

**EFFECTS OF BORDER CONFLICTS ON SELECTED WOMEN ROLES AMONG
THE KURIA EAST COMMUNITY IN MIGORI COUNTY, KENYA**

NYAKERI JERIDA GATI

**A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate School in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements
for the Master of Arts Degree in Gender, Women and Development Studies of Egerton
University**

EGERTON UNIVERSITY

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DECLARATION AND RECOMMENDATION

Declaration

This thesis is my original work and has not been presented in this university or any other for the award of a degree.

Signature 

Date: 1/11/2025

Nyakeri Jerida Gati

GM11/12006/22

Recommendation

This thesis has been submitted with our approval as University supervisors.

Signature



Date: 3/11/2025

Dr. Lilian Chesikaw, PhD

Institute of Gender Women and Development Studies

Egerton University

Signature



Date: 2/11/2025

Dr. Shadrack Cheplogoi, PhD

Department of Agricultural Education & Extension

Egerton University

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my family, whose unwavering support and encouragement made this academic journey possible. I also dedicate this thesis to the resilient women of Kuria East Community who, despite facing numerous challenges from border conflicts, continue to demonstrate remarkable strength and determination in preserving their families and communities.

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ABSTRACT

Border conflicts significantly reshape women's roles, altering traditional responsibilities and creating new social dynamics. This study examined the effect of border conflicts on selected women's roles among the Kuria East Community in Migori County, Kenya. The main objective was to assess how border conflicts affect women's socio-cultural and economic roles. Specific objectives included establishing women's socio-cultural and economic roles, assessing border conflicts' effect on socio-cultural roles, examining their effect on economic roles, and establishing post-conflict coping mechanisms. The study employed Feminist Conflict Theory with a descriptive mixed methods approach. The target population comprised 42,000 Kuria women aged 18 and above in conflict-affected areas, with a sample size of 224 respondents. Data collection involved structured questionnaires administered to women participants, semi-structured interviews with key informants including community leaders and local administrators, and documentary review of relevant reports and records. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics while qualitative data was analyzed using thematic analysis to identify patterns related to role transformations. Results revealed that women's traditional roles were concentrated in cultural transmission (mean=3.55) and household management (mean=3.52) but limited in community decision making (mean=1.99). Border conflicts severely disrupted women's socio-cultural lives, with 67.8% experiencing affected family relationships and 59.9% reporting reduced ceremonial participation. Economic effects were devastating, with 69.8% losing market access and 64.4% forced to change farming practices, while only 22.2% developed new economic skills. Coping mechanisms relied primarily on community-based initiatives (mean=3.19 for peace dialogues) rather than ineffective institutional support (mean=2.33 for government programs). The study concluded that border conflicts fundamentally disrupted women's traditional roles while failing to create meaningful empowerment opportunities, resulting in increased burdens without corresponding gains in formal authority. Women demonstrated remarkable agency through grassroots coping strategies but operated within severely constrained circumstances where institutional support proved inadequate. The study recommends establishing targeted support programs, reforming peacebuilding policies to include women's voices, implementing NGO interventions in conflict epicenters, developing economic recovery programs, and creating transparent aid distribution mechanisms working directly with women's groups.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CIDP	County Integrated Development Plan
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
IGWDS	Institute of Gender Women and Development Studies
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
KNBS	Kenya National Bureau of Statistics
KPS	Kenya National Police Service
NACOSTI	National Commission for Science- Technology and Innovation
NGEC	National Gender and Equality Commission
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational- Scientific and Cultural Organization
WHO	World Health Organization

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Issues of border conflicts especially through resource conflicts and territorial disputes, represent critical areas requiring scholarly attention due to their profound effects on women's roles in traditional societies. According to the UN Women (2020) report, resource conflicts over water sources, grazing lands, and agricultural territories affect approximately 65% of women in conflict zones, forcing them to significantly modify their livelihood patterns and trading relationships, nearly double the World Health Organization's (WHO) recommended maximum effect threshold of 35% (Parshotam & Balongo, 2020). Similarly, territorial disputes along community boundaries affect over 70% of women's socio-cultural responsibilities, with research from the Horn of Africa demonstrating that such conflicts disrupt women's traditional roles in caregiving and cultural preservation, compared to a global average of 40% in stable regions (Tadesse *et al.*, 2020).

According to the report on the World Bank (2021), the two indicators of boundary conflict, resource conflicts, and territorial conflicts, are especially notable in that they overlap directly with women in their primary areas of accountability in traditional agricultural societies. Empirical research on several border areas indicates that in the context of community rivalry regarding resources or territory, the roles of women change significantly since they have to acquire new methods of sustaining household welfare despite facing more and more security conditions (Bendavid *et al.*, 2021; Odary *et al.*, 2020). These role transformations are, therefore, very important to understand in order to have gender-responsive interventions and policies, which will help women grow and build their strength during conflicts and not continue to be marginalized by using the poorly informed strategies.

Globally, the border conflicts have presented varying scenarios where women are increasing their roles in an un-supported ground, whereas their importance is recorded, conflicts have had a devastating impact on their wellbeing and security. As UN women (2020) affirm, in South Asia, the India-Pakistan border tension has forced more than three-quarters of women to move out of traditional household managers to economic actors with 45% becoming cross-border agricultural traders, 30% becoming informal financial brokers and 82% of women becoming primary household decision-makers. These increased roles, however, have high costs and UNDP (2021) documents that these same women are at risk of gender-based violence 65 times

higher, 58% are more likely to have poor mental health, and 72% have less access to the necessary healthcare services when there are conflict situations. The economic change has been directly triggered by resource conflicts over water rights and territorial disputes along the Line of Control, and at the same time, the destruction of vital infrastructure and 68% of women have lost homes or productive assets, 54% have been forced to move and 73% report food insecurity during periods of high conflict (WHO, 2022).

The transformation of women's roles is further evidenced in conflict zones like Northern Ireland, where UN Development Programme data shows 72% of women have transitioned from traditional homemakers to community leaders, with the European Union Border Region Report (2021) documenting 40% serving as professional mediators and 45% leading cross-community reconciliation initiatives effecting over 200,000 households (Aroussi, 2021). Territorial disputes over historical boundaries have driven this transformation, creating spaces for women's leadership in mediation (O'Rourke & Swaine, 2020). Yet these leadership opportunities come amid significant hardships, European Union human rights monitoring (2022) shows 62% of these women face threats or intimidation for their community work, and 47% report negative effects on family relationships due to their expanded public roles. In Myanmar's border regions, Asian Development Bank research (2022) indicates that 65% of women have developed new economic roles, with WHO studies (2021) showing 38% working as agricultural export negotiators and 42% managing informal savings networks worth \$30 million annually, while simultaneously maintaining traditional caregiving duties for an average of 5.2 dependents per household. UN Women surveys reveal this dual burden affects 78% of women who report unsustainable stress levels due to lack of institutional support (Bendavid *et al.*, 2021).

Resource conflicts over mining territories and disputed agricultural lands have necessitated these economic adaptations, with UNDP research (2022) documenting how disrupted traditional economic activities forced women to develop alternative livelihood strategies across conflict zones (Khodary, 2022; Mengesha & Berhe, 2021). According to United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) data from the Israeli-Palestinian conflict zone, 70% of women have evolved into community economic leaders, with World Bank statistics (2022) showing 45% managing agricultural cooperatives serving 150,000 families and UN Women reporting 55% coordinating cross-border market initiatives worth \$65 million annually, highlighting both their adaptability and the urgent need for structured support mechanisms (Loken & Matfess, 2022). However, the same reports document alarming negative effects, with

64% of these women experiencing family separation due to displacement, 57% reporting increased childcare burdens with reduced support networks, and 70% facing heightened physical security risks during conflict periods (World Bank, 2022), illustrating how border conflicts simultaneously transform women's roles while eroding their welfare and stability.

