Kenya: Socio-Demographic Determinants of Intractable Communal Land Use Conflicts in the Squatter Enclaves of Mount Elgon Region

Graham Amakanji OLUTEYO

Abstract: In the post-Cold War world order, the African Continent has been a stage for some of the most violent intra-state conflicts arising from natural resources and land distribution. These contestations have often been inter-communal and take the violent extremism route. The consequences of these devastating contestations have been apocalyptic in most of these conflicts. In Kenya's Mount Elgon Region, the emergence of extremism Sabaot Land Defence Forces and counter-extremist groups is rooted in a long historical struggle for equitable distribution of land rights. Despite efforts by state and non-state actors, sustainable peace remains a distant mirage. Socio-economic determinants have emerged as fundamental determinants in these extremist contestations, yet, extant literature has been silent on this subject matter. This paper sought to interrogate socio-demographic determinants as pathways for homegrown extremism in the Mount Elgon Region. Study findings revealed strong support for the interplay between ownership of land, source of income, level of education, and sustenance of homegrown extremism over land-use conflicts in the study area. The paper recommends the need for the Ministry of Lands to expedite the management of the historical land question to contain the socio-demographic determinants as pathways for homegrown extremism in the study area. The findings underscore the importance of land tenure security in pursuit of peaceful, just, and inclusive societies as advocated for in the Sustainable Development Agenda 2030.

Keywords: Demographic, extremism, homegrown, land-use, Mt. Elgon.

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Conflict Studies Quarterly
Issue 49, October 2024, pp. 41–63

DOI: 10.24193/csq.49.3
Published First Online: October 04 / 2024

I. Introduction

Presently, the former Mt. Elgon district is situated in Kenya, close to the border with Uganda, and is part of Bungoma County. During the period of conflict from 2008 to 2012, its population was approximately 170,000, with a significant portion, 56%, living below the poverty line. Mt. Elgon has experienced several instances of violence in its history. The first occurred during Kenya's independence in 1963, followed by another round when the country transitioned to multi-party politics in 1991. More recently, from 2006 to 2008, the region was plagued by another wave of violence. In the earlier episodes of violence, the Sabaot ethnic tribe, which belongs to the larger Kalenjin tribe, clashed with the Luhya ethnic tribe. These conflicts were characterized by tension and hostility between the two groups (Ngulutu, 2013).

In the 2008–2012 period of violence, the conflict took a different turn as it involved Sabaot language speakers fighting against one another. Specifically, the Soy sub-group of the Sabaot clashed with the Mosop sub-group, also known as the Ndorobo. The root cause of the clashes during this period can be traced back to disputes surrounding a government resettlement scheme. The conflict centered around the distribution of land between the Mosop and Soy communities. The government had initiated the resettlement process back in the 1970s, aiming to relocate the Mosop people to protect their original region, the Moorland, which is an essential water catchment area higher up on Mount Elgon. The relocation resulted in the establishment of three significant resettlement areas: Chepyuk Phases I, II, and III, until 2006. However, various problems arose during all three phases of the government-initiated resettlement plans, contributing to the tensions and conflicts that occurred during the 2008–2012 period (Simiyu, 2007).

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Accusations of nepotism and corruption emerged regarding the beneficiaries of the government-distributed land. The main focus of the resettlement program was the Mosop community. However, members of the Soy community contested this, claiming that they were part of the same community and even more numerous, thus deserving a larger share of the plots. They argued that many individuals from the Soy community had already settled on the land in Chepyuk Phase III, which was now subject to redistribution. A significant portion of the population had been living in the Chepyuk Phase III area for decades, either as squatters or having been born there, leading them to develop a sense of ownership over the land. Moreover, a considerable population increase further complicated the resettlement process, making it challenging to execute the original plans. Out of 7,500 applicants for Phase III, only 1,753 were listed as beneficiaries in April 2006, with half of them from the Soy community and the other half from the Mosop community. Those who were unsuccessful in their applications and had been residing in the Chepyuk III area were forcibly evicted in 2006 (Kamoet, 2011).

The SLDF, also known as the Sabaot Land Defence Force, was established with conscripts from the people who had been evicted from the land during the resettlement process in Chepyuk Phase III. The primary objective of the SLDF was to safeguard the interests of the lowland Sabaot community against the Mosop and to resist the government's efforts to remove squatters from the Chepyuk areas of Mt. Elgon District. Initially, the SLDF began as a small militia referred to as the "Janjaweed," but it rapidly expanded into a substantial and well-armed force. Over time, the SLDF became a formidable militia, equipped with heavy weaponry and capable of exerting significant control and influence in the region.

The dispute over land in the Chepyuk area had a significant political dimension, mainly due to the absence of land titles for those settling in the region. This lack of official documentation provided an opportunity for politicians to exploit the situation for their benefit. During the 2007 parliamentary election, one candidate named Fred Kapondi reportedly made promises to support the SLDF in the land issue if he was elected. Many accused Kapondi of playing a pivotal role in inciting the group and escalating the conflict into violence. His alleged involvement and encouragement were seen as contributing factors to the intensification of the dispute and the ensuing violent clashes in the region (Wachira *et al.*, 2010).

The violence during this period can be analyzed in three dimensions. Firstly, the SLDF directed its aggression towards the Mosop community residing in the Chepyuk settlement areas. They displaced a significant number of Mosop people and engaged in a low-level communal conflict with those who chose to stay and defend their land. As a response to the SLDF's actions, the Mosop community allegedly formed its own defense force known as the Moorland Defence Force (MDF). This development further escalated the conflict between the two groups. During the course of the violence, a total of 20 individuals from the Mosop side were reported to have been killed as a result of the clashes and confrontations. The situation remained tense and volatile as the conflict between the SLDF and the Mosop/MDF continued to unfold (Simiyu, 2007).

