Challenges in the Interplay between Ethnic Identity and Economic Development in Western Kenya since 1963

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ABSTRACT

This article delved on the relations that co-exist between ethnic identity and economic development with a special focus on Western part of Kenya. Its main objective focused on the challenges arising from the two entities. Various literatures were reviewed that built on the findings of the study. Interpretivism philosophy ideas were used to inform the findings supplemented by instrumental Marxism and Relative Deprivation Theories. Due to its historical nature, the research adopted historical research design. The research targeted 47 ethnic groups in Kenya, and therefore, due to the use of purposive and snowball techniques, the sample size reached was 192 respondents. Oral interviews, Focus group discussions and Open ended questionnaires were used to collect data, supplemented by secondary sources. Data collected was analyzed both by use of content and thematic techniques. The research article found out that; ethnic divisions have often fueled political instability, leading to periodic episodes of violence, electoral tensions, and governance crises not only in western Kenya, but also nationally and even globally. Conclusively, it is recorded that; the polarization of ethnic identities in public discourse adds another layer of complexity, hindering the potential for inclusive growth and fostering division. Finally, the research article recommends that; promoting inclusive governance that ensures fair representation and participation of all ethnic groups in decision-making processes will help reduce political instability and foster unity.

Keywords: Development, Economic, Ethnic, Identity, Inclusive Governance, Political Instability

I. INTRODUCTION

The intricate relationship between ethnic identity and economic development in Western Kenya since 1963 underscores a complex interplay of historical, social, and political forces that continue to shape the region's developmental trajectory. Globally, the intersection of ethnicity and economic development is a recurring theme, evident in countries such as China, where ethnic minorities in regions like Xinjiang and Tibet face systemic challenges in accessing economic opportunities due to socio-political marginalization.[1] Despite China's remarkable economic growth, its handling of ethnic diversity highlights the tensions that arise when state-driven development initiatives fail to adequately address the needs of diverse communities. These dynamics provide a critical backdrop for understanding the Kenyan context, where ethnicity plays a central role in shaping political alliances, governance structures, and economic policies.[2]

On the African continent, ethnic identity has been both a unifying and divisive force, deeply embedded in the socio-political fabric of post-colonial states.[3] In Nigeria, the interplay between ethnicity and economic development has been particularly pronounced, with the country's oil wealth often concentrated in regions aligned with political elites. This resource-driven inequality has fueled ethnic tensions, most notably in the Niger Delta, where marginalized communities continue to grapple with environmental degradation and economic exclusion.[4] Such challenges resonate with the experiences of Western Kenya, where perceptions of economic and political marginalization are similarly shaped by historical injustices and unequal resource allocation.[5]

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[1]Sanny Mulubale, "Rethinking the effects of identity politics in a multi-ethnic society: a comparative case analysis of Zambia and Kenya." *Politikon* 44, no. 1 (2017): 49-71., p.56.
[2]Ibid., p.63.
[3]Ibid., p.66.
[4]Peter Anyang' Nyong'o, *A leap into the future: a vision for Kenya's socio-political and economic transformation*. African Books Collective, 2007., p.52.
[5]Ibid., p.55.

Regionally, Tanzania provides a contrasting example of how ethnic diversity can be managed to promote national unity and economic development.[6] Through deliberate efforts to foster a sense of national identity over ethnic affiliations, Tanzania has largely avoided the ethnic conflicts that have plagued many of its neighbors. However, disparities in regional development persist, highlighting the challenges of achieving equitable growth in multi-ethnic societies.[7] In Western Kenya, the failure to emulate such inclusive policies has exacerbated inter-ethnic competition over land and resources, undermining efforts to foster social cohesion and economic stability.

Since gaining independence in 1963, Kenya has grappled with how to balance its rich ethnic diversity with equitable development. The post-independence era saw successive governments adopt policies that, while aimed at national development, often disproportionately benefited certain regions and ethnic groups.[8] In Western Kenya, perceptions of political and economic marginalization have been fueled by skewed infrastructure development, limited industrial investment, and unequal access to education and healthcare. These disparities are not merely economic but are deeply intertwined with ethnic identity, as political patronage systems have historically prioritized loyalty over merit and inclusivity. This has perpetuated a cycle of underdevelopment, where ethnic grievances are both a cause and consequence of economic inequalities.[9]

Western Kenya's multi-ethnic composition, encompassing communities such as the Luo, Luhya, Kisii, and Kalenjin, makes it a microcosm of Kenya's broader struggles with ethnicity and development. The region's reliance on agriculture and small-scale trade has made it particularly vulnerable to inter-ethnic competition over resources such as land and water. Historical grievances stemming from colonial land alienation and post-independence resettlement schemes have further fueled these tensions, disrupting economic activities and eroding trust among communities. Unlike other regions in Kenya that have seen significant industrial growth, Western Kenya remains largely underdeveloped, making it an ideal case study for examining the intersection of ethnic identity and economic development.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The ideal interplay between ethnic identity and economic development envisioned a society where diverse ethnic groups coexisted harmoniously, leveraging their unique cultural resources to foster inclusive growth and shared prosperity. Ethnic diversity, when constructively harnessed, had the potential to serve as a catalyst for innovation, social cohesion, and equitable development. However, in Western Kenya since independence in 1963, the reality deviated starkly from this ideal. Ethnic identity in the region was often politicized, resulting in divisions that perpetuated economic marginalization and stifled development. Competition for resources, land disputes, and skewed political representation rooted in ethnic favoritism entrenched inequalities and perpetuated underdevelopment. Successive development agendas failed to transcend ethnic biases, leaving many communities trapped in cycles of poverty. Social fragmentation further exacerbated the challenges of implementing inclusive economic policies, leading to persistent economic disparities across ethnic lines. This study addressed the gap in understanding how ethnic identity influenced economic development trajectories in Western Kenya. It examined the systemic challenges and proposed strategies to foster integration, equitable resource allocation, and sustainable growth. By exploring these dynamics, the research contributed to resolving the underlying tensions that hindered economic transformation in the region.

1.2 Research Objective

The general objective of this research was to examine the challenges arising from the interplay between ethnic identity and economic development in Western Kenya since 1963, with a focus on understanding how ethnic divisions influenced economic policies, resource allocation, and overall development outcomes in the region.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Review

The research article was guided by two theories, which included; Marxism theory propounded by Karl Marx and Relative Deprivation Theory propounded by Samuel A. Stouffer.