Regionally, border conflicts in Africa have fundamentally transformed women's socio-cultural and economic roles through two primary mechanisms: resource conflicts and territorial disputes, while simultaneously imposing severe humanitarian costs. According to the African Development Bank (2020), in the Democratic Republic of Congo, resource conflicts over mineral-rich territories have affected 82% of women in border regions, with UNDP data showing that 65% have been forced to abandon traditional farming for alternative livelihoods. This displacement has shifted women's roles from subsistence producers to economic intermediaries and community organizers (Odary *et al.*, 2021), but has also resulted in alarming personal costs, the African Union's human security assessment (2022) reports 72% of these women experience increased exposure to sexual violence, 68% face food insecurity, and 59% report the disintegration of family support structures during conflict periods. The UN Women Regional Office reports these women have evolved from subsistence farmers to cross-border traders, managing trade networks worth \$45 million annually despite operating in militarized zones with minimal institutional protection (Odary *et al.*, 2020). In the Great Lakes region, World Bank assessments show territorial disputes have disrupted the livelihoods of 75% of women traders, with UN Economic Commission for Africa data indicating that informal cross-border trade networks operated by women generate approximately \$60 million annually, yet operate without formal recognition or support frameworks (Parshotam & Balongo, 2020; World Bank, 2021).

The African Union's Border Region Assessment (2021) documents that along the Nigeria-Cameroon border, resource conflicts have affected 70% of women farmers, with Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) statistics showing 55% have developed innovative agricultural adaptations that span disputed territories, collectively feeding over 100,000 households (Bendavid *et al.*, 2021). However, these adaptations come amid significant hardship, WHO monitoring (2022) shows 64% of these women have experienced conflict-related injuries or trauma, 58% report deteriorating maternal health outcomes, and 75% face increased workloads without corresponding increases in resources or support. In the Horn of Africa, particularly Somalia and Ethiopia, Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) research shows that 68% of women have established alternative agricultural

enterprises in response to territorial conflicts over pastureland and water access points. These initiatives, according to UN Women East Africa, contribute approximately \$80 million annually to local economies and support an estimated 150,000 households, demonstrating women's crucial yet undervalued role in maintaining regional food security and economic stability (Alemu, 2020; Tadesse *et al.*, 2020). Yet IGAD's conflict assessment (2022) simultaneously documents the severe negative effects, with 67% of these women reporting disrupted education for their children, 72% experiencing heightened household tension and domestic violence, and 65% facing increased health risks due to conflict-damaged infrastructure.

According to UN Women Kenya (2021), 72% of women in border regions have been forced to develop alternative economic strategies due to resource conflicts, with the Economic Survey (2021) showing that 45% have established new agricultural ventures and 38% have created alternative market access routes. However, these adaptations come with significant negative consequences, Kenya Human Rights Commission (2022) documents that 63% of these women experience increased gender-based violence, 58% report lost educational opportunities for children, and 71% face deteriorating health outcomes due to conflict-related stress and limited access to services. The Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (2021) reports that along the Kenya-Somalia border, territorial disputes have affected 65% of women traders, with UNDP data showing their adaptive economic networks generate approximately \$40 million annually (Reuben *et al.*, 2022). In Turkana and West Pokot counties, World Bank assessments indicate that 70% of women have modified their traditional economic activities due to resource conflicts over pastoral lands (Lotwel *et al.*, 2021). Along the Kenya-Uganda border, UN Women statistics show women-led cross-border trade contributes \$55 million annually to local economies despite operating without institutional support (Parshotam & Balongo, 2020).

The challenges are particularly acute in Kenya's marginalized regions, where women's expanding roles intersect with deep-rooted structural inequalities and conflict-related trauma. In Turkana and West Pokot counties, recurring border conflicts have compelled women to assume unprecedented responsibilities, with recent studies showing that 65% of women have become primary household providers while managing peace-building initiatives (Lotwel *et al.*, 2021). Yet these expanded responsibilities come amid devastating loss, the National Cohesion and Integration Commission (2022) reports that 59% of these women have lost family members to conflict violence, 67% have experienced displacement at least once, and 72% report significant psychological trauma affecting their ability to function in their expanded roles.

These regions face chronic marginalization, with women navigating both traditional cultural constraints and conflict-induced changes. In Turkana, women's groups have established innovative conflict early warning systems, yet these crucial initiatives remain largely informal and under supported (Yator, 2021). In the northern counties affected by pastoralist conflicts, the National Gender and Equality Commission (2020) documents that 52% of women actively participate in early warning systems and peace-building initiatives (Letting, 2020).

In Kuria East Community, resource conflicts and territorial disputes have profoundly affected women's traditional roles while creating severe socioeconomic disruptions. The Migori County Integrated Development Plan (2022) notes that disputed agricultural lands between Kipsigis and Kuria communities have caused prolonged contention, resulting in significant loss of life, livestock and property since the 1970s. According to the same plan, 68% of women have abandoned traditional farming patterns due to resource conflicts. The National Gender and Equality Commission (2021) reports that 75% of women in Gwitembe have had market activities disrupted, compelling them to develop alternative economic systems through informal trading networks and cooperative enterprises (Onserio, 2021). Despite demonstrated resilience, their transformed roles lack systematic documentation and institutional support, highlighting the need for targeted research (Maisori, 2023).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The persistent border conflicts in Migori County, particularly in areas near Gwitembe, Ang'ata Barkoi and Transmara where Kuria and Kipsigis communities interact, present a critical development challenge as they disproportionately affect women who serve as primary mediators of both household and community welfare. These conflicts, manifesting through resource conflicts and territorial disputes, have disrupted traditional socio-cultural and economic roles, exposing them to heightened vulnerability and marginalization. While these women occupy a central position in maintaining social fabric and economic stability during conflicts, existing research has focused primarily on general conflict effects, overlooking the specific mechanisms through which resource conflicts and territorial disputes transform women's roles in Kuria East. Despite the critical nature of women's evolving responsibilities in conflict situations, there remains limited comprehension of how resource conflicts and territorial disputes specifically affect their traditional roles like farming and trading, adaptation strategies, and overall welfare in Kuria East community. This study aimed to bridge this gap by determining the effects of border conflicts on selected women's roles among the Kuria East Community in Migori County, Kenya.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

1.3.1 General Objective

To determine the effects of border conflicts on selected women roles among the Kuria East Community in Migori County, Kenya

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

The study was guided by the following specific research objectives;

- i. To establish the socio-cultural and economic roles of women in relation to border conflict situations among the Kuria East Community in Migori County, Kenya
- ii. To assess the extent to which border conflicts affect socio-cultural roles of women among the Kuria East Community in Migori, Kenya
- iii. To examine the effect of border conflicts on economic roles of women among the Kuria Community in Migori County, Kenya
- iv. To establish the post border conflict coping mechanisms on women roles among the Kuria East Community in Migori County, Kenya.

1.4 Research Questions

The study answered the following research questions:

- i. What are the socio-cultural and economic roles of women in relation to border conflict situations among the Kuria Community in Migori County, Kenya?
- ii. To what extent does border conflicts affect socio-cultural roles of women among the Kuria East Community in Migori, Kenya?
- iii. What is the effect of border conflicts on economic roles of women among the Kuria Community in Migori County, Kenya?
- iv. What are the post border conflict coping mechanisms on women roles among the Kuria East Community in Migori County, Kenya?

