = .758$, $p < .001$). Indicators were consistently high, including considering different perspectives ($M = 4.93$), fairness ($M = 4.82$) and joint decision-making ($M = 4.82$). In the regression model, consensus-building remained a significant positive predictor ($\beta = .263$, $p < .001$).

The interviews reinforced the importance of shared ownership and fairness. Participants described consensus as a process through which disputants can identify common interests, hear different perspectives and develop decisions that are more acceptable to affected communities. An elder emphasised that parties who feel ownership of a decision may be more willing to implement it and less likely to return to conflict. At the same time, informants noted that consensus can be weakened by unequal participation, mistrust, historical grievances and weak implementation arrangements. Thus, the high descriptive rating and strong bivariate relationship coexist with a need to interpret consensus-building as a process whose quality depends on the conditions of participation.

Correlation and Multiple Regression

Table 5 Integrated bivariate and multivariate results.

Dialogue dimension	Pearson r	p	Standardized β	p
Negotiation	.684	< .001	.301	< .001
Mediation	.712	< .001	.254	.004
Stakeholder participation	.735	< .001	.426	< .001
Consensus-building	.758	< .001	.263	< .001

Figure 2 Pearson correlations between dialogue dimensions and perceived land conflict resolution.

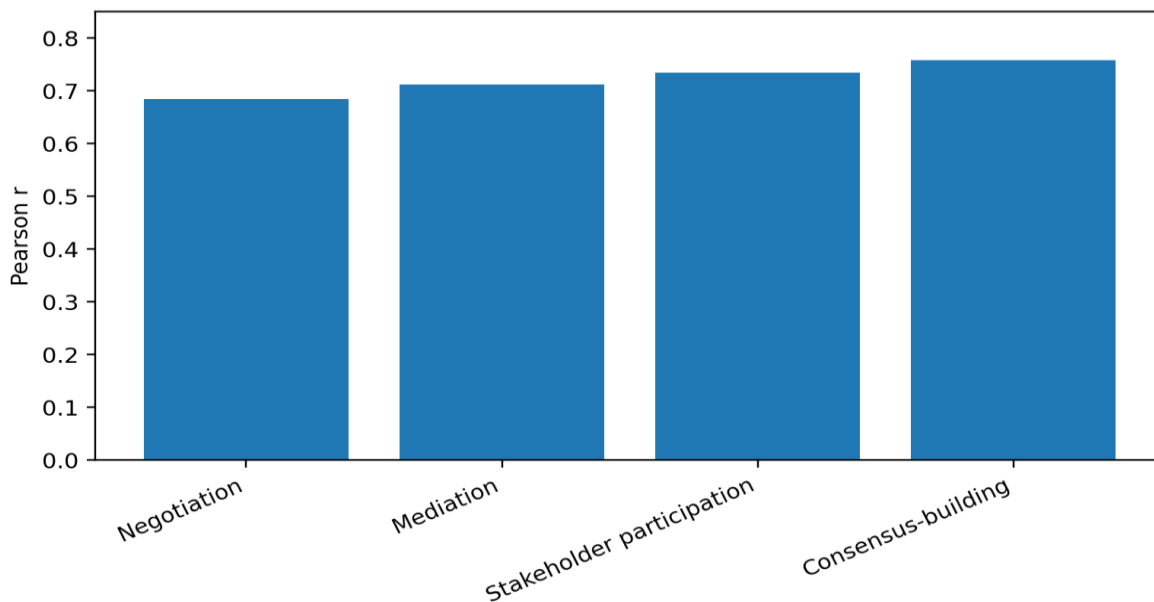


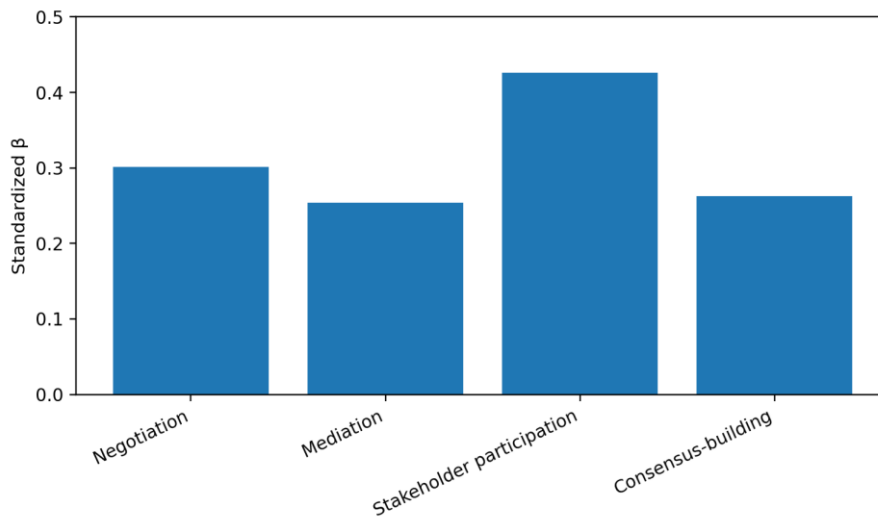
Table 6 Multiple regression model summary.

Model statistic	Value
R ²	.551
Adjusted R ²	.536
F(4,137)	56.18
p	< .001
Regression SS	38.124
Residual SS	31.206
Total SS	69.330

Table 7 Multiple regression coefficients predicting perceived land conflict resolution.

Predictor	B	SE	β	t	p
Constant	.842	.214	—	3.93	.000
Negotiation	.286	.078	.301	3.67	.000
Mediation	.241	.081	.254	2.98	.004
Stakeholder participation	.391	.076	.426	5.14	.000
Consensus-building dialogue	.431	.082	.263	4.13	.000

Figure 3 Standardized regression coefficients for the four dialogue dimensions.