The second type of violence emerged later and became the predominant form during the conflict. As the SLDF grew in size and influence, they started targeting civilians, primarily from the Soy community. The SLDF sought food, money, and collaboration from these civilians, effectively using them as a source of sustenance and support for their operations. The group established an extortion system, forcing people to pay taxes to supply their troops and enrich their leaders (Njogu, 2021). The final dimension of the violence was the confrontation with government security forces. In the initial stages of the SLDF's activities, the local police were overwhelmed and unable to counter the group's activities effectively. However, in March 2008, the Kenyan Defense Forces (KDF) intervened, launching a military operation to crush the SLDF and restore order in the region. The KDF's intervention marked a significant turning point in the conflict, leading to a decisive defeat of the SLDF and ending their reign of violence and intimidation.

Following the intervention by the Kenyan Defense Forces (KDF) in March 2008, the conflict resulted in the death of the SLDF leader, Matakwei, in May 2008. Additionally, several other high-ranking SLDF commanders were arrested and imprisoned. The KDF's operation had a significant impact on the SLDF's leadership and led to a weakening of their forces. However, after the conflict came to an end, the government resumed the implementation of the settlement plan based on the 2006 list of beneficiaries for the Chepyuk III settlement area (Ngulutu, 2013). Despite the violent conflict, there were no substantial changes in the settlement policies, and the underlying issues of the conflict were not effectively addressed or resolved. Despite the active role socio-demographic variables play in feeding into homegrown extremism in the study area, these remain under-examined. The current study sought to interrogate land ownership, income, level of education, and housing structure as determinants of homegrown extremism in the Mount Elgon Region.

II. Methodology

The study was conducted in two specific wards, namely Chesikaki-Cheptais and Chepyuk-Kopsiro, located in the Mt. Elgon Region. Chesikaki-Cheptais is predominantly inhabited by the Soy community, primarily engaged in farming, and also home to the SLDF. On the other hand, Chepyuk-Kopsiro is home to the Mosop community, who are mainly pastoralists residing in the upper part of Mt. Elgon, and it was also home to the Moorland Defense Force. These two wards were purposively selected they have played and continue to play a role in shaping the contrasting perceptions of homegrown extremism in the Mt. Elgon land question. Several justifications informed the choice of these areas for the study. First, according to the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS) and Society for International Development (SID) (2013), only 34.1% of land parcels in Bungoma County have official title deeds, meaning that 65.9% of households live on ancestral land without any formal documentation of ownership. Additionally, Bungoma County faces issues of landlessness and squatter settlements, with a significant number of these cases occurring in Mt. Elgon (Kamoet, 2011).

Secondly, being situated in a peripheral geographic space with a minority ethnicity- the Sabaot, the state's presence and development in the region are notably low. The area lags behind in terms of general development, including education, health, and infrastructure such as roads. Consequently, widespread poverty prevails, and the elite has exploited this situation to perpetuate sub-ethnic divisions between the Soy and the Mosop (Wafula, 2019). Thirdly, the wards are home to the Sabaot ethnicity, primarily comprising the Soy and Mosop sub-ethnicities, which have been the main actors in the ongoing conflicts (Wachira *et al.*, 2010). Lastly, the Chepyuk settlement schemes located in the area have been central to the emergence of homegrown extremism in the region, making it a critical site for examination.

The study adopted descriptive and historical research designs. The target population comprised 452 respondents sampled from 400 households, 10 ex-SLDF combatants, 2 community elders, and 40 victims of land conflicts. Primary data was collected using questionnaires from household heads through simple random sampling. Two key informant interviews were conducted using purposively sampled community elders. Focus Group Discussion guides were used to collect data from 10 ex-SLDF combatants and 4 homogenous groups of male and female victims of land conflict in the study area. Quantitative data was analyzed descriptively by computing measures of central tendency, frequency counts, and percentages. Qualitative data was analyzed thematically and presented through narratives and verbatim quotations.

III. Findings & Discussions

This section presents and discusses findings on socio-demographic determinants of homegrown extremism in the Mount Elgon Region. These variables include ownership of land, source of income, level of education, and housing structure. These are presented and discussed in subsequent sections.

1. Land Ownership

In discourses of homegrown extremism in Mt. Elgon Region, land remains the single and most prominent issue. For a rural and remote community and in an area that has been for a long time described as Kenya's breadbasket, land in Mt. Elgon is a source of livelihood, a key economic driver, and a pathway against poverty in addition to being a source of identity. This explains why attachment to land informs studies on conflict and homegrown extremism. To this end, the study sought to interrogate land ownership with data collected used to determine the propensity of homegrown extremism in the Mt. Elgon Region. Data on the same were collected, analyzed and the results presented in Figure 1.

Quantitative evidence in Figure 1 revealed that the majority 388 (97%) of respondents in the study area were squatters with very marginal land evidence of land ownership. The findings revealed that only 4 (1%) owned land in the study area whereas only 8 (2%) were settlers with the settlers having no proof of land ownership. The findings thus reveal an element of legal exclusion from land ownership. The statistics on land ownership are a negation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal number 16.9 is committed to providing legal identity for all. Legal identity on land could be in the form of an allotment letter or a title deed which an overwhelming majority lacked and thus a determinant in grievance leading to extremism in the study area. During FGD with male victims of land conflict, a title deed was mentioned as one of the single most protective documents in land discourse exposing respondents to food insecurity, frequent evictions, and lack of access to

basic needs, especially food and shelter which fed to further deprivation and consequently the risk of extremism.