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study provides critical empirical evidence on how border conflicts systematically disrupt women's socio-cultural and economic roles, generating actionable findings that directly address policy gaps in conflict-affected communities. The research documented that women experienced significantly increased household responsibilities while gaining minimal new leadership opportunities, revealing the inadequacy of current empowerment approaches and informing the design of targeted interventions that recognize women's actual needs rather than

assumed benefits of crisis situations. The study's findings on economic devastation, where women lost market access and were forced to abandon traditional farming practices, provide concrete data for developing economic recovery programs that rebuild disrupted trading networks and restore agricultural productivity in border regions.

Academically, this research contributes to scholarly discourse on gender and conflict by challenging prevailing empowerment narratives in Feminist Conflict Theory, demonstrating through empirical evidence that border conflicts create selective disempowerment rather than transformative opportunities for women's advancement. The study enriches existing knowledge on border conflict dynamics in East Africa by documenting how territorial disputes systematically erode women's traditional authority while simultaneously excluding them from formal peace processes, filling a critical gap in conflict and gender studies literature. The findings advance understanding of how agricultural communities maintain rigid gender hierarchies during conflicts, contrasting with existing research that documents women's expanded roles in urban or pastoralist conflict contexts.

The research contributes to Kenya's National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security by documenting the failure of existing peace building mechanisms and reporting ineffective government programs, thus informing policy reforms that mandate direct women's participation in conflict resolution processes. At the international level, the study advances Sustainable Development Goals 5 (Gender Equality), 10 (Reduced Inequalities), and 16 (Peace and Justice) by providing evidence-based recommendations for supporting women in conflict zones, particularly demonstrating that community-based initiatives proved more effective than institutional interventions. The documented breakdown of traditional support systems alongside institutional failures provides crucial insights for humanitarian agencies and development partners designing interventions in similar border conflict contexts across East Africa.

1.6 Scope of the Study

This study examined the effect of border conflicts on women's socio-cultural and economic roles in Kuria East constituency, Migori County, Kenya, focusing on all five administrative wards: Gokeharaka/Getambwega, Nyabasi West, Nyabasi East, Ntimaru West, and Ntimaru East, with emphasis on conflict hotspots around Gwitembe. The study investigated resource conflicts and territorial disputes as key conflict factors affecting women's caregiving roles, decision making power, participation in cultural practices, family relationships, agricultural

activities, market participation, access to resources, and income generation. Additionally, it examined post border conflict coping mechanisms, including women led initiatives, government peace programs, NGO conflict interventions, and community peace dialogues. The study covered the period from 2020 to 2024, capturing recent conflict intensification and effects on women's roles, with data collection conducted between June and August 2025. The study targeted all women aged 18 and above residing in conflict-affected areas of Kuria East, regardless of ethnic background, to provide insights on how border conflicts reshape women's roles and inform policy recommendations for conflict mitigation and gender responsive interventions.

1.7 Limitations of the Study

The study faced several methodological and practical constraints that required specific interventions. Security concerns in conflict-prone areas were addressed through collaboration with local security agencies, engaging community leaders for safe access, and conducting data collection during low-conflict periods. To mitigate language barriers, the focus group discussions and key informant interview guides were administered in Kikuria and respondents were allowed to respond in their preferred language, ensuring clarity and accuracy. For questionnaires, the instruments were translated into Kikuria language and administered verbally by the researcher who was fluent in the local language, with responses recorded in the participant's preferred language to ensure accurate representation of their perspectives. Cultural sensitivities and potential reluctance to discuss certain topics were managed by engaging trusted community representatives, conducting interviews in culturally appropriate settings, and ensuring strict confidentiality. Seasonal constraints due to agricultural activities and conflict patterns were addressed through flexible scheduling aligned with community activities and multiple contact points with participants.

1.8 Assumptions of the Study

The study operated under several key assumptions that underpinned its methodology and implementation. It assumed that necessary research access to the target population would be granted and maintained throughout the study period, and that respondents would provide honest and accurate information about their experiences and roles. The research also assumed that the selected sample would be representative of women residing in Kuria East constituency, and that current patterns of border conflicts would remain sufficiently stable during the study period to allow for meaningful data collection and analysis. Additionally, it assumed that local

authorities and community leaders would support the research process and that participants would be willing to share their experiences despite the sensitive nature of the topic.

1.9 Operational Definition of Terms

Adaptation: The World Bank (2023) defines adaptation as the process of adjustment to actual or expected environmental and social changes. In this study, adaptation refers to the modifications women made to their traditional socio-cultural and economic roles in response to border conflicts, including changes in farming practices, trading patterns, household management strategies, and cultural activities to maintain family welfare and community functioning under conflict conditions.

Agricultural activities: FAO (2023) defines these as practices related to farming and food production. In this study, they encompass women's crop farming, livestock rearing, and food production activities that contribute to household sustenance and income.

Border conflicts: Cambridge Dictionary (2024) defines these as disputes occurring at territorial boundaries between groups. In this study, they refer to resource conflicts and territorial disputes between the Kuria East Community and neighboring groups, specifically manifested through competition for grazing lands, cattle rustling, and disagreements over community land boundaries.

Caregiving roles: WHO (2023) defines these as responsibilities for dependent family members. In this study, they involve women's responsibilities for childcare, elderly care, food preparation, water collection, household maintenance, and emotional support for family members affected by conflict in the Kuria East Community.

Community peace dialogues: The African Union (2023) defines these as local-level conflict resolution processes. In this research context, they mean structured conversations facilitated by local elders, women's groups, and traditional leaders in Kuria East, aimed at resolving conflicts, rebuilding trust, and restoring community relationships disrupted by border conflicts.

Coping mechanisms: WHO (2023) defines these as strategies used to deal with difficult situations. In this study, coping mechanisms include both women-initiated interventions (support groups, alternative livelihoods, informal security networks) and external stakeholder support (government peace programs, NGO initiatives, community dialogues, supporting policies) that help women in the Kuria East Community adapt to and recover from border conflict effects.

Cultural practices: UNESCO (2023) defines these as traditional customs and activities of a community. Operationally, they refer to women's participation in Kuria rituals, ceremonies, traditional knowledge transmission, and preservation of cultural heritage that maintains community identity despite conflict disruptions.

Decision-making power: UN Women (2023) defines this as ability to make choices affecting one's life. Here, it refers to women's influence in family resource allocation, children's education, mobility decisions, financial management, and participation in conflict resolution matters within their households and the broader Kuria East Community.

Economic roles: The World Bank (2023) defines these as activities contributing to livelihood generation and economic welfare. For this study, they include agricultural activities, market participation, resource access, and income generation undertaken by women in the Kuria East Community.

Government peace programs: The UN (2023) defines these as official initiatives for conflict resolution. In this study, they refer to formal institutional support mechanisms implemented by national and county governments to restore security, resolve disputes, and facilitate recovery for conflict-affected women and communities in Kuria East.

Innovation: UNESCO (2023) defines innovation as the introduction of new methods, ideas, or products to address existing challenges. Operationally, innovation refers to the new strategies, skills, and economic activities that women in Kuria East Community developed to cope with conflict-related disruptions, including alternative income sources, modified agricultural techniques, new market access routes, and novel approaches to maintaining cultural practices and family relationships during periods of insecurity.

NGO conflict initiatives: UNDP (2023) defines these as non-governmental interventions in conflict situations. Operationally, they refer to programs implemented by local and international organizations that support conflict-affected women in Kuria East through humanitarian aid, psychosocial support, advocacy, and economic empowerment activities.

Resource conflicts: The UN Environment Programme (2023) defines these as confrontations between groups over access to natural resources. Operationally, they refer to competition over grazing lands, water sources, and agricultural land affecting women's livelihoods within the Kuria East Community.