The model was statistically significant, $F(4,137) = 56.18$, $p < .001$, and the four dialogue dimensions jointly explained 55.1% of the variance in perceived land conflict resolution ($R^2 = .551$; adjusted $R^2 = .536$). The results show an important distinction between descriptive prominence, bivariate association and unique predictive contribution. Consensus-building was the most highly rated construct and had the strongest bivariate correlation, but stakeholder participation had the largest standardized regression coefficient. This suggests that when the four dimensions are considered simultaneously, stakeholder participation accounts for the largest unique share of the model's predictive relationship with perceived resolution.

Integrated Qualitative Findings

Table 8 Summary of qualitative themes and integration with quantitative findings.

Theme	Core insight	Quantitative convergence
Negotiation as entry mechanism	Direct engagement clarifies interests and can support agreements; records, political interference and historical grievances can constrain it.	$r = .684$; $\beta = .301$

Mediation as facilitated communication	Neutral facilitation can reduce hostility and preserve relationships; mediator capacity and implementation matter.	$r = .712; \beta = .254$
Meaningful stakeholder participation	Inclusive participation can strengthen transparency, ownership, accountability and confidence; nominal participation may be insufficient.	$r = .735; \beta = .426$
Consensus and shared ownership	Fairness, different perspectives and joint decisions can strengthen acceptance and peaceful coexistence.	$r = .758; \beta = .263$
Institutional/contextual conditions	Trust, impartiality, credible records, coordination and implementation shape dialogue processes.	Qualifies all positive relationships

Across the qualitative material, five cross-cutting conditions emerged. First, trust influenced willingness to engage and accept facilitation. Second, impartiality was important to the credibility of mediators and other facilitators. Third, reliable land records affected the ability to distinguish competing claims and therefore influenced the informational foundation of negotiation and mediation. Fourth, institutional coordination affected continuity between dialogue, administrative action and implementation. Fifth, compliance with agreements determined whether a settlement was experienced as durable. These conditions provide an explanatory context for the statistical findings without converting qualitative observations into causal claims.