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[6]Jimmy J. Kisobo, "The Impact of Coalition Government on Political, Economic and Social Development of Postconflict Societies: case of Kenya, 2008-2012." PhD diss., University of Nairobi, 2013, p.23.

[7]Ibid., p.25.

[8]Mosley, Jason, and Elizabeth E. Watson. "Frontier transformations: development visions, spaces and processes in Northern Kenya and Southern Ethiopia." *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 10, no. 3 (2016): 452-475., p.465.

[9]Omweri F. S., "The Constitutional Eschatology of Decentralization in Kenya: Exploring Federalism's Role in Shaping the Future of Devolution and Regional Autonomy." *International Journal of Innovative Scientific Research* 2, no. 3 (2024): 37-67., p.65.

2.1.1 Marxism

Karl Marx, the primary proponent of Marxism, introduced his theories in the mid-19th century, particularly through *The Communist Manifesto* (1848) and *Das Kapital* (1867). Marxism focused on the economic structures that shaped social relationships, emphasizing class struggle, material conditions, and capitalism's exploitation of the working class.[10] Marx argued that societal change resulted from conflicts between the ruling and working classes, with economic inequalities at the core of social tensions.

This study adopted Marxism because it highlighted the economic foundations of ethnic disparities.[11] In Western Kenya, ethnic identities had often been linked to political power and resource distribution, creating inequalities that hindered development. Marxism's emphasis on class struggle provided insight into how marginalized ethnic groups faced exploitation, while the focus on material conditions explained how economic structures shaped social and political outcomes.[12]

Despite its strengths, Marxism had limitations. It tended to oversimplify ethnic issues by focusing predominantly on class struggles, potentially overlooking the multifaceted factors that influenced ethnic identity.[13] In the Kenyan context, cultural, historical, and political factors played significant roles in shaping ethnic tensions and economic development, which Marxism may not have fully addressed.[14] Thus, while Marxism offered valuable insights, its scope was limited in capturing the complexities of ethnic dynamics in Western Kenya.

2.1.2 Relative Deprivation Theory

Relative Deprivation Theory was developed by Samuel A. Stouffer in 1949, primarily through his work *The American Soldier*, where he examined how soldiers' morale during World War II was affected by feelings of deprivation.[15] Stouffer argued that individuals or groups experience a sense of deprivation when they compare their own situation to others who are perceived as better off, leading to frustration, anger, and potential social unrest.[16] This theory became a valuable framework for understanding social conflict, especially when inequalities and perceived disparities shape group behavior.

The study adopted Relative Deprivation Theory due to its applicability in explaining how perceptions of inequality between ethnic groups contribute to conflict and hinder economic development.[17] In Western Kenya, economic and social disparities between ethnic communities often create feelings of deprivation, fueling tensions and undermining collective progress. The theory's tenets, such as perception of inequality, social comparison, and social tension, helped illuminate the ways ethnic groups perceive and react to disparities in wealth, resources, and political representation.[18] While the theory provides a strong foundation for understanding ethnic conflict, its focus on perceived inequality may overlook other contributing factors such as historical grievances, cultural factors, and institutional inequalities, which also play a significant role in ethnic tensions in Kenya.

2.2 Empirical Review

Globally, the relationship between ethnic identity and economic development has been examined extensively, particularly in multi-ethnic societies. In India, the caste system, a form of ethnic identity, has historically influenced access to economic opportunities, land ownership, and education.[19] Despite economic growth, caste-based inequalities persist, hindering inclusive development. Similarly, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, ethnic divisions exacerbated by the Balkan wars continue to obstruct post-conflict economic recovery, as political and economic systems are often aligned along ethnic lines. Such global examples highlight the complexity of balancing ethnic diversity with equitable economic growth.[20]

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[10]Karl Marx, and Friedrich Engels, *The communist manifesto and its relevance for today*. Resistance Books, 1998, p.43.

[11]Ephraim Nimni, *Marxism and nationalism: Theoretical origins of a political crisis*. Pluto Press, 1991, p.67.

[12]Terry Boswell and William J. Dixon, "Marx's theory of rebellion: A cross-national analysis of class exploitation, economic development, and violent revolt." *American sociological review* (1993): 681-702., p.689.

[13]Andrew D. Chapman, *Marxism*. The Autodidact's Toolkit, 2023, p.62.

[14]John O. Oucho, *Undercurrents of ethnic conflicts in Kenya*. Vol. 3. Brill, 2002., p.78.

[15]Samuel A. Stouffer et al, "The American soldier: Adjustment during army life. (studies in social psychology in World War II), vol. 1." (1949)., p.12.

[16]Richard H. Kohn, "The Social History of the American Soldier: A Review and Prospectus for Research." *The American historical review* 86, no. 3 (1981): 553-567., p.559.

[17]Iain Walker and Heather J. Smith, eds. *Relative deprivation: Specification, development, and integration*. Cambridge University Press, 2002., p.87.

[18]Cecilia L. Ridgeway, "Why status matters for inequality." *American sociological review* 79, no. 1 (2014): 1-16., p.8.

[19]Abhijit Banerjee, and Lakshmi Iyer, "History, institutions, and economic performance: The legacy of colonial land tenure systems in India." *American economic review* 95, no. 4 (2005): 1190-1213., p.1198.

[20]Myron Weiner, *Sons of the soil: Migration and ethnic conflict in India*. Princeton University Press, 2015., p.45.

At the continental level, African countries vividly demonstrate how ethnic identity intersects with economic development. In Nigeria, oil wealth has deepened ethnic divides as communities in the Niger Delta region feel marginalized despite their resource contribution.[21] Ethnic identity has fueled resource-based conflicts, affecting national cohesion and equitable development. In Rwanda, the 1994 genocide underscored the devastating impact of ethnic divisions on national stability and development. Post-genocide recovery efforts emphasize inclusivity, showcasing the importance of addressing ethnic disparities for sustainable economic growth.[22]

Regionally, East African nations face similar challenges. In Tanzania, the government's policies under Julius Nyerere promoted national unity by minimizing ethnic distinctions.[23] The *Ujamaa* policy, despite its shortcomings, created a relatively cohesive society, fostering development. Conversely, Uganda's ethnic marginalization, particularly in the northern region, has perpetuated economic disparities and socio-political instability.[24] These cases illustrate the contrasting outcomes of policy approaches to ethnic diversity.