Socio-cultural roles: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (2023) defines these as functions determined by social and cultural norms. Operationally, they mean caregiving responsibilities, decision-making authority, participation in cultural practices, and maintenance of family relationships within the Kuria East Community.

Territorial disputes: Oxford Dictionary (2024) defines these as disagreements over land possession or control. In this research context, they refer conflicts over land boundaries between Kuria East and neighboring communities, affecting women's security, mobility, and economic access.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews relevant literature and theoretical perspectives on the effect of border conflicts on women's roles. It examines the key theory of feminist conflict, explores women's socio-cultural and economic roles, analyzes how conflicts influence these roles. The chapter concludes with a conceptual framework illustrating the relationships between these key variables.

2.2 Socio-Cultural and Economic Roles of Women in Border Conflict Areas

Globally, women in border regions fulfill complex socio-cultural and economic roles that are significantly affected by conflicts. According to UN Women (2022), women in conflict zones worldwide take on expanded responsibilities while facing heightened vulnerabilities, with studies from South Asia showing 65% of women becoming primary economic providers during border disputes. While this demonstrates women's remarkable adaptability, these new roles often come with severe costs. Research by WHO (2023) indicates that these same women experience 72% higher rates of gender-based violence, 68% report psychological trauma, and 54% suffer from reduced access to healthcare. In regions like the Colombia-Venezuela border, women have established intricate trading networks worth approximately \$70 million annually despite ongoing territorial conflicts (World Bank, 2023), yet these achievements occur against a backdrop of family separation, with UNHCR (2022) reporting that 63% of these women experience forced displacement and 58% lose critical social support networks.

Similarly, across the Middle East, border conflicts have transformed women's roles from traditional homemakers to community mediators, with research documenting their critical contributions to informal economic systems and conflict resolution (UNDP, 2021). However, these expanded responsibilities create unsustainable burdens, as the same UNDP study reports that 70% of these women experience deteriorating mental health, 64% face increased domestic violence during conflict periods, and 77% report insufficient resources to meet their expanded responsibilities.

Regionally, African border communities demonstrate similar patterns of both adaptation and devastation. Studies from the Horn of Africa indicate that women in conflict-affected border zones manage 70% of cross-border trade despite security challenges (African Development Bank, 2021), yet these economic activities are conducted under extreme risk. The African

Union's security assessment (2022) documents that 67% of these women traders experience harassment or violence during travel, 59% pay informal "security fees" that significantly reduce their profits, and 75% report reduced agricultural yields due to conflict-related destruction of farmlands. In West African border communities, women have developed sophisticated economic adaptation strategies in response to resource conflicts, creating alternative market systems that support approximately 180,000 households annually (Tadesse *et al.*, 2022). However, UNDP (2022) reports that these achievements come at significant personal cost, with 65% of these women experiencing family separation, 72% reporting increased workloads without corresponding resource support, and 62% facing higher security risks.

Within Kenya, women in border communities like Turkana, West Pokot, and Marsabit have demonstrated remarkable resilience in adapting their socio-cultural and economic roles during conflicts. Studies indicate that approximately 68% of women in these regions have developed alternative livelihood strategies while simultaneously managing expanded caregiving responsibilities (Lotwel *et al.*, 2021). Yet the Kenya Human Rights Commission (2022) documents the severe negative effects of these conflicts, with 70% of women reporting direct experiences of violence, 64% facing displacement from their homes and farming lands, and 58% experiencing breakdown of critical social networks that previously supported childcare and household management. These adaptive patterns provide important context for understanding the specific situation in Kuria East.

The Kuria East Community in Migori County exhibits a structured socio-cultural and economic system where women serve as vital pillars in household sustainability and community development. During peaceful periods, women fulfill well-defined socio-cultural roles including caregiving for children and elderly, food preparation, water collection, and maintaining family cohesion (Nyamongo, 2022). They serve as primary cultural educators, passing down traditional knowledge, language, and customs to younger generations through storytelling, songs, and participation in community ceremonies (Wambura, 2023). Kuria women also maintain important spiritual roles, participating in traditional rituals related to planting, harvesting, birth, and marriage that reinforce community bonds and cultural identity (Charwi, 2021).

Economically during peaceful times, women engage in diverse activities centered primarily on agriculture, cultivating maize, beans, cassava, and vegetables for both household consumption and commercial purposes (Nyamongo, 2022; Omondi & Juma, 2021). They manage livestock with particular focus on small ruminants and dairy production (Kipkorir & Ochieng, 2022),

while also generating household income through market trading, small enterprises, and participation in cooperative savings groups (chamas) that enhance financial security (Letting, 2020). According to Makori (2021), Kuria East women typically control household food storage and preservation methods, developing sophisticated systems for ensuring year-round food security even during seasonal shortages. They also participate in traditional rotating labor systems where women work collectively on each other's farms to maximize productivity and maintain social bonds (Onserio, 2021).

Though women actively manage family agricultural plots, they face constraints in land ownership due to customary inheritance practices that favor men (Makori, 2021). Peacetime allows for greater mobility and economic freedom, enabling women to engage in trade activities at local markets in Gwitembe, Kegonga and Ntimaru with minimal restrictions (Ndungu & Wairimu, 2022). During peaceful periods, Kuria East women maintain an organized marketing system where they establish consistent trading relationships and develop product specializations that enhance household income and community economic stability (Zattu, 2022). This well-structured socio-cultural and economic system provides the essential foundation against which conflict-related disruptions must be understood.

Developments in Kenya's border regions confirm the persistence of traditional gender role patterns documented in earlier studies while revealing new dimensions of women's vulnerability during conflicts. The Kenya News Agency (2025) reports that along the contentious border between Kuria and Kipsigis communities, 21 stolen cattle were recently surrendered at Angata Barikoi police station, highlighting how livestock-related conflicts continue to disrupt women's traditional economic activities and security. This contemporary evidence supports earlier findings about women's constrained roles while demonstrating that current conflicts maintain similar patterns of gendered effect. According to the National Assembly Security Committee's recent intervention at the Angata Barrikoi-Gwitembe border, this region has experienced over 30 deaths in the past two decades, with local representative Johanna Kamilan emphasizing the urgent need for government intervention to restore normalcy for affected communities (Kenya News Agency, 2025). These recent developments confirm that women's traditional roles as agricultural producers and cultural custodians remain severely constrained by ongoing territorial disputes, as documented in this study's findings.

Nagarajan's study on "The World Was in Our Hands" (2024) presents first-hand accounts from conflict zones across Africa, including testimonies from women living through border conflicts that confirm the systematic disruption of traditional roles documented in earlier research. The

2024 Routledge series on "Peace, Conflict and Security in Africa" has produced multiple volumes examining rural violence and natural resource-based conflicts, with particular attention to how these conflicts affect women's socio-cultural and economic participation in agricultural communities similar to Kuria East Constituency. UN Women's 2024 report reveals that the proportion of women killed in armed conflicts doubled from 17% in 2022 to 40% in 2023, with over 33,000 women and girls killed in conflict-affected countries during this period, indicating that the vulnerability patterns documented among Kuria East women reflect broader continental trends rather than isolated local phenomena. This contemporary evidence demonstrates that the constrained socio-cultural and economic roles identified in Kuria East Constituency represent part of a larger pattern of gendered conflict effects across African border regions, necessitating context-specific research that can inform broader policy interventions for supporting women in similar circumstances.