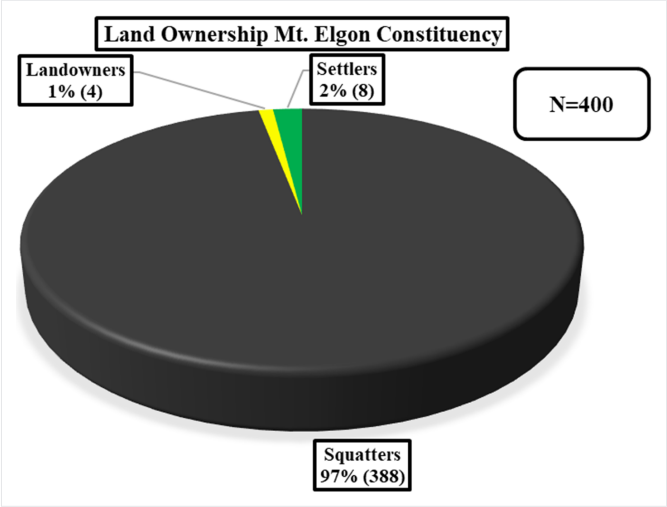

Figure 1: Land ownership in Mt. Elgon Region

Source: Field Data (2021)

Study findings on land ownership were corroborated during FGD discussions with male victims of land conflict in the study area. The following is an account of responses collected during FGDs.

> *Hapa vile tuko wote tunafuta kitu moja tu, hiyo cheti ya shamba. Na hatutatchoka.*
>
> As you can see all of us here are looking for one thing which is the land documentation in the form of a title deed. And we will not tire in our search for it. (FGD with male victims of land conflict, Sasuri Location, August 18, 2021).
>
> *Mimi nimeishi hapa zaidi ya miaka 40, sijaona cheti. Nimezika baba na mama na watu yangu, itakuwaje leo hi unaniambia kuwa mimi si wa hapa Mt. Elgon. Nikitoka hapa kwetu kwingine ni wapi? Sijui nyumbani ingine. Lakini watu wenye sio Mt. Elgon wanapewa mashamba kubwa kubwa.*
>
> I have lived on these lands for over forty years. In those forty years, we have never stopped pursuing the land titles. I am an orphan and all my parents and relatives have been buried here. What other proof is there to show that this is not my home, even without the land title deeds? (FGD with male victims of land conflict, Sasuri Location, August 18, 2021).
>
> *Wakati wa siasa ikifika, utawaona wakikuja na kupeana title deeds. Hizo titles zenye huwa wanapeana huwa ni za kutafuta kura tu. Sasa sisi kila mwaka ya siasa, ni kuahidiwa tu na kukuja kupeana titles zenye hatupatangi.*

> When the political campaign period comes, you will see them (referring to politicians) coming and claiming to distribute title deeds. As a matter of fact, those titles that they always claim to distribute never reach the beneficiaries, yet they use that to gain political mileage (FGD with male victims of land conflicts, Sasuri Location, August 18, 2021).

The current study is cognizant of the consistency of the usage of the word exclusion and marginalization in studies of terrorism. Study findings on land ownership paint a dire situation of marginalization and exclusion in the form of a lack of title deeds and therefore lack of any form of protection in land ownership which exposes respondents to frequent evictions. These findings are consistent and in tandem with the fact that exclusion has nurtured the growth of violent extremism groups across the world and Africa in particular thus supporting the pragmatic Africanacity philosophy on which this study was anchored.

The findings of the current study regarding the marginalization of land ownership align with Afrocentric examples that highlight the emergence of homegrown violent extremist organizations in Africa, which are often rooted in issues of exclusion and resource marginalization. In particular, on land conflicts and violent inter-communal contestations, the findings of the study align with studies from across Africa in the Rwandan (Homer-Dixon & Percival, 1996; Gasana, 2002; Bigagaza *et al.*, 2002) and Darfur genocides (Sikainga, 2009) as having been over land resource distribution. Other notable examples include; *Boko Haram* in Nigeria, whose narrative revolves around politics of exclusion and unequal distribution of resources between the Muslim North and Christian South. This unequal distribution is perceived by the Muslim North as the cause of their impoverishment. The Global Terrorism Index 2016 report ranked *Boko Haram* as the deadliest terrorist organization worldwide (Institute of Economics & Peace, 2016). Moreover, the Arab Spring Uprising, which took place in the last decade, was fueled by exclusionary narratives surrounding the lack of job opportunities for the youth and oppression by totalitarian regimes, among other factors. Similarly, prominent extremist groups such as al-Shabaab, al-Qaeda, and Hezbollah have foundations that trace back to issues of socio-economic marginalization and exclusion. Additionally, the Rwanda Genocide, which represents a discourse of extremism in the post-World War II era, was primarily driven by exclusionary factors (Uwizeyimana, 2017). These examples underscore the significant role that exclusion and marginalization play in shaping extremist ideologies and actions in various African contexts.

Study findings on lack of land ownership shed light on the intractable nature of the land problem in the Mt. Elgon Region and the increasing challenge of finding sustainable solutions. It is important to note that since the initiation of the Chepyuk settlement schemes in 1971, the population in the region has nearly tripled, which further complicates the pursuit of lasting resolutions. These findings align with Youé (2002) observations, which suggested that estimates of squatter numbers are often underestimated due to the squatters' efforts to remain "invisible" and avoid state control. This invisibility, combined with the population growth over a four-decade-long conflict, could further complicate

discussions surrounding land conflicts and extremism, catalyzing the intractable nature of the conflict in the Mt. Elgon region.

Indeed, the findings of the current study align with the sentiments expressed by Youé (2002) regarding squatting as a persistent and challenging problem. Youé described squatting as an insidious drug that is easily acquired but difficult to eradicate, or as something that is economically unsustainable and incompatible with modern farming needs. The magnitude of the squatting issue was recognized as early as 1945 when it was proclaimed as one of the biggest problems faced by Kenya, reaching "almost unmanageable proportions". The challenge arose from the impossibility of evicting squatters, as the colonial office did not grant permission for such actions. The accommodation of squatters would ultimately lead to the decline of the White Highlands, a significant aspect of the colonial landscape.