Nationally, Kenya's ethnic diversity has been both a strength and a challenge. Ethnic identity influences political affiliations, resource allocation, and access to economic opportunities.[25] Since independence, governance systems have been criticized for favoring particular ethnic groups, perpetuating regional disparities. The post-election violence in 2007-2008, partly fueled by ethnic grievances, demonstrated the fragility of ethnic relations in shaping national development.[26]

In Western Kenya, the interplay between ethnic identity and economic development has been pronounced. The region's multi-ethnic composition has often resulted in competition over land, resources, and political representation.[27] Historical injustices, such as colonial-era land allocations, continue to fuel ethnic tensions that undermine economic growth. Additionally, ethnic favoritism in public service and resource distribution has perpetuated inequalities, hindering inclusive development. Understanding these dynamics is critical for addressing the structural challenges that impede equitable economic growth in the region.

III. METHODOLOGY

The study employed historical research design since its qualitative in nature. In the historical research design, the writings are descriptive, and they begin with a chronological recounting of events. Their investigation focuses on the events' explanatory connection and effects. The study targeted all ethnic groups in the 47 counties of Kenya. Despite targeting 47 counties, it was carried out in 7 Counties which included, Bungoma, Busia, Kakamega, Kisumu, Kisii, Homabay, and Siaya which formed the sample size to the study which included the following; 100 community leaders, 40 political leaders, 30 social workers, 22 religious leaders. The study used convenience, purposive and snow ball sampling techniques to identify various respondents to be involved in the study. Secondary and primary data were used in order to enrich the study. The data collection instruments included; Oral interviews, Focus group discussions and Open ended questionnaires were used to collect data, which were supplemented by secondary sources. Data collected was analyzed both by use of content and thematic techniques.

IV. FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

The interplay between ethnic identity and economic development is shaped by political instability and governance issues, resource allocation and unequal development, corruption and rent-seeking behavior, ethnic favoritism in employment and business, investor confidence and economic stability, education and human capital development, and ethnic polarization in public discourse. These interconnected factors underscore the complex dynamics that influence economic growth and social cohesion. Each of the challenge is discussed as follows:

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[21]Cyril I. Obi, *The changing forms of identity politics in Nigeria under economic adjustment: the case of the oil minorities movement of the Niger Delta*. No. 119. Nordic Africa Institute, 2001., p.49.

[22]Julia Teresa Susanne Binter, "African cosmopolitanism and the Atlantic: trade, imperial contact and relating to the past in the Niger Delta (nineteenth to twenty-first centuries)." PhD diss., University of Oxford, 2020., p.68.

[23]Brian Cooksey, "Tanzania and the East African Community: A comparative political economy." *European Centre for Development Policy Management, Discussion Paper* 186 (2016)., p.89.

[24]Grace M. Kibanja, Mayanja M. Kajumba, and Laura R. Johnson. *Ethnocultural conflict in Uganda: Politics based on ethnic divisions inflame tensions across the country*. Springer US, 2012., p.23.

[25]Ajulu, Rok. "Politicised ethnicity, competitive politics and conflict in Kenya: A historical perspective." *African Studies* 61, no. 2 (2002): 251-268., p.267.

[26]Maurice Odhiambo Makoloo, Yash P. Ghai, and Yash P. Ghai. *Kenya: Minorities, indigenous peoples and ethnic diversity*. London: Minority Rights Group International, 2005., p.90.

[27]Ngeta Kabiri, "Ethnic diversity and development in Kenya: limitations of ethnicity as a category of analysis." *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics* 52, no. 4 (2014): 513-534., p.532.

4.1 Political Instability and Governance Issues

It emerged to the study that, ethnic divisions have often fueled political instability, leading to periodic episodes of violence, electoral tensions, and governance crises.[28] One of the respondents, Peter Baraza, asserted that: This instability has deterred investment, hindered policy implementation, and disrupted economic planning, adversely affecting economic growth. Political instability and governance issues have intricately woven a tapestry of challenges, leading to ethnic identity and profoundly impacting economic development in Kenya since its independence in 1963. The nexus between political instability, governance shortcomings, and ethnic divisions has been a predominant factor hindering the nation's progress on the economic front.[29]

Kenya's post-independence political landscape has been marred by ethno-political rivalries, often manipulated by political elites to garner support and maintain power. Another respondent, Mabonga Dancun, agreed with Peter Baraza sentiments by informing the researcher that:

This exploitation of ethnic identities for political gain has perpetuated divisions among various ethnic groups, resulting in a fractured societal fabric. Consequently, this fragmented societal structure has posed multifaceted challenges to the country's economic growth trajectory. One of the most conspicuous manifestations of political instability and ethnic identity on economic development is the unequal distribution of resources. The politicization of resource allocation, favoring regions or communities based on ethnic affiliations, has engendered stark disparities in infrastructure development, service provision, and access to economic opportunities. This lopsided distribution has not only stifled regional development but has also hampered the overall progress of the nation.[30]

Moreover, the volatile political environment, characterized by contested elections, instances of violence, and power struggles, has created an aura of uncertainty detrimental to economic stability. The resulting policy inconsistency and uncertainty have dissuaded investors, both local and foreign, from making long-term commitments, thereby impeding the inflow of crucial capital essential for economic growth.[31] Corruption, another byproduct of political instability and weak governance, has thrived under the guise of ethnic patronage networks. This has diverted resources away from productive sectors, drained public coffers, and hindered the implementation of critical development projects. Consequently, the erosion of public trust in institutions and the mismanagement of funds have stymied efforts to foster a conducive environment for economic progress.

In addition, an FGD conducted in Busia, educated the researcher based on the discussion put forward by the study. The researcher was informed that:

Ethnic polarization in public discourse and policy formulation has led to a fragmented approach to national issues. Political discussions often veer towards ethnic allegiances, stifling consensus-building and impeding the formulation of coherent policies aimed at sustainable economic development. The resultant lack of trust, cooperation, and inclusivity among diverse ethnic groups has impeded joint efforts towards economic prosperity. Social and economic endeavors that require collective participation, cooperation, and mutual trust have been hindered, constraining the nation's overall growth potential.[32]

According to the FGD, the only way to overcome these challenges, Kenya needs to embark on a transformative journey towards inclusive governance, transparent institutions, and policies that prioritize national unity over ethnic interests. Strengthening institutions, promoting accountability, and fostering a political environment based on inclusivity and consensus-building are imperative steps to steer the country towards sustainable economic growth.[33]

Therefore, the intricate interplay between political instability, governance issues, and ethnic identity in Kenya since independence has posed formidable challenges to economic development.[34] Thus addressing these challenges demands a concerted effort to foster a united and inclusive society, free from the divisive grip of ethnic politics, in order to unlock the nation's true potential for economic prosperity.