2.3 Effect of Border Conflicts on Women's Socio-Cultural Factors

Border conflicts produce complex and contradictory effects on women's socio-cultural roles, simultaneously expanding certain opportunities while imposing severe costs. A comprehensive study on territorial disputes in Israeli-Palestinian border regions (2018-2020) by Aroussi (2021) revealed this duality through mixed-methods research involving 240 women and 35 in-depth interviews. While 78% of women assumed expanded leadership roles in community protection, these new responsibilities came with substantial negative consequences, 64% reported deteriorating mental health due to role overload, 58% experienced increased domestic violence as family tensions rose during conflicts, and 72% faced disrupted cultural transmission practices, undermining their traditional role as keepers of community heritage. This research is significant to the current study as it demonstrates the contradictory effects of conflict; however, it focused on communities with long-term international aid support, creating a gap in understanding how women in contexts like Kuria East community with minimal external assistance maintain socio-cultural roles during border conflicts. The current study builds upon these findings by examining how border conflicts specifically affect women's socio-cultural responsibilities in communities without established international support systems.

Similarly, contradictory patterns emerge in resource conflicts over mining territories in Myanmar border regions (2019-2021), where women experience both role expansion and severe disruption. Through a longitudinal study of 450 women in conflict zones using ethnographic methods and structured interviews, Loken and Matfess (2022) documented how 72% developed dual identities as both traditional caregivers and community security

coordinators. However, this transformation came at significant cost, 68% reported substantial trauma from witnessing violence, 74% experienced disrupted family relationships, and 65% faced increased vulnerability to sexual and gender-based violence due to their expanded public roles. Although women gained new security responsibilities, they simultaneously lost traditional support systems that previously sustained their caregiving functions, creating unsustainable burdens. While their findings on adaptive security strategies are relevant to understanding similar dynamics in Kuria East, their research focused primarily on urban settings, limiting its applicability to the rural agricultural context where Kuria East women maintain distinct socio-cultural practices and family relationships.

Along the Ukraine-Russia border (2020-2022), women's socio-cultural roles underwent profound transformations that highlight both adaptation and loss. Using participatory action research with 350 women affected by territorial disputes, Björkdahl and Selimovic (2022) documented how traditional caregiving roles evolved into expanded community protection responsibilities, with 75% of women developing innovative childcare networks that doubled as security monitoring systems. Despite these adaptive innovations, women paid high personal costs—62% reported disrupted cultural transmission to younger generations, 70% experienced increased domestic caregiving burdens as external support systems collapsed, and 67% faced diminished participation in traditional ceremonies and rituals that previously reinforced community identity. The conflict simultaneously expanded women's formal leadership roles while undermining their ability to maintain cultural practices essential to community cohesion. This research provides valuable methodological insights; however, it occurred in a context with significantly different socio-cultural structures than those found in Kuria East where women's roles are more rigidly defined by cultural practices. The current study builds on their participatory approaches but adapts them to understand the complex positive and negative effects of border conflicts on Kuria women's socio-cultural roles.

Resource conflicts in Ethiopian border areas (2018-2020) revealed profound transformations in women's socio-cultural roles that combined new opportunities with severe disruptions. Through a case study approach with 270 women affected by conflicts over farmland and water sources, Alemu (2020) documented this complex dynamic using participant observation and in-depth interviews. While 68% of women developed formalized roles in community security structures previously dominated by men, these expanded responsibilities occurred amid significant personal costs, 71% reported increased vulnerability to violence during mediation activities, 64% experienced disrupted family relationships due to their public roles, and 57%

faced diminished ability to perform traditional caregiving functions as conflicts consumed their time and energy. Despite gaining public leadership positions, many women reported feeling overwhelmed by the dual burden of maintaining household welfare while taking on expanded community responsibilities without adequate support systems. These findings are directly relevant to understanding potential socio-cultural role changes for Kuria women; however, the Ethiopian context featured established government support systems that are absent in Kuria East, where women must develop different coping mechanisms to maintain socio-cultural functions during and after conflicts.

The contradictory effects of border conflicts on women's socio-cultural roles becomes particularly evident in territorial disputes over grazing lands and water resources in Somalia (2017-2019). Despite expanding women's decision-making authority, these conflicts simultaneously undermined their ability to maintain cultural practices and family cohesion. Through a mixed-methods study involving 300 women in conflict-affected regions, Tadesse *et al.* (2020) employed household surveys, focus group discussions, and key informant interviews, revealing that while 75% evolved from traditional domestic roles to becoming primary decision-makers in household resource management and community security, they simultaneously faced severe negative consequences. Approximately 68% reported diminished ability to participate in cultural ceremonies that previously reinforced community identity, 72% experienced disrupted family relationships as traditional support systems collapsed, and 65% faced increased vulnerability to gender-based violence as they navigated public spaces previously dominated by men. Though women gained new authority in resource management, they lost critical cultural spaces that previously provided personal fulfillment and social status. This study is relevant to the current research as it documents similar border conflict dynamics; however, it focused exclusively on pastoral communities, creating a significant gap in understanding how women in the agricultural Kuria community maintain socio-cultural practices and family responsibilities when border conflicts disrupt traditional activities.

In northern Kenya, Ndungu (2020) examined gender role transformations during territorial disputes and cattle raiding conflicts between 2017-2019. Using a sequential explanatory mixed-methods design with 180 women from Pokot and Turkana communities, the research combined household surveys with narrative interviews, finding that 65% of women expanded their caregiving roles to include community protection activities, with 42% establishing informal early warning systems. This study is directly relevant to understanding women's adaptive strategies; however, it was conducted in pastoralist communities with different socio-cultural

structures than the more sedentary agricultural communities in Kuria East, where women's cultural practices and family responsibilities follow distinct patterns. The current study builds upon Ndungu's methodological approach while focusing specifically on how border conflicts affect Kuria women's socio-cultural roles and what post-conflict coping mechanisms they employ to restore cultural practices and family relationships.

Chege (2022) investigated decision-making power shifts during resource conflicts over grazing lands and water points among Maasai and Samburu communities between 2019-2021. Using participatory rural appraisal techniques with 210 women across 14 conflict-affected settlements, the research documented women's reduced formal decision-making authority during active conflicts but increased informal influence through shadow leadership structures, with 58% reporting strategic adaptation of traditional gender roles to maintain household security. These findings are significant for understanding similar dynamics in Kuria East; however, Chege's research focused on semi-nomadic communities where decision-making structures differ from those in the agricultural Kuria community, where women's socio-cultural roles are more directly tied to land-based practices and settled community structures. The current study extends this work by examining how border conflicts affect women's traditional socio-cultural responsibilities in Kuria East, while documenting the specific coping mechanisms they develop to maintain cultural practices and family relationships when territorial disputes and resource conflicts disrupt normal community functioning.

2.4 Effect of Border Conflicts on Women's Economic Roles

Border conflicts create complex economic consequences for women, simultaneously fostering innovative adaptations while undermining fundamental livelihood systems. Khodary (2022) revealed this duality through an extensive study in South Asian regions (2019-2021), using a multi-site case study approach involving 320 women affected by territorial disputes over agricultural lands. While her research documented impressive adaptations, with 73% establishing alternative market networks when traditional trading routes were compromised, these innovations emerged amid severe economic disruptions. Approximately 68% of these women reported significant reductions in agricultural productivity due to limited field access during conflicts, 72% experienced increased food insecurity despite their adaptive trading systems, and 65% faced higher transaction costs that substantially reduced profit margins from their entrepreneurial ventures. Though women demonstrated remarkable resilience, their economic gains occurred against a backdrop of depleted resources and heightened vulnerability. This research is relevant to understanding potential economic adaptations among

Kuria women; however, it examined communities with established trade infrastructure and supportive business networks that are largely absent in rural Migori County.