The findings of the current study, which highlight the significance of land ownership as a determinant of homegrown extremism, are in line with the research conducted by Hassan (2018). Hassan's (2018) study linked the emergence of the Mombasa Republican Council (MRC), an extremist group, to issues of landlessness and exclusion from land ownership in the squatter settlements of Coastal Kenya. The main slogan of the MRC was "*Pwani si Kenya*" (The Coast is not Kenya), which stemmed from the perception that despite being a popular tourist destination, the residents of the Coastal Strip in Kenya continued to experience poverty and landlessness, with development lagging behind the rest of the country. Consequently, the MRC's primary agenda was to advocate for secession of the Coastal region so that its residents could have full control and use of their resources. It is crucial to note that the MRC's agenda was anchored on issues of exclusion and marginalization, which are consistent themes in discussions and discourses of homegrown extremism. The core issue that the MRC fought for was land, a problem that can be traced back to 1887 when the Sultan of Zanzibar allegedly leased the large coastal strip to the British East Africa Company, resulting in the displacement of coastal inhabitants and rendering them squatters in their land (Munyembo, 2014).

The findings of the current study align with the observation that land allocation practices favoring outsiders with close ties to ruling regimes have contributed to the rise of landless populations. This practice, as noted during the FGD discussions, has resulted in the displacement of indigenous people from their ancestral lands or has left them vulnerable to evictions by returning absentee landlords. These historical injustices remain unaddressed and continue to have a disruptive impact to this day. In the Coast region, where much of the land is now owned by a small group of wealthy individuals, indigenous people are particularly susceptible to land dispossession. Many reside on land without formal title deeds, leaving them vulnerable to land-related disputes and encroachments. This vulnerability contributed to the emergence of homegrown extremist groups, such as the Mombasa Republican Council (MRC), in the Coast Region. These dynamics underscore the urgent need for governance structures to address land and resource management issues, not only in Kenya but also across the African continent. Efforts to expedite the resolution of these issues are essential in promoting peace, justice, and stability in affected regions.

Study findings on marginalization based on land ownership align with the arguments presented by Warah (2017). Warah emphasized that marginalization over land ownership can lead to the development of in-group versus out-group stereotypes, which can escalate and be used to target communities in a full-blown conflict between perceived relatively deprived and relatively privileged groups. These stereotypes may also extend to settler communities, who may be excluded as non-indigenous to the area, further exacerbating divisions. Warah (2017) argued that while land issues are deeply rooted in history, the prejudicial attribution of land in present times is widening separations and divisions within the country. In the Coast region, for instance, people often identify themselves as "Coastarian" rather than as Kenyan, indicating a distinct regional identity. Warah noted that calls for secession by politicians from the Coast region reflect deep-seated grievances that trace back at least a hundred years. Many of these grievances are connected to landlessness and historical injustices that remain unresolved and have been overlooked by successive governments. The term "*wabara*" used by people from the coastal region to refer to non-indigenous individuals reflects a mindset that views the rest of Kenya as separate or different, exemplified by the rallying cry of the secessionist MRC. These dynamics underscore the significance of addressing land-related grievances and historical injustices to promote unity, and inclusivity and reduce the risk of extremism in the country.

The findings of the current study on land ownership align with the insights provided by Ngumbao (2012) regarding the issue of landlessness and the emergence of extremist MRC. Ngumbao noted that the MRC was funded through membership contributions, with individuals paying a non-refundable fee of one hundred shillings. The group held their meetings in forests or during burials, using manipulation and propaganda to garner support and sympathy from the public. Some members of the MRC sought elective positions, promising to represent the MRC's agenda through legislation and negotiations with the government. Within Kilifi County, there were witch doctors who were given permission and powers to conduct oaths and rituals for MRC members, ensuring secrecy and commitment to the group's activities. The training of MRC members, similar to the SLDF, was conducted by retired or dismissed police officers. The study's findings on the marginalization of land ownership contribute to the discussions on relative deprivation. Extended marginalization can lead to frustrations, which may drive individuals to seek alternative means of pursuing justice regarding land-related issues. These frustrations and grievances can be significant factors in the emergence of extremist groups and movements seeking redress and change over land issues.

1.1 Women and land ownership

Arising from the FGD discussions, study findings established that women were excluded from land ownership in the Mt. Elgon region. In addition, the peripheral role and voice of women were also observable during the primary data collection exercise where women generally would prepare venues for FGDs, and men were given priority when both genders

were present during the administration of household questionnaires. Nyambura's (2014) study highlights that despite women accounting for 50.3% of the national population in Kenya, they face challenges in accessing and controlling land resources. This aligns with the current study's observation that this could potentially serve as a determinant of homegrown extremism in the future. Women tend to experience disadvantages in various aspects of life, including education, employment, land rights, and healthcare. The study established that women do not have equitable access to land, leading to conflicts when they attempt to inherit land from their matrimonial or husband's family. Additionally, women lack the protection of property rights as they often do not hold title deeds to the land they occupy. These findings contradict Chapter Four of the Constitution of Kenya (2010), which outlines the Bill of Rights and emphasizes equitable access to land, security of land rights, and the elimination of gender discrimination in land governance and resources.

However, the current study argues that while women's land ownership in the study area is an important issue, immediate attention should also be given to the deprivation of land in the region not as a men's issue but as a communal issue since both genders lack land. As such, issues of women's ownership of land issues in the study area would not merit much discussion since it is a communal issue. The study suggests that, generally access to land is a distant dream for households in the study area, which indicates a broader problem affecting both genders. This calls for comprehensive investigation and interventions to address the overall issue of land deprivation in the region.

2 Source of Income

The study also sought to examine respondents' sources of income. Data on the same were collected, analyzed, and presented in Figure 2. Quantitative evidence in Figure 2 revealed that the majority 292 (73%) respondents depended on farming as their source of income, 84 (21%) respondents depended on businesses that were largely dependent on the sale of agricultural products and only 24 (6%) respondents were in formal employment. The findings on the importance of land as a source of livelihood in the study area have important policy implications, particularly in the context of Africa where a significant portion of the population relies on farming for their livelihood. The challenges faced in accessing and utilizing land in areas like Mt. Elgon can lead to grievances and conflicts. This has a ripple effect on various aspects, such as income generation, food security, and the overall progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Policymakers must address these issues and promote equitable access to land to ensure the well-being and development of communities in the region.