DISCUSSION

The study found consistent positive relationships between all four dialogue dimensions and perceived land conflict resolution. The pattern is notable because it does not depend on a single mechanism. Negotiation, mediation, stakeholder participation and consensus-building each showed statistically significant bivariate relationships, and all remained statistically significant in the multiple regression model. The overall model accounted for 55.1% of the variance in perceived resolution. Within the limits of the cross-sectional design, this indicates that dialogue use is an important component of the explanatory model examined in Kajiado East, while leaving substantial variance associated with other factors.

The findings are broadly consistent with conflict-transformation scholarship, which treats communication, participation, relationship repair and collaborative problem-solving as central to constructive change (Lederach, 1995; Miall, 2022). They also align with institutional perspectives emphasising the role of rules, organisations and norms in shaping collective action (North, 1990). The qualitative findings are particularly important because they demonstrate that dialogue mechanisms are embedded in institutional and social conditions. A process can be formally available yet produce limited confidence if participants distrust the facilitator, if land information is unavailable or if agreements lack implementation support.

Negotiation

The positive relationship between negotiation and perceived resolution is consistent with research that treats direct engagement as a practical mechanism for identifying interests and developing settlements. Justin (2021) similarly emphasised negotiation in conflict management, while Memon and Abdulrahman (2021) highlighted its relevance to community land disputes. The present findings add that negotiation in Kajiado East is not simply a communication event. Its usefulness is conditioned by the availability of credible information and willingness to engage. Incomplete land records can shift a negotiation from problem-solving toward disagreement over basic facts, while historical grievances can make present-day bargaining more difficult.

From a peace-education perspective, negotiation provides an experiential setting for learning interest-based communication and respectful disagreement. Community peace-education initiatives can therefore incorporate practical exercises on identifying interests, distinguishing positions from needs, evaluating evidence and developing options. Such educational support should not replace institutional land administration; rather, it can strengthen participants' capacity to use dialogue within legitimate institutional processes.

Mediation

Mediation's significant association with perceived resolution is consistent with studies of third-party facilitation in community resource conflicts (Moore & Woodrow, 2021) and Kenyan land disputes (Mburu & Kinyua, 2024). The lower descriptive mean for mediation compared with the other dialogue dimensions may reflect the procedural and institutional challenges identified qualitatively. In particular, the low rating for a structured process suggests that mediation may be experienced as less consistently institutionalised than other aspects of dialogue.

The finding also reinforces the importance of mediator credibility. Interview participants stressed impartiality and the need for parties to trust the process. Peace education can contribute by strengthening facilitator competencies in active listening, managing unequal participation, recognising power differences, communicating procedures and supporting respectful engagement. However, training alone cannot solve problems of land documentation or political interference; institutional measures remain necessary.

Stakeholder Participation

Stakeholder participation produced the largest unique standardized coefficient ($\beta = .426$). This finding deserves careful interpretation because it differs from the descriptive and bivariate pattern. Consensus-building had the highest mean and strongest correlation, but once the overlap among the four dialogue dimensions was accounted for, stakeholder participation had the largest unique contribution. One plausible interpretation, supported by the qualitative evidence, is that participation influences the perceived legitimacy and ownership of the process across multiple dialogue mechanisms. When affected actors can meaningfully express views and participate in decisions, the resulting process may be regarded as more transparent and accountable.

This interpretation is consistent with participation literature and Kenyan evidence emphasising inclusion in community land disputes (Mansuri & Rao, 2021; Musyoka & Wambua, 2024). It also has direct educational implications. Participation is a civic-learning practice: participants learn how decisions are made, how to articulate interests, how to listen to competing perspectives and how to deliberate over shared problems. The lower mean for active community involvement, however, cautions against equating representation with meaningful participation. Peace-education and civic-learning programmes should therefore focus on participatory skills and structures, not simply attendance lists.