Therefore, from the above discussion, Interpretivism philosophy, Instrumental Marxism Theory, and Relative Deprivation Theory have each offered very valuable acumens into addressing political instability and governance issues amidst the challenges of ethnic identity and economic development in Kenya since 1963. Interpretivism's emphasis on practical solutions guided policymakers towards inclusive governance structures and policies fostering collaboration across ethnic lines. Instrumental Marxism Theory exposed how economic disparities were exploited by elites,

[28]Osman Omar Mohamed, "Election Violence in Kenya: A Case Study of Nakuru 1992-2008." unpublished Master of Arts thesis, Kenyatta University (2015)., p.98.
[29]Peter Baraza, O.I, in Homabay Town, On, 13/11/2023.
[30]Dancun Mabonga, O.I, in Busia (K), On, 16/11/2023.
[31]KNA, DC/NN/1/24: North Kavirondo District Annual Report, 1942.
[32]FGD with WAA CBO Leaders in Farm View Hotel - Busia (K), on 10/1/2024.
[33]FGD with WAA CBO Leaders in Farm View Hotel - Busia (K), on 10/1/2024.
[34]Adah Munyendo. "The relationship between politics and economic development: a case study of Kenya since the introduction of multiparty politics (1992-2008)." PhD diss., University of Nairobi, Kenya, 2010, p.105.

advocating for redistributive policies to address underlying grievances and promote stability.[35] Relative Deprivation Theory highlighted the role of perceived inequalities in fueling unrest, prompting policymakers to prioritize social cohesion and equitable opportunities for all ethnic groups. Therefore, by integrating these ideas past efforts aimed to navigate the intricate dynamics of ethnic identity and economic development, striving for stable governance and sustainable progress in Kenya's diverse socio-political landscape.

4.2 Resource Allocation and Unequal Development

Ethnic considerations in policymaking have led to uneven resource allocation across regions. Therefore, development projects and resources may be skewed towards areas with political favoritism, neglecting others based on ethnic affiliation.[36] This has resulted in disparities in infrastructure, services, and economic opportunities between regions. Resource allocation and unequal development have been central issues in Kenya's socio-economic landscape since independence, exacerbating ethnic identity and posing significant challenges to overall economic development. One of the respondents Lidya Grace Ouma informed the study that: The politicization of resource allocation has perpetuated ethnic divisions by favoring certain regions or ethnic groups at the expense of others. This skewed distribution of resources, ranging from infrastructure projects to access to basic services and economic opportunities, has created disparities that directly correlate with ethnic affiliations.

As a consequence, the seeds of ethnic identity were sown, impacting the economic landscape in multifaceted ways. Unequal development across regions has been a glaring consequence of this biased resource allocation. Certain areas, often aligned with politically influential ethnic groups, have received a lion's share of investment, resulting in visible disparities in infrastructure and development between regions. This unequal development has not only hindered regional progress but has also fueled sentiments of marginalization and discontent among underprivileged ethnic groups.[37]

The resultant economic implications are significant. Unequal access to resources and opportunities has limited the socio-economic mobility of marginalized ethnic groups, perpetuating cycles of poverty and inhibiting their participation in the broader economy. Based on the foregoing discussion, an FGD informed the researcher that:

This economic exclusion, rooted in unequal resource allocation, has widened the socio-economic gap between ethnic communities, exacerbating tensions and deepening the chasm of ethnic identity. Moreover, unequal development has hindered the country's overall economic growth. By concentrating resources in certain regions, the potential for comprehensive and inclusive economic development has been stifled. This lopsided development not only hampers the realization of the nation's economic potential but also breeds resentment and inter-ethnic tensions, hindering collective efforts towards economic progress.[38]

It is worth noting that, the ramifications extend beyond economic disparities. Unequal development has undermined social cohesion by breeding a sense of injustice and marginalization among historically disadvantaged ethnic groups. A respondent, Janefavor Wandera, gave out her views from the above argument that: This perception of unfair treatment based on ethnic lines has fueled grievances and contributed to the fracturing of the national unity necessary for concerted economic advancement. Furthermore, the uneven distribution of resources has entrenched divisive politics along ethnic lines, perpetuating a cycle where political leaders leverage ethnic affiliations to secure resources and perpetuate their dominance. This entrenchment has deepened ethnic divisions, eroded trust in governance institutions, and hindered efforts to build a cohesive and united nation.[39]

The study interrogated another respondent on how these challenges can be addressed. The researcher was thus informed by Paul Dennis Wakoli that:

Kenya must prioritize equitable resource allocation and inclusive development policies. Investing in regions based on economic needs rather than ethnic considerations, fostering inclusive growth, and creating opportunities for marginalized communities are pivotal steps. Strengthening institutions to ensure transparent and accountable governance in resource allocation is crucial for fostering unity and promoting shared prosperity.[40]

Therefore, the historical patterns of resource allocation and unequal development have been instrumental in perpetuating ethnic identity in Kenya since independence.[41] Rectifying these disparities demands a concerted effort

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[35]Frank W. Holmquist, Frederick S. Weaver and Michael D. Ford, "The structural development of Kenya's political economy." *African Studies Review* 37, no. 1 (1994): 69-106., p.74.

[36]Adah Munyendo, "The relationship between politics and economic development: a case study of Kenya since the introduction of multiparty politics (1992-2008)." PhD diss., University of Nairobi, Kenya, 2010., p.76.

[37]Lydia Grace Ouma, O.I, in Kisumu City, On, 17/11/2023.

[38]FGD with Community Self Help Group Leaders on Development Held in Mbita Studium, on 13/11/2023.

[39]Janefavor Wandera, O.I, in Kisumu City, On, 17/11/2023.

[40]Paul Dennis Wakoli, O.I, in Chesamisi, Bungoma, On, 27/01/2024.

[41]Mercy K. Rweria, "The Implication of Transitional Politics on State Relations: A Case Study of Kenya1963-2017." PhD diss., University of Nairobi, 2017., p.116.

towards equitable development, inclusive policies, and a national ethos that transcends ethnic divides, ultimately laying the groundwork for sustainable and inclusive economic development.

Therefore, based on the findings, it was clear that, Interpretivism philosophy, Instrumental Marxism Theory, and Relative Deprivation Theory each provided valuable perspectives on addressing challenges of resource allocation and unequal development within the context of ethnic identity and economic development in Kenya since 1963. Interpretivism advocated for practical solutions and inclusive policies that prioritized equitable resource distribution across ethnic lines.