The findings of the study affirm the place of land as the fundamental source of livelihood in the area, and the deprivation of land leads to grievances and the emergence of extremist tendencies. According to human needs theorists such as Abraham Maslow and John Burton, the absence of essential needs, including access to land for food and income, creates in-

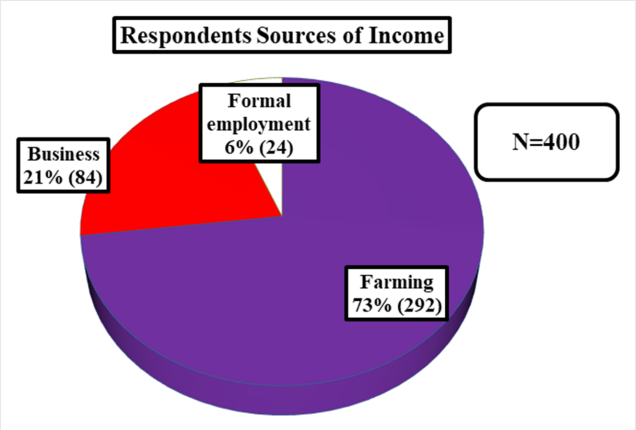

Figure 2: Respondents Sources of Income

Source: Field Data (2021)

security and uncertainty about the future. Human needs theorists argue that unmet needs at the individual, group, and societal levels are a primary driver of protracted conflicts.

At the foundational level of the human needs pyramid is the need for food, and the study posits that without access to land in the study area, obtaining food and income becomes extremely challenging. This exacerbates existing tensions and conflicts in the area. Human needs theorists offer a new perspective on conflict theory, recognizing the importance of addressing human needs comprehensively. They also acknowledge that needs are non-negotiable and cannot be easily traded or suppressed, unlike interests. Unfortunately, during conflicts, human needs are often undermined, further complicating the process of post-conflict recovery and creating fertile ground for future conflicts (Abaho, 2020). This highlights the long-lasting impact of conflicts on meeting essential needs and the importance of addressing these needs in post-conflict situations.

These findings are supported by the Akinyemi *et al.* (2019) study which advanced that land access is fundamentally crucial to efficient agricultural production, food security, and poverty alleviation in Africa where rural households have limited access to productive land. The vital role of land in the production of food is linked to the social, political, and economic life of most African countries, where agriculture, natural resources, and other related land-based activities are critical to livelihoods, food security, incomes, and employment. Empirical research conducted in many developing areas has demonstrated that relatively egalitarian land distribution patterns often foster higher rates of economic growth than highly concentrated ones (Berg, 2011; Deininger *et al.*, 2017). This is often due to the widespread agricultural growth that mostly brings about second-round expenditures in support of locally produced non-tradable goods and services in rural areas and towns (Jayne *et al.*, 2009). The multiplier effects brought about by this growth are usually less when the source of agricultural growth is confined within relatively few hands. This is

particularly true of land, which is a limited agricultural resource. Therefore, the growth rate is likely to influence the distribution of land in the agricultural sector, particularly among rural households.

These findings are supported by Pevehouse and Goldstein (2009). Pevehouse and Goldstein (2009) emphasized that societies must ensure the fulfillment of these needs to establish a solid foundation for economic growth. Access to adequate food is crucial as it enhances individuals' capacity to earn and produce, and the income generated enables them to purchase food. Furthermore, having sufficient food has a significant impact on people's ability to participate in various aspects of life, such as economic, political, and social spheres, and facilitates the escape from persistent poverty.

These findings underscore the significance of enabling individuals to participate fully in various aspects of life, which enhances human security and facilitates human-focused development. This approach plays a vital role in preventing violent conflicts by addressing underlying issues during the conflict itself and providing opportunities to tackle the root causes of the conflict during the recovery phase. By prioritizing the fulfillment of basic needs and fostering inclusive development, societies can establish a strong foundation for long-term peace and stability.

Corroborating study findings on respondents' source of income, Aremu (2010) proposed that poverty eradication should be a key focus for achieving peace in the African continent. The author argued that poverty can lead to economic humiliation and financial trauma, which may impair an individual's rational thinking. When humiliated and desperate, a poor person may resort to acts of theft, violence, and destruction. Sadly, the cycle continues as conflicts themselves destroy the infrastructure necessary to fulfill basic needs.

The importance of basic needs in ensuring happiness, contentment, and safety is undeniable, but the reality in Africa presents a different picture. Despite the lack of essential social services, the continent has been plagued by persistent conflicts, while the military often receives significant funding and resources (Mentan, 2014). This situation contrasts with the visions of post-independence African leaders like Nyerere and Kaunda, who advocated for a dignified life for Africans through philosophies such as *Ujaama* and humanism. However, this state of affairs is not surprising considering that the African State's history and existence have been shaped by European administrative politics rooted in Westphalian thinking. This aligns with the Pragmatic Africanacity philosophy, which serves as the philosophical foundation of this study.

These findings highlight the significance of national poverty and sluggish economic growth as predictors of civil war. These factors operate at the country level. The expression of outrage and mobilization described in this section appears to be rooted in grievances rather than being driven solely by insurgent motivations. However, the key question that needs to be addressed is why grievances associated with land encroachment on a rural population base have particularly inflammatory implications for rebellion, while other types of grievances do not. Fearon (2004) adds that there is a substantive and methodological

answer to this question. On substantive grounds, policies that turn rural men into refugees make them natural recruits for insurgencies, as they have few other opportunities in life, especially if the country's economy is poor. This helps explain also why Sons of the Soil wars tend to last so long. With migrants occupying the homesteads of the rebels, rebels have little choice but to make rebellion their way of life, and their career. With no chance to return home, the rebel band becomes the rebel's home. Under these conditions, high costs and low rewards for continuing civil wars are no longer deterrents. The theoretical answer here is that grievances may well be a necessary condition for rebellion, but since grievances are nearly ubiquitous, this is not very much of a restriction. It is only certain types of grievance that motivate insurgency.