Consensus-Building

Consensus-building had the strongest bivariate association with perceived resolution ($r = .758$) and the highest descriptive mean ($M = 4.75$). This aligns with Kariuki and Muriithi (2024), who reported the importance of consensus-building in community land disputes in Narok County, and with Kisembo and Namusoke (2023), who linked consensus-building with community conflict resolution. The high ratings for fairness, consideration of different perspectives and joint decision-making indicate that respondents value the relational and participatory qualities of consensus-building.

The regression result nevertheless shows why descriptive ratings should not be treated as evidence of comparative causal effectiveness. Stakeholder participation had the largest unique standardized coefficient. The distinction demonstrates the value of multivariate analysis: several dialogue dimensions may overlap conceptually and empirically, and a dimension that is highly rated may not account for the largest unique share of variance when other dimensions are controlled. Consensus-building should therefore be understood as an important component of an integrated dialogue system rather than as a stand-alone superior mechanism.

The findings also offer a practical point of connection with community peace education. The statistically significant relationships identified in this study suggest that negotiation, mediation, stakeholder participation and consensus-building warrant attention in community-based capacity-building initiatives. Such initiatives may provide opportunities for community members and local dialogue facilitators to practice constructive communication, inclusive deliberation and collaborative problem-solving. Nevertheless, these implications should be interpreted cautiously. The present study did not measure educational participation, learning outcomes or changes in conflict-resolution competencies. Further research would be necessary to establish whether structured peace-education interventions improve these competencies or contribute to better conflict-resolution outcomes.

Why Stakeholder Participation Emerged as the Strongest Unique Predictor

Three explanations are supported by the combined evidence. First, participation may operate across the other dialogue dimensions. Negotiation, mediation and consensus-building all depend on who is present, who can speak and whose interests are recognised. Second, participation may strengthen legitimacy and ownership, which qualitative respondents repeatedly connected to acceptance and implementation. Third, participation can improve access to distributed knowledge. Community members, elders, officials and organisations may hold different information about land histories, boundaries, customary practices and institutional procedures. Bringing these perspectives into one process may reduce informational gaps and broaden the basis for decisions.

These interpretations remain explanations rather than tested causal mechanisms. The cross-sectional design cannot determine whether increased participation causes better resolution, whether successful dialogue attracts more participation, or whether both are influenced by other factors. Longitudinal and experimental or quasi-experimental studies would be needed to test causal pathways. Nevertheless, the convergence between the statistical coefficient and qualitative accounts provides a coherent interpretation of why participation was prominent in the study model.

Institutional and Educational Implications

The integrated findings support a view of peace education as connected to institutions and community practice. Education for peaceful coexistence is more likely to be meaningful when participants can apply learned competencies in credible decision-making settings. Facilitator training should therefore include communication, negotiation, mediation ethics, inclusion, gender-sensitive participation, conflict analysis, information verification and agreement follow-up. Community peace committees and local dialogue structures can serve as practice environments where these competencies are developed and reinforced.

At the institutional level, the findings support stronger linkages among dialogue forums, land administration and implementation structures. The National Land Commission, county institutions, local administration and community-based mechanisms need reliable channels for sharing information and following up agreements. The AJS policy framework is relevant because it recognises the value of accessible, participatory and culturally responsive justice mechanisms (Judiciary of Kenya, 2023). County planning instruments can also incorporate community peace education and dialogue capacity-building as part of broader social-cohesion and land-governance programming.

Limitations

Several limitations qualify interpretation. First, the cross-sectional design provides a snapshot rather than evidence of change over time. Second, correlational and regression analyses identify association and predictive contribution, not causal effects. Third, the dependent variable was based largely on perceived land conflict resolution rather than independently verified case records. Fourth, 58 returned questionnaires were excluded because of incomplete responses, so the usable quantitative sample was smaller than the number returned. Fifth, the study was geographically bounded to Kajiado East and should not automatically be generalized to other counties. Sixth, land conflict is politically and socially sensitive, which may affect willingness to disclose information. Finally, the qualitative evidence was purposively generated and is intended to provide contextual depth rather than statistical representation.