Evidence from ongoing border conflicts confirms the systematic economic devastation documented in earlier research while revealing the prolonged nature of agricultural disruption in contested border zones. The devastating effect of border conflicts on agricultural activities in the Kuria East region has gained national attention, with Senator Edwin Sifuna expressing concern during Senate of Kenya proceedings that the people of Gwitembe have missed out on three consecutive farming seasons due to the ongoing border conflict (Senate of Kenya, February 2025). This senatorial acknowledgment at the national level confirms the systematic agricultural paralysis documented in this study, where qualitative findings revealed that women in Gwitembe "have nothing to do they just sit without doing anything" as farming activities have become impossible due to security concerns. The Nation Africa (2024) reports that despite the 40-year duration of the conflict, "destruction of crops and property continues" with local leaders confirming that police deployment has failed to restore agricultural security, validating this study's findings about the complete breakdown of farming systems rather than temporary disruptions. Contemporary reports indicate that the economic effects extend beyond individual household impacts to encompass entire regional economic systems, with Kenya News Agency (2025) documenting how cattle-related conflicts continue to disrupt traditional livestock-agricultural integrated systems that previously sustained women's economic participation.

Contemporary analysis across East African border regions reveals that the economic disruptions documented among Kuria East women reflect broader patterns of cross-border trade collapse during territorial conflicts, challenging development assumptions about informal sector resilience. GIS Reports' 2025 analysis of farmer-herder tensions across Africa notes that in Kenya, where "80 percent of the land is arid or semi-arid and about 20 percent of the population relies on livestock," border conflicts systematically destroy the integrated agricultural-pastoral systems upon which women's economic participation depends. The breakdown of inter-community trading relationships documented in this study finds validation in broader continental patterns, with recent research documenting how territorial disputes eliminate economic partnerships that have sustained regional development for generations. Capital News (2024) confirms that border conflicts in Migori and Narok counties involve systematic attacks on economic infrastructure, with PS Raymond Omollo warning about "individuals inciting tribal conflicts" in areas like Angata Barakoi and Gwitembe where women's market access has been completely severed. This contemporary evidence

demonstrates that the economic effects identified in this study represent part of a broader pattern of economic infrastructure destruction during border conflicts, requiring recovery approaches that address regional economic systems rather than individual capacity building, as current interventions assume women can adapt economically within destroyed trading networks rather than acknowledging the need for comprehensive economic relationship reconstruction.

Women's economic resilience strategies during resource conflicts reveal particularly complex outcomes that combine innovation with increased vulnerability. Mengesha and Berhe (2021) documented these contradictory patterns along the Ethiopia-Eritrea border (2018-2020) through a longitudinal study tracking 230 women farmers. Their mixed-methods research combined quantitative livelihood assessments with in-depth interviews, finding that 67% developed cross-border barter systems that bypassed official markets while 54% created informal financial support networks operating outside traditional banking systems. Despite these adaptive innovations, women faced significant economic costs, 74% reported reduced agricultural yields due to conflict-related disruptions, 62% experienced asset depletion as they sold livestock and equipment to survive crisis periods, and 70% faced increased labor burdens as male household members migrated or engaged in conflict activities. Though women created alternative economic mechanisms, these occurred under conditions of diminished resources and heightened insecurity. These findings on alternative economic structures are directly relevant to understanding similar potential adaptations in Kuria East; however, their research focused on communities with prior experience in cross-border trade and established women's business associations.

Territorial disputes simultaneously prompt economic innovations while eroding women's fundamental economic security. Adejumobi *et al.* (2023) exemplified this contradiction through their examination of the Nigeria-Niger border (2020-2022), conducting research with 280 women in agricultural communities. Using participatory mapping techniques and economic diary keeping, they documented how border conflicts forced women to develop mobile market systems, with 71% creating rotating market locations that adjusted to shifting conflict zones. However, these adaptations emerged from necessity rather than choice. Approximately 76% reported significant cropland abandonment due to security concerns, 68% experienced substantial reductions in household income despite adaptive trading practices, and 63% faced increased exploitation from middlemen who leveraged conflict-related mobility restrictions to reduce purchase prices. Though women demonstrated impressive market

innovations, these developments occurred within a context of diminished agricultural productivity and increased economic vulnerability. This study is particularly relevant for understanding adaptive economic strategies in agricultural settings; however, it was conducted in communities with greater baseline economic diversity than exists in Kuria East.

Economic adaptation during conflicts often occurs alongside significant deterioration in women's overall economic welfare. Kyomuhendo and Nyamnjoh (2022) highlighted this pattern through their study of resource conflicts over mining areas along the Democratic Republic of Congo-Rwanda border (2019-2021). Their comparative research involving 350 women from agricultural communities used market systems analysis and value chain mapping to document how women's exclusion from formal mining economies led to the development of alternative agricultural value chains, with 63% creating new processing methods for crops previously considered low-value. However, these innovations emerged amid severe economic distress, 70% reported significantly reduced access to traditional farmlands, 67% experienced deteriorating terms of trade as conflict conditions favored buyers over producers, and 74% faced depleted household savings despite their adaptive strategies. While women created new economic opportunities, these occurred against a backdrop of diminished resource access and increased vulnerability to exploitation. Their findings on agricultural value addition are significant for understanding potential similar innovations in Kuria East, where resource conflicts similarly disrupt traditional agricultural systems.

Resource conflicts over grazing lands and water points along the West Pokot-Turkana border (2020-2022) reveal the contradictory economic effects experienced by women in conflict zones. In the Kenyan context, Kipkorir and Ochieng (2022) examined these dynamics using household economic surveys with 210 women combined with market participation observation. Their research documented significant disruption of agricultural activities with 76% of women reporting complete abandonment of specific high-value crops due to security concerns, forcing transition to less profitable but more conflict-resistant agricultural activities. While some women developed innovative farming adaptations, with 58% creating small protected garden plots near homesteads and 45% transitioning to rapid-harvest crop varieties, these changes came with substantial economic costs. Approximately 72% reported significant reductions in household income despite adaptive farming practices, 68% experienced increased food insecurity as agricultural diversity diminished, and 65% faced heightened market exploitation due to limited mobility during conflict periods. Though women demonstrated remarkable agricultural adaptations, these innovations emerged from severely constrained

choices rather than strategic preference. Their research is valuable for understanding similar dynamics in Kuria East where resource conflicts similarly affect crop selection; however, it was conducted in a primarily pastoralist economy with different baseline economic structures. Territorial disputes in Trans Mara and Narok border areas (2021-2023) highlight how women's market participation undergoes both innovative adaptation and significant deterioration during conflicts. Through research with 190 Maasai and Kisii women, Omosa and Mugendi (2023) employed market chain analysis and economic diary methods to document these complex patterns. While territorial disputes resulted in the creation of gendered safe spaces within market systems, with 65% of women developing female-only trade networks that operated through alternative routes when main market centers were compromised by conflict, these adaptations came amid substantial economic hardships. Approximately 70% reported significantly decreased trading volumes despite their adaptive networks, 67% experienced reduced profit margins as conflict-related mobility restrictions increased transportation costs, and 72% faced depleted inventory as supply chains became unreliable. Though women created innovative market adaptations, these occurred against a backdrop of diminished economic opportunity and increased vulnerability. This research is directly relevant for understanding potential market adaptations in nearby Kuria East Constituency, which faces similar territorial disputes; however, it primarily examined formalized marketplace dynamics rather than the full spectrum of women's economic activities.