The findings of the study align with Mwamvuneza's (2018) research on *Girinka* as a post-genocide strategy in Rwanda. Mwamvuneza's (2018) study suggested that the genocide was orchestrated and promoted by elites through mass media, but effectively carried out by peasants. In the rural context of pre-genocide Rwanda, being a farmer was associated with lower analytical skills, limited education, and higher susceptibility to political manipulation by influential individuals. Therefore, the study implies that a household's source of income can play a significant role in determining their likelihood of engaging in violent extremism. Individuals with low or unstable incomes are more susceptible to manipulation and divisive narratives propagated by elites. Conversely, individuals with stable sources of income are less likely to be influenced by such manipulation. During the 100 days of the genocide in 1994, the majority of the victims, including Tutsis and moderate Hutus, were killed by their Hutu peasant neighbors and even their own families. The genocide was made possible by the willingness and active participation of ordinary farmers (Bangwanubusa, 2009).

The relationship between poverty and conflict has been extensively studied in quantitative social science research (Collier *et al.,* 2003; Fearon & Laitin, 2003). This study highlights the existence of a "conflict trap" alongside the more commonly known poverty trap. The conflict trap suggests that once a country experiences conflict, it undergoes a reversal in economic development, which in turn increases the likelihood of future conflicts. Furthermore, the literature argues that poverty serves as the primary underlying cause of civil war. The weight of evidence indicates that economic factors related to opportunities for rebellion, such as poverty, low income, negative growth, dependence on natural resources, and remittance flows from diaspora groups, have a stronger impact on the occurrence of civil war compared to political grievances such as inequality, state repression, ethnic fractionalization, and low levels of democracy in a country. This suggests that economic considerations play a significant role in driving conflicts and extremism.

Collier and Hoeffler (2002) have put forth the argument that poverty increases the probability of civil war onset by facilitating the recruitment of fighters for rebel groups. In impoverished societies, the economic benefits associated with joining a rebellion can outweigh those of conventional economic activities. On the other hand, Fearon and Laitin (2003) propose that poverty increases the likelihood of civil conflict by weakening the state's financial and military capabilities. A weaker state, according to their argument,

enhances the chances of success for rebel groups in a civil war. Both explanations highlight how poverty or low income can provide greater incentives and opportunities for rebels.

It is crucial to recognize that poverty and inequality are conceptually separate, despite their potential relationship. Poverty refers to a state of lacking resources or opportunities, indicating some level of deprivation. On the other hand, inequality focuses on the disparities or variations between individuals or groups, irrespective of whether they experience severe deprivation. While poverty and inequality can intersect, understanding their distinct conceptual aspects is essential for comprehensive analysis.

In light of this, the current study emphasizes the importance of addressing the threat to the respondents' source of income in Mt. Elgon, namely land. The deprivation of their traditional income source not only has implications for their economic mobility but also fuels extremism, contributing to the intractable nature of the Mt. Elgon Conflict. Actors must recognize and address this issue to promote sustainable peace and development in the region.

3. Level of Education

The level of education was considered a key factor in this study. This is because education influences the choices individuals make such as participating in or desisting from extremism-homegrown or external. Mwamvuneza's (2018) study advanced that there is an untested general census in Rwanda that minimal or lack of analytical skills exposed ordinary masses to manipulative planners of genocide hence actively engaging unsuspecting citizens in the implementation of genocide. Taking cognizance of this, the study sought to examine how levels of education as a variable are likely to play a role in homegrown extremism and intractable land use conflicts in the study area. Data on the same were collected and analyzed and the results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Table showing respondents' level of education

Level of Education	Percentage (Frequency)
No formal education at all	41% (164)
Primary Education	37% (148)
Secondary Education	16% (64)
Tertiary Education	6% (24)
Total	**100% (400)**

Source: Field Data (2021)

Study findings in Table 1 revealed that a higher proportion of 164 (41%) respondents had no formal education at all, 148 (37%) respondents had primary education, 64 (16%) had secondary education and 24 (6%) had tertiary level education. Study findings are not in agreement with conventional literature which shows that rural Afrocentric-based

radicalization into homegrown extremism involves more uneducated populations with the educated playing more managerial roles in the realm of homegrown extremism.

Study findings are not consistent with Horgan *et al.* (2016) study of conventional Euro-American drivers of extremism which established that lone actors were more educated than solo mass murderers, nineteen percent had some level of postgraduate university education compared to the latter, whereas 24% had some degree of university education. Liem *et al.* (2018) compared lone-actor terrorists and homicide offenders and found the latter were significantly more likely to only be educated to a primary school level. Zeman *et al.* (2022) reported 42% of their lone-actor sample were educated to at least a tertiary level. In an analysis of 1, 473 radicalized US citizens, LaFree *et al.* (2018) found that 43.3% had a college degree. In contrast, in a sample of Northern Irish murderers, 43% had no GCEs (the equivalent of high school-level examinations). Disaggregating suicide bombers from terrorists, Gill and Young (2011) report 32% of indicted terrorists had some college education compared to 50% of suicide bombers who had the equivalent of a high school education. Levels of education are markedly varied across these samples and most likely do not provide a reliable indicator of risk.