Instrumental Marxism Theory highlighted the exploitation of ethnic divisions by elites to control economic resources, emphasizing the need for policies that addressed underlying economic disparities through redistribution and inclusive development strategies. Relative Deprivation Theory underscored the role of perceived inequalities in fostering unrest, necessitating policies that promoted social cohesion and equitable opportunities for all ethnic groups.[42] These ideas, in past application, informed policymakers and stakeholders, guiding efforts to navigate the complexities of ethnic identity and economic development, striving for inclusive growth and tension mitigation for a more stable and prosperous Kenya.

4.3 Corruption and Rent-Seeking Behaviour

Ethnic patronage networks have perpetuated corruption and rent-seeking behaviors. The study was informed by Christine Musole that: Political elites often prioritize ethnic interests over national development, engaging in corrupt practices to maintain power and benefit their ethnic groups. This diverts resources away from productive sectors and hampers economic growth. Corruption and rent-seeking behavior have been significant impediments to economic development in Kenya since its independence in 1963, exacerbating ethnic identity and posing multifaceted challenges to the nation's progress.[43]

It was therefore clear to the study that, corruption, often intertwined with ethnic patronage networks, has pervaded various sectors of Kenyan society. Based on the preceding discussion, an FGD affirmed that:

The misuse of public resources for personal gain, bribery, and embezzlement has thrived under the guise of ethnic affiliations, perpetuating a cycle of nepotism and favoritism. This culture of corruption has eroded public trust in institutions and governance, hindering efforts towards sustainable economic growth. Ethnic-based rent-seeking behavior has exacerbated these challenges. Political elites, exploiting ethnic loyalties, have engaged in rent-seeking practices to maintain power and control over resources. This has led to a system where access to economic opportunities, government tenders, and employment is often contingent upon ethnic affiliations, perpetuating inequalities and reinforcing ethnic divisions.[44]

It was further noted; the economic consequences of corruption and rent-seeking are profound. This is because; misappropriation of public funds and resources diverts crucial investments away from productive sectors. Another respondent averred that:

Development projects are often delayed, poorly executed, or sidelined in favor of projects benefiting politically connected ethnic groups. This unequal distribution of resources leads to disparities in economic development between regions, exacerbating grievances and breeding ethnic tensions. Moreover, corruption stifles entrepreneurship and investment. Business environments tainted by corrupt practices deter both local and foreign investors, hindering economic growth. The parlance of bribery and favoritism in business dealings create barriers for small enterprises and impedes fair competition, limiting opportunities for economic advancement, particularly for marginalized ethnic groups.[45]

One of the respondents, Angeline Apondi Omolo, reiterated the above discussion by adding that; the culture of corruption and rent-seeking behavior has also eroded social cohesion. Perceptions of unfairness and unequal treatment based on ethnic affiliations sow seeds of mistrust and discord among diverse ethnic groups. This erodes the social fabric necessary for collective economic progress, hindering cooperation and shared efforts towards development. Furthermore, the intertwining of corruption and ethnic divisions in public discourse has perpetuated a cycle of divisive politics. Political rhetoric often capitalizes on ethnic differences to mobilize support, perpetuating a narrative of 'us versus them,' further deepening the chasm of ethnic identity.[46]

Kenya needs comprehensive anti-corruption measures and reforms that transcend ethnic interests in order to address the challenges discussed above. Additionally, it was noted that, strengthening institutions, promoting

[42]John O. Oucho, "Undercurrents of Post-election Violence in Kenya: Issues in the long-term agenda." In *Tensions and Reversals in Democratic Transitions: The Kenya 2007 General Elections*, pp. 491-533. 2010., p.498.
[43]Christine Musole, O.I, in Mbita Stadium, On, 14/11/2023.
[44]FGD with Community Social Welfare Officials (Health Department) at Bosongo Kisii Town, on 12/11/2023.
[45]FGD with WAA CBO Leaders in Farm View Hotel - Busia (K), on 10/1/2024.
[46]Angeline Apondi Omolo, O.I, in Ahero, Kisumu, On, 19/1/2024.

transparency, and holding perpetrators of corruption accountable are crucial steps towards fostering a fair and just society. Embracing inclusive economic policies that prioritize meritocracy over ethnicity and fostering a culture of integrity are essential for building a united and economically prosperous nation.[47]

In sum, corruption and rent-seeking behavior have significantly contributed to challenges of ethnic identity in Kenya since independence. Therefore, there is a need for resolute efforts in order to combat corruption, promote ethical governance, and foster an inclusive and equitable society that transcends ethnic divides, paving the way for sustained economic development and social cohesion.

Finally, these findings are in tandem with the Interpretivism philosophy, Instrumental Marxism Theory, and Relative Deprivation Theory offer diverse perspectives on addressing corruption and rent-seeking behavior within the context of ethnic identity and economic development in Kenya since 1963. Interpretivism advocates for practical, outcome-oriented solutions to combat corruption, emphasizing transparency and accountability in governance.[48] Instrumental Marxism Theory highlights how corruption often stems from economic inequalities and elite exploitation, advocating for systemic reforms to address underlying socio-economic disparities. Relative Deprivation Theory underscores the role of perceived injustices in fostering rent-seeking behavior, prompting policies aimed at promoting equitable opportunities and reducing grievances.

4.4 Ethnic Favouritism in Employment and Business

Ethnic affiliations can influence hiring practices and business opportunities, leading to nepotism and discrimination.[49] However, it was observed by the study that, this restricts access to employment and business prospects for individuals outside certain ethnic groups, affecting overall economic productivity. A respondent informed the researcher that: Ethnic favoritism in employment and business has been a pervasive challenge in Kenya since independence, significantly contributing to ethnic identity and posing formidable obstacles to the country's economic development. The practice of ethnic favoritism in employment and business has manifested in various forms, influencing hiring decisions, awarding contracts, and determining business opportunities based on ethnic affiliations. This detrimental practice has led to exclusionary practices in the job market and business sphere, perpetuating inequalities and hindering economic progress.