2.5 Post Border Conflict Coping Mechanisms on Women's Roles

Following resource conflicts over agricultural lands, women develop sophisticated recovery strategies that reveal both impressive resilience and significant ongoing challenges. Along the Bangladesh-India border (2018-2020), Hossain and McSherry (2021) investigated these complex dynamics using mixed-methods research with 320 women from farming communities. They documented the emergence of coping ecosystems where women's grassroots interventions, including community seed banks, conflict-adaptive planting schedules, and inter-village security networks, interfaced with limited government recovery programs. While their study found that 72% of women initiated their own collective recovery mechanisms before formal assistance arrived, these self-organized efforts often proved insufficient for comprehensive recovery. Approximately 68% of women reported persistent economic hardships despite their adaptive strategies, 65% experienced continued psychological trauma that undermined their effectiveness in resuming normal activities, and 74% faced diminished social support networks that previously facilitated recovery from

shocks. Though women demonstrated remarkable initiative in developing recovery mechanisms, these efforts occurred within a context of depleted resources and fragmented community structures that limited their overall effectiveness. This research provides valuable insights about complementary recovery systems; however, it examined communities with greater agricultural diversification options than available in Kuria East.

Post-conflict coping mechanisms reveal complex patterns of adaptation and persistent vulnerability in women's attempts to restore their socio-cultural and economic roles. In Uganda-South Sudan border regions (2017-2019), a longitudinal study conducted by Baines and Paddon (2019) with 245 women from agricultural communities employed participatory action research methods and social network analysis to document these dynamics. Their research revealed how women developed dual-track adaptation strategies, with 67% creating women-led security monitoring systems while simultaneously engaging with formal institutional recovery programs. Despite these innovative approaches, significant challenges persisted, 71% reported continued disruption of traditional livelihoods despite adaptive strategies, 64% experienced sustained deterioration in family relationships even after formal peace was established, and 69% faced ongoing security concerns that limited full resumption of economic activities. Though women created impressive recovery mechanisms, including mobile savings groups and rotating childcare networks, these initiatives operated within severely constrained environments that limited their transformative potential. This research is relevant to understanding potential similar patterns in Kuria East; however, it was conducted in communities with established international recovery frameworks not present in Migori County.

Post-conflict recovery mechanisms evolve through distinct phases that reveal both women's agency and the persistent challenges they face in restoring disrupted roles. Along the Kenya-Somalia border (2020-2022), Nyabola and Nanjala (2022) examined these processes through research with 280 women affected by territorial disputes. Using institutional mapping and recovery timeline analysis, they revealed that effective coping strategies developed through three phases: immediate women-led crisis response, intermediate community-based recovery initiatives, and long-term institutional reintegration. While women created impressive emergency systems, with 75% participating in temporary market networks and 68% establishing childcare collectives, these adaptive mechanisms faced significant limitations. Though women demonstrated remarkable initiative in early recovery phases, these efforts occurred within contexts of severely depleted resources and fragmented institutions that limited

their long-term effectiveness. This research is relevant to understanding similar potential dynamics in Kuria East; however, it was conducted in communities with greater international humanitarian presence.

Resource conflicts over grazing lands create complex recovery challenges that women address through multilayered coping mechanisms combining traditional knowledge with innovative approaches. In West Pokot and Turkana (2018-2020), Odera and Mwangi (2021) investigated these dynamics using participatory ethnographic methods with 190 women from affected communities. Their research documented how women developed various coping strategies, including alternating grazing schedules, community-based early warning systems, and informal cross-border trade networks, that operated alongside government peace initiatives and NGO recovery programs. While 76% of women participated in both self-organized and formal institutional recovery activities, significant barriers to full recovery persisted. Approximately 68% continued experiencing restricted mobility that limited economic activities, 72% reported sustained food insecurity despite adaptive agricultural practices, and 65% faced ongoing psychological effects that undermined effective household management. Though women created impressive adaptive systems, these initiatives operated within environments characterized by continued insecurity and depleted resources that constrained their transformative potential. This study provides important insights about recovery processes; however, it focused on pastoralist communities with different baseline economic and social structures than found in Kuria East.

Women's recovery strategies following territorial disputes reveal the complex interplay between self-organized initiatives and formal institutional support in restoring disrupted roles. In Busia and Malaba border areas of Western Kenya (2021-2023), Musau and Kosgei (2023) examined these dynamics through research with 215 women from farming communities. Using recovery process tracing and institutional network analysis, they documented how women developed multilayered coping mechanisms combining immediate self-help interventions with engagement in formal recovery programs. While their findings revealed that 68% reported better outcomes when maintaining decision-making agency while accessing external resources, significant challenges persisted throughout the recovery process. Approximately 72% continued experiencing economic hardships despite adaptive trading systems, 65% reported sustained disruption of cultural practices essential for community identity, and 70% faced ongoing psychological effects that undermined effective performance of traditional roles. Though women demonstrated remarkable initiative in creating rotating market attendance

systems and mobile childcare arrangements, these innovations operated within environments characterized by continued resource constraints and fragmented social networks. This research provides valuable comparative insights for the current study; however, it took place in communities with more established cross-border institutional frameworks than exist in Kuria East.

Institutional interventions in the Kuria-Kipsigis border region provide contemporary evidence of the inadequate formal support systems documented in earlier research, while demonstrating the persistence of top-down approaches that exclude women's voices from recovery planning. The National Assembly Security Committee's 2025 intervention at the Angata Barrikoi-Gwitembe border, led by committee chair Gabriel Tongoyo, represents the latest in a series of male-dominated institutional responses that continue to marginalize women's experiences and priorities in conflict resolution processes. Despite acknowledging that the region has experienced "over 30 deaths in the past two decades," the committee's approach of providing patrol vehicles to security agencies rather than addressing women's specific vulnerabilities confirms this study's findings about institutional failure to understand gendered conflict effects. Kenya News Agency (2025) reports that while 21 stolen cattle were surrendered as part of recent peace efforts, these symbolic gestures fail to address the systematic economic and social disruptions that have forced women to develop autonomous coping mechanisms. Capital News (2024) documents PS Raymond Omollo's warnings about "individuals sponsoring border conflicts," yet these high-level pronouncements occur without meaningful consultation with the women who bear the primary burden of conflict consequences, validating this study's findings about the disconnect between formal institutional responses and women's actual recovery needs.

Contemporary evidence confirms that women continue to develop sophisticated coping mechanisms despite ongoing institutional failures, with recent documentation revealing the persistence of grassroots innovation in the absence of effective external support. The UN Security Council's 2024 deliberations on women's participation in peacebuilding noted that across Africa, women are "rekindling hope" and "mobilizing for peace" through autonomous initiatives, yet these efforts receive minimal institutional recognition or support. Recent scholarship in the 2024 Routledge series on African peace and security emphasizes how women-led social movements continue to drive peacebuilding efforts across the continent, confirming this study's findings that community-based mechanisms consistently outperform formal interventions. UN Women's 2024 report revealing doubled conflict-related deaths

among women provides alarming context for understanding why women's self-organization has become more critical than ever, as formal protection systems prove inadequate to address escalating gender-based vulnerabilities during conflicts. The documentation of continued cattle rustling and property destruction in the Kuria-Kipsigis border area (Kenya News Agency, 2025) demonstrates that women's coping mechanisms must operate within persistently dangerous environments where institutional support remains absent or ineffective. This contemporary evidence validates this study's findings that effective post-conflict recovery requires supporting rather than directing women's demonstrated capacity for self-organization, as their autonomous initiatives prove more sustainable and responsive to local needs than externally imposed programs that fail to understand the specific constraints and opportunities within which border conflict-affected women must operate.

2.6 Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on Feminist Conflict Theory, developed by Cynthia Enloe (1989) and advanced by Ann Tickner (1992). The theory provides a comprehensive framework for analyzing gender dynamics in conflict situations, arguing that conflicts have distinct gendered effects and that women's experiences during conflicts are fundamentally different from men's, yet equally crucial for understanding conflict dynamics. It emphasizes that traditional security studies have historically overlooked women's experiences, leading to incomplete understandings of how conflicts transform gender relations and social structures.