Study findings on level of education are corroborated by a study by Wachira *et al.* (2010). The findings from Wachira *et al.* (2010) regarding the conflict in Mt. Elgon highlighted the high level of unemployment in the district. The lack of skilled labor opportunities and limited access to formal sector employment, with most opportunities being on a casual basis, contribute to this situation. The study also reveals a low completion rate of secondary education, with only 17% of individuals who enroll in secondary schools completing their education. This leads to a significant number of unskilled and unemployed youth, including school dropouts and those with limited education. The combination of limited job prospects and the politicization of social and ethnic diversity in the region has contributed to the conflict. Furthermore, this unemployment and vulnerability to radical and extremist narratives in the area pose additional challenges and risks.

According to Østby *et al.* (2019), the relationship between education and conflict has gained significant attention from policymakers, practitioners, and scholars in various fields. This includes the fields of education, conflict studies, psychology, and others (Burde, 2014; Gross & Davies, 2015). In his book, *The Better Angels of Our Nature*, Harvard psychologist Steven Pinker emphasizes the role of education in reducing conflict. Pinker (2012) identifies education as a key component of the "escalator of reason" and one of the most important factors in pacifying humanity's history of violence. This perspective on education's role in conflict reduction is not new and aligns with the preamble to UNESCO's 1946 Constitution, which recognizes the power of education in constructing the defenses of peace by addressing the roots of conflict in the minds of individuals.

Research examining the relationship between education and conflict has thus far yielded inconclusive findings regarding their broader implications (Ishiyama & Breuning, 2012). This can be attributed to three main factors. Firstly, the predominant focus of research on

education and armed conflict has been qualitative, with a reliance on fieldwork involving practitioners and researchers working directly in conflict-affected areas. These studies have aimed to gain an in-depth understanding of individual cases within specific contexts. Secondly, the availability of comparable data on education, both at the international and sub-national levels, is limited. Education data are often lacking in countries and regions affected by conflict, making it difficult to conduct comprehensive quantitative analyses. Lastly, the relationship between education and armed conflict is intricate and multi-dimensional, with conflict influencing education outcomes in both negative and positive ways, while education itself can also shape conflict dynamics. The interplay between education and conflict is complex and multi-directional, further contributing to the challenge of drawing definitive conclusions about their broader implications (Barakat & Urdal, 2009; Ishiyama & Breuning, 2012).

The existing literature on education and conflict primarily focuses on the levels of education attained and government investment in education. Higher levels of education are generally assumed to promote peace, and this can be attributed to several reasons. Firstly, higher levels of education signify greater investments in human capital, which reduces grievances related to exclusion from education and diminishes the motivation to resort to violence against the government. Secondly, a larger educated population provides more opportunities for alternative economic pursuits, making rebellion less appealing as a means of generating income. This increases the opportunity costs associated with engaging in violent activities. Lastly, higher levels of schooling indicate that more individuals have been exposed to state-sanctioned educational content, potentially leading to changes in their normative ideas about the value of conflict. These arguments support the notion that the level of education among respondents in the Mt. Elgon Region plays a role in shaping homegrown extremism.

Education levels can have both direct and indirect effects on the grievances that can contribute to political violence. According to relative deprivation theories, grievances arise when there is a growing gap between people's expectations and their actual circumstances. Higher levels of education may lead to increased expectations for socio-economic opportunities, and when these expectations are not met, grievances can emerge (Gurr, 1970). Government investment in education also plays a role in shaping grievances. Higher spending on education demonstrates a government's commitment to the well-being of its citizens. This investment can have a direct and lasting positive impact on people's lives, reducing grievances in society (Aoki & Davies, 2002). Additionally, education spending can indirectly reduce grievances and conflict by fostering economic development and social equality, leading to improved socio-economic conditions and reducing disparities (Thyne, 2006). In summary, education levels can influence grievances through the concepts of relative deprivation, government investment, and the indirect effects of education on economic development and social equality. These factors highlight the potential role of education in mitigating or exacerbating the underlying causes of violence.

In the literature examining the economic causes of civil war, education is viewed as a factor that influences the opportunity cost of engaging in conflict. This relates to the structural conditions that may facilitate a rebel group's ability to wage war against a state, with one important aspect being the cost of recruiting individuals to join the rebel ranks. Recruiting soldiers incurs costs, including the income that these individuals would forgo by enlisting as rebels. Higher levels of education increase the opportunity cost for young people to join conflicts, making rebel recruitment costlier and reducing the likelihood of rebellion (Collier & Hoeffler, 2004; Kuhn & Weidmann, 2015; Lochner & Moretti, 2004). Collier and Hoeffler (2004) suggest that policymakers should focus on increasing male secondary school enrolment, as young men are the primary group from which rebels are recruited. By doing so, countries with large cohorts of young males, who represent potential recruits for rebel groups, can significantly reduce the pool of individuals available for recruitment. Barakat and Urdal (2009) argue that increasing education at any level in these countries can help substantially decrease the potential pool of recruits for rebel groups. In summary, higher levels of education increase the opportunity cost of joining a rebellion, as individuals with more education have greater economic prospects outside of conflict. Policymakers can target male secondary school enrolment to reduce the pool of potential rebel recruits and contribute to reducing the likelihood of civil war.

A third explanation for the pacifying effect of education levels is its role in promoting social and political stability through the transmission of norms and preferences regarding the use of violence. According to Aristotle, education fosters a culture of peace by cultivating a collective preference for nonviolent conflict resolution (Sargent, 1996). Lipset (1959) argued that education broadens individuals' outlook and helps them understand the importance of tolerance and the need to avoid extremist ideologies. Scholars have further suggested that higher levels of education reduce the risk of political violence by promoting political participation and providing institutional channels for resolving conflicts of interest (Alesina & Perotti, 1996). More recent research highlights the role of education in fostering social cohesion and peaceful cooperation. Kuhn and Weidmann (2015) emphasize that individuals with lower levels of education are more susceptible to rhetoric, propaganda, and indoctrination, while Thyne (2006) argues that indicators of adult education, such as secondary and tertiary enrolment rates and adult literacy, are particularly relevant in assessing a government's ability to foster social cohesion among individuals who may be prone to rebellion. In summary, education plays a crucial role in promoting social and political stability by instilling values of tolerance, political participation, and peaceful conflict resolution. Higher levels of education contribute to the development of cohesive societies and provide individuals with the critical thinking skills necessary to resist extremist ideologies and manipulation.