An important limitation concerns the exclusion of incomplete questionnaires. Of the 200 questionnaires returned, 58 were excluded from the quantitative analysis, leaving 142 usable responses. Although the return rate was high, the study did not establish whether respondents whose questionnaires were excluded differed systematically from those included in the analysis. The possibility of non-response or complete-case bias therefore remains. In addition, the dependent variable was based on respondents' perceptions of land conflict resolution rather than independent verification of dispute outcomes. These limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings and their applicability beyond the study area.

CONCLUSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The study demonstrates a consistent empirical relationship between four dimensions of dialogue use and perceived land conflict resolution in Kajiado East Sub-County. Negotiation, mediation, stakeholder participation and consensus-building were all positively and significantly associated with perceived resolution. Together they accounted for 55.1% of the variance in the regression model. The results also reveal an important analytical distinction: consensus-building had the highest descriptive rating and strongest bivariate correlation, whereas stakeholder participation had the largest unique standardized regression coefficient.

The qualitative findings add that dialogue quality depends on conditions such as trust, impartiality, credible land information, institutional coordination, political neutrality, inclusive participation and implementation of agreements. Consequently, the findings support an integrated rather than purely procedural understanding of dialogue. For community peace education, the evidence points to the value of practical learning in negotiation, mediation, participation, consensus-building and collaborative problem-solving. Such learning should be connected to credible institutional processes rather than treated as a substitute for land administration or formal justice.

Future research should pursue at least three directions. First, longitudinal studies could examine whether sustained dialogue participation is associated with changes in conflict recurrence, relationship quality and agreement compliance over time. Second, comparative studies across Kenyan counties could test how land-tenure systems, institutional arrangements and cultural contexts shape dialogue relationships. Third, intervention research could evaluate community peace-education or facilitator-training programs and measure whether they improve dialogue competencies, participation quality and documented conflict-resolution outcomes. These approaches would strengthen causal inference and move beyond perception-based measures

Community-based peace-education initiatives may incorporate practical learning on negotiation, mediation, inclusive stakeholder participation and consensus-building. Such initiatives should be designed in collaboration with relevant local institutions and community structures to ensure that learning activities are connected to the realities of land-related disputes. Their effectiveness should subsequently be assessed through dedicated evaluation rather than assumed from the present study's findings.

PRACTICAL RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Strengthen meaningful stakeholder participation. Dialogue organizers should establish clear procedures for identifying affected stakeholders and ensuring that women, youth, community members, elders, officials and relevant organizations have genuine opportunities to present information and influence decisions. Participation should be assessed by quality of engagement rather than attendance alone.
2. Build the capacity and ethical standards of mediators and facilitators. Training should cover impartiality, active listening, conflict analysis, management of unequal participation, culturally responsive communication, gender sensitivity and ethical handling of confidential information.
3. Improve access to credible land information. County and land-governance institutions should strengthen coordination around land records, boundary information and procedures for verifying competing claims so that dialogue is not undermined by unresolved factual disputes.

4. Link dialogue agreements to implementation mechanisms. A dialogue process should specify responsibilities, timelines and follow-up arrangements, with appropriate institutional actors responsible for monitoring compliance and addressing implementation barriers.

5. Integrate community peace education into local conflict-prevention programming. Peace-education activities should use practical, participatory learning methods focused on negotiation, listening, perspective-taking, civic participation, consensus-building and non-violent problem-solving. The educational component should complement, not replace, formal land governance and justice institutions.

6. Align interventions with policy and county planning frameworks. Stakeholders should connect dialogue and peace-education programming with the Alternative Justice Systems policy framework, relevant National Land Commission functions and county development planning so that community initiatives are institutionally supported and sustainable.

DECLARATIONS

The underlying study reports voluntary participation, informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity, institutional approval and national research-authorization procedures. The manuscript is based on primary questionnaire and interview evidence generated in the underlying study; no public dataset is claimed. No conflict of interest is reported in the source study.

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