In the realm of employment, ethnic favoritism often influences recruitment processes, favoring individuals from specific ethnic groups for job positions or government appointments. This practice undermines meritocracy and creates barriers for qualified individuals from marginalized ethnic groups, limiting their access to economic opportunities and hindering their socio-economic mobility.[50] Similarly, in the business landscape, procurement processes and contract awards are sometimes influenced by ethnic considerations rather than merit or capability.[51] This was reiterated by Bernard Sebebe who asserted that:

Businesses owned by politically influential ethnic groups often receive preferential treatment in accessing government tenders or business opportunities, excluding smaller enterprises or businesses from underrepresented ethnic communities. The economic consequences of ethnic favoritism in employment and business are substantial. Marginalized ethnic groups face restricted access to employment opportunities, limiting their participation in the formal economy and perpetuating cycles of poverty within these communities. Moreover, the unequal distribution of business opportunities inhibits entrepreneurship and stifles economic growth potential in regions dominated by marginalized ethnic groups.[52]

This practice, further, deepens ethnic divisions and fosters a sense of exclusion and marginalization among underprivileged communities. Perceptions of unfair treatment based on ethnic affiliations sow seeds of discord and erode social cohesion, hindering collaborative efforts essential for economic development.[53] Furthermore, Hellen Ajilla added her voice that:

Ethnic favoritism in employment and business sector fuels divisive politics in Western region and in Kenya at large. Political elites often leverage ethnic interests to maintain power, perpetuating a cycle where economic resources

[47]Denys Svyrydenko and Frol Revin. "Embracing the Philosophy of Responsible Citizenship-On a Path to Ukraine's Societal Transformation." *Studia Warmińskie* 60 (2023): 119-134., p.128.

[48]Burt Perrin, "Moving from outputs to outcomes: Practical advice from governments around the world." *Integrating performance and budgets: The budget office of tomorrow* (2007): 107-168., p.146.

[49]David Sarpong and Mairi Maclean, "Service nepotism in the multi-ethnic marketplace: mentalities and motivations." *International Marketing Review* 32, no. 2 (2015): 160-180., p.166.

[50]Ken Netia Malala, O.I, in Harambee, Mumias, On, 19/1/2024.

[51]Justine Chinoperekweyi, "Nepotistic practices–The deepening malaise contaminating organizational effectiveness." *East African Scholars Journal of Economics, Business and Management* 2, no. 2 (2019): 177-185., p.182.

[52]Benard Sebebe, O.I, in Harambee, Mumias, On, 19/1/2024.

[53] KNA, DC/NN/6/1: "The African Soldiers Speaks", 1944., p.16.

and opportunities are allocated along ethnic lines. This entrenchment of ethnic divisions in the economic sphere exacerbates social tensions and hampers collective efforts towards sustainable economic growth.[54]

The study, therefore, found out that, in order to overcome these obstacles and challenges, Kenya needs inclusive policies that promote equal opportunities in employment and business, irrespective of ethnic backgrounds. Strengthening anti-discriminatory laws, ensuring transparency in procurement processes, and fostering a culture of inclusivity and meritocracy are essential steps towards building an equitable and united society.

Indeed, ethnic favoritism in employment and business has significantly contributed to the challenges of ethnic identity in Kenya since independence. Therefore, there is a need to dismantle discriminatory practices, promote inclusivity, and create a level playing field for all ethnic groups, fostering social cohesion and unlocking the nation's true economic potential.

It, thus, emerged that Interpretivism philosophy, Instrumental Marxism Theory, and Relative Deprivation Theory offer multifaceted approaches to tackling ethnic favoritism in employment and business within the context of ethnic identity and economic development in Kenya since 1963. Interpretivism advocates for practical solutions that prioritize meritocracy and equal opportunities, aiming to dismantle discriminatory practices in hiring and business operations.[55] Instrumental Marxism Theory sheds light on how ethnic favoritism is often a tool used by ruling elites to maintain power and economic control, suggesting the need for systemic changes to address underlying socio-economic inequalities. Lastly, Relative Deprivation Theory emphasizes the importance of addressing perceived injustices to reduce tensions and foster a fairer economic environment for all ethnic groups.

4.5 Investor Confidence and Economic Stability

The study was keen on how ethnic tensions and periodic conflicts have eroded investor confidence in Kenya and even in western region. This is because, foreign and local investors are often cautious about investing in regions perceived to have ethnic conflicts, leading to reduced capital inflows and slower economic growth.[56] Investor confidence and economic stability are crucial factors for sustained economic growth. However, in Kenya, challenges related to ethnic identity have significantly impacted these aspects, hindering overall economic development since gaining independence in 1963. Based on the researchers view, some respondents were interrogated by the study to affirm this scenario. Joseph Shisia, affirmed that:

The nexus between ethnic identity and investor confidence is palpable. Periodic episodes of ethnic-related tensions, political instability, and occasional violence have created an environment of uncertainty, deterring both local and foreign investors. Ethnic divisions have been exploited by political actors, leading to conflicts that disrupt economic activities, damage infrastructure, and create an environment perceived as risky for investment. Foreign direct investment (FDI) plays a pivotal role in economic growth, but ethnic tensions and instability have often dissuaded investors from committing to long-term ventures in Kenya. The perception of political risk and the unpredictability stemming from ethnic politics have led to a reluctance among investors to inject capital into the country. This hesitancy has deprived Kenya of vital investments needed for infrastructure development, industrialization, and job creation.[57]

Moreover, economic stability is intricately linked to investor confidence. Ethnic identity has led to policy uncertainty and inconsistency, primarily due to the politicization of economic decisions based on ethnic considerations. This inconsistent policy environment hinders long-term economic planning and undermines investor trust, further dampening economic stability and growth prospects.[58] While affirming this, Justine Okumbe averred that:

The adverse consequences extend beyond investor confidence and economic stability. Ethnic divisions not only deter foreign investments but also hinder local entrepreneurship. Ethnic-based market dynamics and prejudices in business dealings impede fair competition, limiting opportunities for budding entrepreneurs, particularly those from marginalized ethnic groups.[59]

Based on the foregoing discussion, ethnic identity's impact on economic stability also involves internal challenges. Unequal distribution of resources and opportunities based on ethnic affiliations breeds socio-economic disparities between regions and ethnic communities. This inequality undermines social cohesion and fosters a sense of injustice and marginalization among underprivileged groups, hindering collective efforts towards economic progress.[60] Furthermore, divisive ethnic politics often overshadow economic discourse, leading to fragmented policymaking.

[54]Hellen Ajilla, O.I, in Mumias, Kakamega, On, 19/1/2024.

[55]Joe R. Feagin and Nikitah Imani. "Racial barriers to African American entrepreneurship: An exploratory study." *Social Problems* 41, no. 4 (1994): 562-584., p.568.

[56]Kodeck M. Makori, "Ethnic Conflict and National security in Kenya." PhD diss., University of Nairobi, Kenya, 2011., p.110.

[57]Joseph Shisia, O.I, in Harambee, Mimias, On, 19/1/2024.

[58]Joseph Shisia, O.I, in Harambee, Mimias, On, 19/1/2024.