Education is commonly believed to raise the opportunity cost of recruiting rebels, thus decreasing the likelihood of rebellion. Socioeconomic inequality is often considered a key factor in measuring grievances and is associated with the emergence of conflict. Ferranti

(2004) contends that education is the primary driver of socioeconomic inequality within a society due to its significant influence on individuals' future opportunities and paths in life.

4. Housing Structure

The study to examine the determinants of homegrown extremism in Mt. Elgon Region sought to look at the existing housing structures in the study area. For a long time, housing has been a cornerstone of human needs and thus an important determinant of conflict of any nature and at any level. Data on housing structure were collected and analyzed and the results are presented in Figure 3. Quantitative evidence in Figure 3 revealed that the majority 244 (61%) of respondents lived in structures made of mud, 104 (26%) respondents lived in the grass thatched houses, 44 (11%) respondents lived in brick houses here as only 8 (2%) respondents had cement houses. It is also important to point out that there was no single observable house in the study area made from bricks or cement apart from the few government structures- classroom blocks and dispensaries.

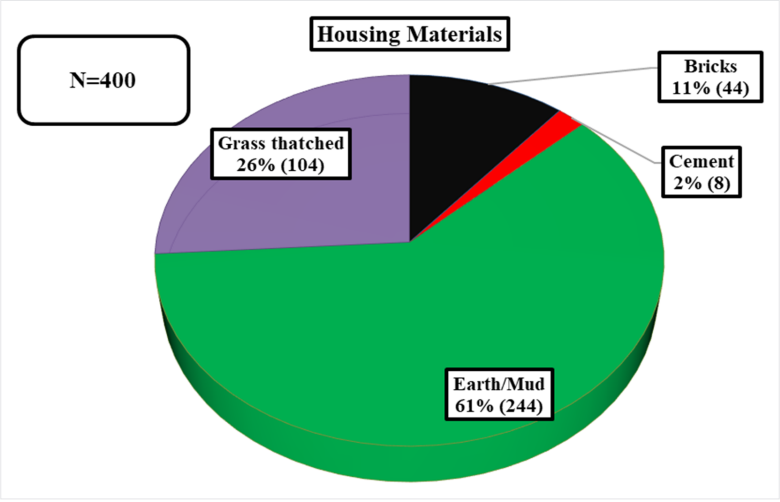

Figure 3: Housing Structure in Mt. Elgon Region of Kenya

Source: Field Data (2021)

The findings of the current study on housing depart from the traditional notion of housing as a human need. This study interrogated housing in two folds. First, the housing material used was looked at as an indicator of poverty levels. With majority of respondents having mud houses, which are usually made from soil, required little or no expertise as well as minimal labor. Secondly, housing structure was used as a measure of temporary habitation in the area. With the majority of respondents not having any proof of land ownership in an area that has been volatile for almost four decades, this could be indicative that, like

nomads, populations in Mt. Elgon are always ready to migrate in the event of any land-related violence. The findings on temporary residence could be attributed to the mini-violence in late 2018. This period saw thousands of households depart to "safer" areas on the lower side of Mt. Elgon following the mini-reign of terror, the government through the Ministry of Interior and Coordination of National Government effected a 6 months long dusk to dawn curfew.

In addition, respondents also revealed that such temporary structures would not pose many challenges to rebuild due to the availability of earth material with the majority of the households having roofs made from aluminum. This was attributed to aluminum being difficult to torch down as had been witnessed during the conflict. In the Laboot area—in the moorland, for instance, during government eviction programs, houses are usually torched down by the security enforcing agencies. To this end, housing in the study area plays a key role in adapting to the temporary circumstances that the residents in the study area live under. The current study makes a significant contribution to knowledge in terms of housing which for a long time has been looked at as a human need and a factor in conflict. The current study looks at housing as an indicator of hostility, non-permanence, and a determinant of homegrown extremism over intractable land-use conflicts in the study area.

IV. Conclusions

Arising from the findings and discussion of results, the paper concludes that indeed, the African conflict sets a diverse picture that departs from conventional literature with regards to studies on homegrown extremism. The study concludes that the socio-demographic determinants of homegrown extremism under study were strongly supported and thus fundamental in understanding the intractable conflict architecture in the squatter enclaves of Mount Elgon Region. These were land ownership, source of income, level of education, and housing structure with results revealing a complex interplay between the four variables. Addressing land tenure security emerges as a vital priority, as it can have a spillover effect on the other three variables. By tackling land tenure insecurity, the study suggests that the risk of homegrown extremism in the study area can be reduced, paving the way for potential progress in managing and resolving the conflict.

V. Recommendations

The conclusions drawn from the study highlight the intricate relationship between land ownership, income sources, education level, and housing structure concerning issues of exclusion, thus contributing to the emergence and persistence of homegrown extremism in the study area. These conclusions not only shed light on extremism in the Mount Elgon region but also indicate that similar patterns can be observed across Africa, where many conflicts have been fueled by exclusionary narratives. Examples include the Rwanda

Genocide, Civil Wars in Sierra Leone and Liberia, the Darfur Genocide, Post-election violence in Kenya, and ongoing conflicts in South Sudan, the youngest nation in Africa. There is a need, therefore, for Governments to be at the vanguard of addressing the root causes of the conflict- in the case of Mount Elgon, land tenure insecurity if attaining sustainable peace is of priority. Without sustainable peace, development aspirations cannot be attained, and as such these if not addressed will continue to negate the "leaving no one behind" slogan which is the cog that propels the Global sustainable agenda 2015–2030.

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