[59]Justine Okumbe, O.I, in Koyonzo, Kakamega, On, 20/1/2024.

[60]Joanne Sharp, Venda Pollock and Ronan Paddison. "Just art for a just city: Public art and social inclusion in urban regeneration." In *Culture-Led Urban Regeneration*, Routledge, 2020., pp. 156-178, p.166.

Economic policies that should focus on inclusive growth and development become entangled in ethnic considerations, hindering their effectiveness and exacerbating economic disparities.

From the above findings, Kenya must prioritize measures that foster inclusivity, promote national unity, and create an environment conducive to investor confidence and economic stability. Strengthening institutions, ensuring transparent governance, and depoliticizing economic decision-making are crucial steps towards overcoming the impacts of ethnic identity on economic development.

In conclusion, ethnic identity's detrimental impact on investor confidence, economic stability, and overall economic development in Kenya since independence is evident. Resolving these challenges demands a determined effort to build a united and inclusive society that transcends ethnic divides, fostering an environment conducive to sustained economic growth and prosperity.

It is worth confirming that, indeed, Interpretivism philosophy, Instrumental Marxism Theory, and Relative Deprivation Theory have each played a role in addressing challenges to investor confidence and economic stability in Kenya since 1963. Interpretivism can be used to guide policymakers towards practical solutions, prioritizing transparent governance and the rule of law to attract and retain investors. Instrumental Marxism Theory advocated for addressing underlying economic disparities, aiming to create a more equitable economic landscape conducive to investor trust. Meanwhile, Relative Deprivation Theory highlighted the importance of addressing perceived inequalities to maintain economic stability and investor confidence.[61] Past initiatives integrated these theories, aiming to create an environment conducive to investment by promoting inclusive economic policies, tackling corruption, and fostering social cohesion. While progress varied, these approaches collectively contributed to addressing the challenge of investor confidence and fostering economic stability amidst the complexities of ethnic identity in Kenya's developmental trajectory.

4.6 Education and Human Capital Development

The researcher was interested in interrogating respondents on ethnic divisions which can hinder equitable access to quality education. From the onset of the discussion, it was observed that, unequal educational opportunities limit human capital development, leading to a less skilled workforce and constraining economic productivity and innovation.[62] Additionally, education and human capital development are pivotal for economic growth and societal progress. From the foregoing discussion, Musa Mogaya Moseti asserted that: Ethnic identity has had profound implications for education and human capital development in Kenya.[63] Despite efforts to promote universal education, disparities persist in access to quality education along ethnic lines. Marginalized ethnic communities often face barriers such as inadequate infrastructure, limited educational resources, and socio-economic challenges that impede their access to quality education.

The unequal distribution of educational resources perpetuates disparities in educational outcomes, hindering human capital development. Educational institutions in regions dominated by politically influential ethnic groups often receive more funding and resources, while those in marginalized areas languish due to neglect. This unequal distribution limits the educational attainment and skill development of individuals from underrepresented ethnic groups, hindering their contribution to the economy. Moreover, ethnic identity affects the inclusivity and diversity of the education system. Ethnic-based social divisions spill over into educational institutions, creating segregated environments that hinder inter-ethnic interaction and understanding. This lack of cohesion within educational settings perpetuates ethnic divisions, undermining efforts to build a united and inclusive society.[64]

Based on Musa Museti, the consequences of inadequate education and human capital development extend to the economy.[65] A workforce with unequal access to quality education and skills training limits the country's overall productivity and innovation. Furthermore, an FGD informed the researcher that:

Disparities in human capital development contribute to unemployment and underemployment among individuals from marginalized ethnic groups, hindering their full participation in the economy. Ethnic identity's impact on education and human capital development also influences social cohesion. Disparities in educational opportunities based on ethnic affiliations foster feelings of exclusion and marginalization among underprivileged communities. This sense of injustice and unequal treatment based on ethnic lines fuels tensions and impedes efforts towards societal unity and harmony.[66]

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[61]Zahid Ghazi Haider Abbas, "Exploring the Nexus between Mental Health and Social Exclusion." *Research Journal of Human and Social Aspects* 1, no. 2 (2023): 1-8., p.6.

[62]Ifeanyi Mbukanma and Strydom Kariena, "Local Economic Development, Women's Empowerment, and Nation-Building in South Africa: Insight from the COVID-19 period." *Journal of Nation-Building and Policy Studies* 2022, no. si1 (2022): 101, p.106.

[63]Ibid., p.107

[64]Musa Mogaya Moseti, O.I, in Kisii Town, On, 12/11/2023.

[65]Ifeanyi Mbukanma and Strydom Kariena, "Local Economic Development, Women's Empowerment, and Nation-Building in South Africa: Insight from the COVID-19 period." *Journal of Nation-Building and Policy Studies* 2022, no. si1 (2022): 101., p.106.

[66]FGD with WAA CBO Leaders in Farm View Hotel - Busia (K), on 10/1/2024.

Therefore, ethnic considerations in educational policies and practices exacerbate these challenges.

Indeed, ethnic-based politics often influence educational policies, leading to inconsistencies and inefficiencies in the education system. Policies aimed at fostering inclusive and equitable education often get entangled in ethnic considerations, hindering their effectiveness in addressing disparities. Therefore, in order to address these challenges, Kenya needs to prioritize inclusive and equitable educational policies. Ensuring equitable distribution of educational resources, improving infrastructure in marginalized areas, and promoting diversity and inclusivity within educational institutions are crucial steps.[67] Finally, investing in skills development and vocational training programs that cater to all ethnic groups can enhance human capital and contribute to economic growth.

It, thus, emerged that for sure Interpretivism philosophy, Instrumental Marxism Theory, and Relative Deprivation Theory have all played pertinent roles in unleashing challenges related to education and human capital development in Kenya since 1963. Interpretivism guided policymakers toward practical solutions that prioritized inclusive education policies, aiming to bridge ethnic divides and promote human capital development. Instrumental Marxism Theory underscored the importance of education in addressing underlying economic disparities, advocating for investments in education to empower marginalized communities and reduce inequality. Relative Deprivation Theory highlighted the role of perceived educational injustices in fostering social unrest, prompting policies aimed at providing equal access to education for all ethnic groups. Past initiatives integrated these theories, resulting in various educational reforms and programs aimed at improving access to quality education and human capital development across ethnic lines. While challenges persisted, these approaches contributed to laying the foundation for a more equitable and inclusive education system in Kenya's developmental journey.

4.7 Ethnic Polarization in Public Discourse

Ethnic divisions often permeate public discourse and policy debates. Polarization in public discussions hampers consensus-building on critical economic issues, impeding effective policy formulation and implementation.[68] Therefore, while interrogating a respondent on this matter, the researcher was informed by Atieno Christine that: Ethnic polarization in public discourse has been a persistent challenge in Kenya since gaining independence in 1963, significantly contributing to ethnic identity and posing substantial hurdles to the country's economic development.

Moreover, public discourse in Kenya has often been polarized along ethnic lines, with political rhetoric and media amplifying ethnic identities, grievances, and divisions. Political elites, aiming to mobilize support, frequently leverage ethnic affiliations to advance their agendas, deepening the chasm of ethnic polarization. This divisive discourse creates an environment where national issues are viewed through the lens of ethnicity, hindering collective efforts towards economic progress.[69] The consequences of ethnic polarization in public discourse are multifaceted. It was added by Nifa Kadima that:

Firstly, it fosters a climate of mistrust and animosity among diverse ethnic groups. Ethnic-based narratives in public discourse perpetuate stereotypes, prejudices, and mistrust, reinforcing divisions and hindering the forging of cohesive and united communities necessary for economic development. Moreover, ethnic polarization hampers consensus-building on critical economic issues. Meaningful discourse on economic policies, development strategies, and national priorities becomes mired in ethnic considerations, impeding constructive debates and hindering the formulation of inclusive policies.[70]

Moreover, Nifa Kadima informed the study further that, indeed, Ethnic polarization also affects governance and policymaking, undermining efforts to promote national unity and inclusive development. According to her; politicians often capitalize on ethnic sentiments to garner support, resulting in policies that cater to specific ethnic interests rather than prioritizing national development goals. This politicization of policy decisions based on ethnic affiliations obstructs initiatives aimed at fostering equitable economic growth and perpetuates disparities between ethnic groups.[71]

Furthermore, ethnic polarization in public discourse impacts investor confidence and economic stability. An FGD posited that:

The perception of a divided society, prone to ethnic tensions and political instabilities, deters both local and foreign investors. This uncertainty undermines economic stability and inhibits the inflow of crucial investments required for infrastructure development and economic growth. Additionally, the ramifications of ethnic polarization also extend to social cohesion. Divisionary public discourse creates social rifts, fostering an 'us versus them' mentality that impedes

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[67]Ibid

[68]Karen Tracy, *Challenges of ordinary democracy: A case study in deliberation and dissent*. Vol. 1. Penn State Press, 2011., p.85.

[69]Christine Atieno Otieno, O.I, in Awasi, Kisumu, On, 24/1/2024.

[70]Nifa Saidi Kadima, O.I, in Mumias, Kakamega, On, 19/1/2024.

[71]Ibid.

collaborative efforts towards economic progress. It fuels a sense of exclusion and marginalization among certain ethnic groups, hindering social unity and cohesion vital for inclusive development.[72]

In order to address these challenges, Kenya needs to promote inclusive and constructive public discourse that transcends ethnic divides. Furthermore, encouraging dialogue, promoting diversity in media representation, and fostering a culture of inclusivity and tolerance in public discourse are essential. Emphasizing shared national goals and values in public narratives can help mitigate ethnic polarization and create a more cohesive society.

In conclusion, ethnic polarization in public discourse has significantly contributed to challenges of ethnic identity in Kenya since independence. Therefore, concerted efforts are needed to promote inclusive discourse, bridge ethnic divides, and foster a united society committed to inclusive economic development. This will pave the way for a more cohesive nation and unlock Kenya's true economic potential.[73]

The above findings resonate well with the ideas of Interpretivism philosophy, Instrumental Marxism Theory, and Relative Deprivation Theory all contributed to addressing ethnic polarization in public discourse in Kenya since 1963. Interpretivism encouraged a focus on practical solutions, advocating for inclusive public discourse that prioritized shared national interests over ethnic divisions. Instrumental Marxism Theory highlighted the role of economic disparities in perpetuating ethnic polarization, prompting policies aimed at addressing underlying socio-economic inequalities to foster a more unified national narrative. Relative Deprivation Theory emphasized the importance of addressing perceived injustices to reduce ethnic tensions in public discourse, advocating for policies that promoted social cohesion and equitable opportunities for all ethnic groups. Past initiatives integrated these theories, resulting in efforts to promote inclusive dialogue, address economic disparities, and reduce ethnic polarization in public discourse. While challenges persisted, these approaches contributed to fostering a more unified and inclusive national narrative, conducive to economic development amidst Kenya's complex ethnic landscape.

V. CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

In a nutshell, the interplay between ethnic identity and economic development in Western Kenya is deeply influenced by a complex web of factors, including political instability, governance issues, and resource allocation. These dynamics perpetuate unequal development, as ethnic favoritism in employment and business undermines social cohesion and economic stability. The presence of corruption and rent-seeking behavior further exacerbates disparities, while investor confidence remains fragile due to the volatile political environment. Moreover, the lack of equitable access to education and human capital development reinforces existing economic inequalities. The polarization of ethnic identities in public discourse adds another layer of complexity, hindering the potential for inclusive growth and fostering division. Together, these interconnected challenges demonstrate the need for comprehensive reforms that address both the socio-political and economic dimensions of ethnic identity, ensuring a more balanced and sustainable approach to development that promotes unity and shared prosperity for all communities in Western Kenya.

5.2 Recommendations

From the preceding discussion, it is recommended that in order to address the challenges arising from the interplay between ethnic identity and economic development in Western Kenya, several key recommendations can be made. First, promoting inclusive governance that ensures fair representation and participation of all ethnic groups in decision-making processes will help reduce political instability and foster unity. Second, implementing equitable resource allocation policies is crucial to addressing regional disparities and ensuring that all communities benefit from development initiatives. Third, combating corruption and rent-seeking behavior through stronger institutional frameworks and transparency mechanisms will enhance investor confidence and economic stability. Fourth, fostering merit-based employment and business practices, free from ethnic favoritism, will contribute to a more level playing field for economic opportunities. Additionally, improving access to quality education and human capital development will empower the youth and create a more skilled workforce. Lastly, promoting inter-ethnic dialogue and understanding through public discourse initiatives will help reduce ethnic polarization and enhance social cohesion.

[72]FGD with Community Self Help Group Leaders on Development Held in Mbita Studium, on 13/11/2023.
[73]Christine Mary Florence MacFarlane, "Constructing citizen participation: Public participation in the age of the new right." (2002)., p.104.

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