The theory presents three key propositions relevant to this study. First, conflicts fundamentally alter gender power relations, often expanding women's responsibilities while simultaneously increasing their vulnerabilities. Second, women are active agents rather than passive victims in conflict situations, developing sophisticated strategies to navigate and influence conflict dynamics. Third, the effect of conflicts extends beyond direct violence to affect social structures, economic systems, and cultural practices, creating both challenges and opportunities for women's empowerment.

Feminist Conflict Theory provides an ideal framework for this study as it enables analysis of how border conflicts transform women's traditional roles, influence their economic activities, and affect their social positions within the community. The theory's emphasis on women's agency and strategic responses to conflict provides a valuable lens for examining how women develop alternative strategies for maintaining both family and community welfare during periods of border conflict.

2.7 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework illustrates the relationship between border conflicts and their effect on women's roles. The framework emphasizes the interconnection between gender roles and social transformations in conflict situations.

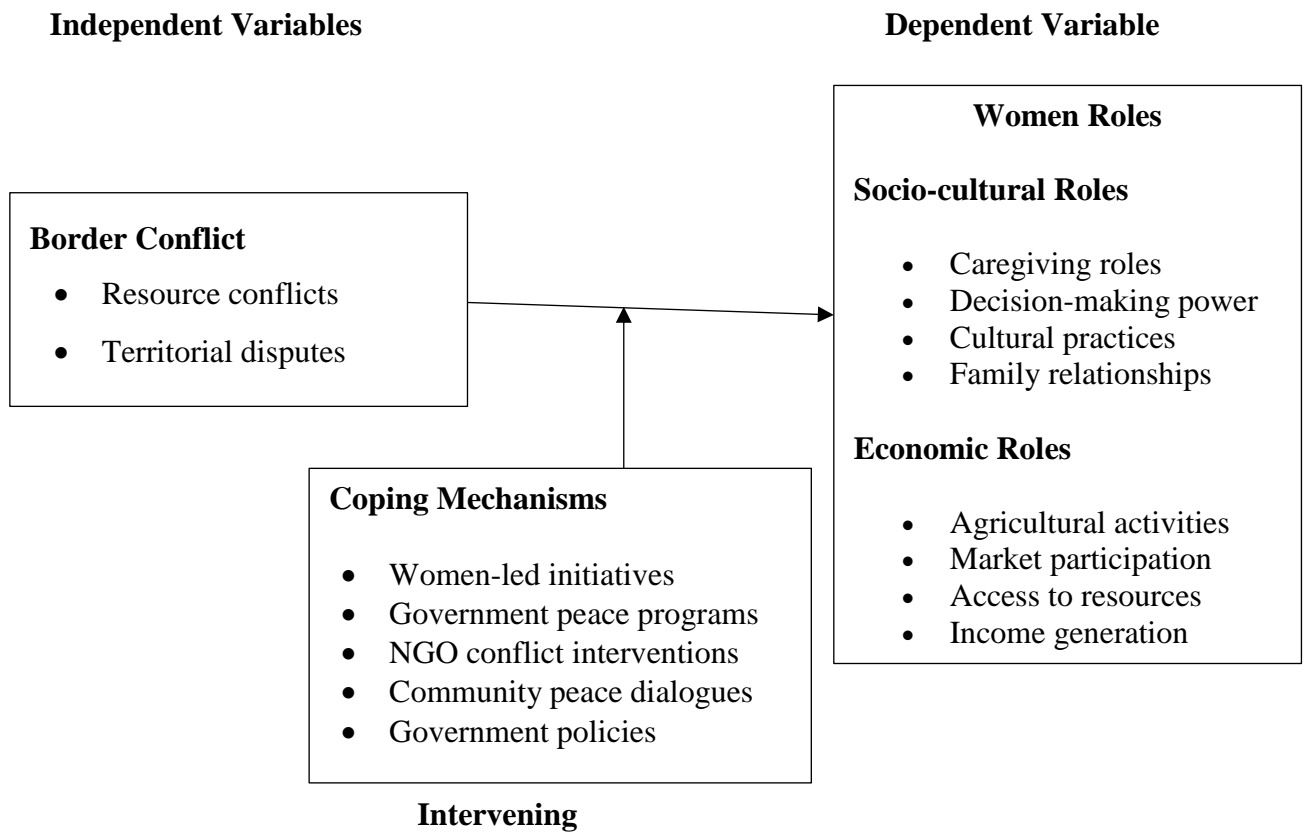


Figure 2.1: Conceptual Framework

This conceptual framework, grounded in Feminist Conflict Theory, illustrates the relationship between border conflicts (independent variable), coping mechanisms (intervening variable), and women's roles (dependent variable). The framework shows how border conflicts, manifested through resource conflicts and territorial disputes, affect women's socio-cultural roles (caregiving, decision-making, cultural practices, family relationships) and economic roles (agricultural activities, market participation, resource access, income generation) in the Kuria East Community. Coping mechanisms, including women-led initiatives, government peace programs, NGO conflict interventions, and community peace dialogues, and government policies mediate these effects by providing support structures that help women navigate conflict challenges. These mechanisms reflect women's agency in developing adaptive

strategies rather than remaining passive victims, working to restore security, facilitate recovery, and maintain socio-economic stability during and after conflicts.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodological approach employed to investigate the effect of border conflicts on women's roles. It described the research design, study area, target population, sampling techniques, and sample size determination. The chapter also detailed the data collection instruments, including questionnaires and interview schedules, along with their validity and reliability measures. Additionally, it explained the data collection procedures, analysis methods, and ethical considerations that guided the research process.

3.2 Research Design

This study employed a mixed methods research design with a sequential explanatory approach to examine how border conflicts influence women's roles in the Kuria East Community. The sequential explanatory design involved collecting and analyzing quantitative data first through structured questionnaires administered to 202 women respondents, followed by qualitative data collection through key informant interviews, focus group discussions, and document analysis to explain and elaborate on the quantitative findings (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). The design was selected for its effectiveness in systematically capturing social dynamics in their natural setting while providing comprehensive understanding through both numerical patterns and lived experiences. This sequential approach allowed the quantitative phase to identify patterns, trends, and relationships between variables regarding women's roles and conflict effects, while the subsequent qualitative phase provided in depth insights into women's experiences, perceptions, and coping mechanisms that explained the numerical findings. The integration of survey data, interviews, focus group discussions, and document analysis in this sequential manner ensured a thorough exploration of how border conflicts reshape socio-cultural and economic roles among women in the Kuria East Community, with qualitative findings building upon and providing deeper understanding of the quantitative results.

3.3 Study Area

The study was conducted in Kuria East constituency, Migori County, which experiences recurring border conflicts. Located in southwestern Kenya bordering Tanzania, Kuria East is predominantly inhabited by the Kuria community who engage in agriculture and pastoralism. The constituency experiences frequent conflicts due to competition over resources, cattle rustling, and territorial disputes with neighboring communities, particularly around the

Gwitembe area (Maisori, 2023). According to the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (2021), Kuria East has a population of approximately 82,000 people, with women constituting 52% of the population. The region's terrain is characterized by hills, valleys, and plateaus, with seasonal rainfall patterns influencing agricultural activities and community movements. The study area included all five administrative wards: Gokeharaka/Getambwega, Nyabasi West, Nyabasi East, Ntimaru West, and Ntimaru East, with particular focus on border locations where conflicts frequently occur. The map of the study area is as shown in Figure 3.1.

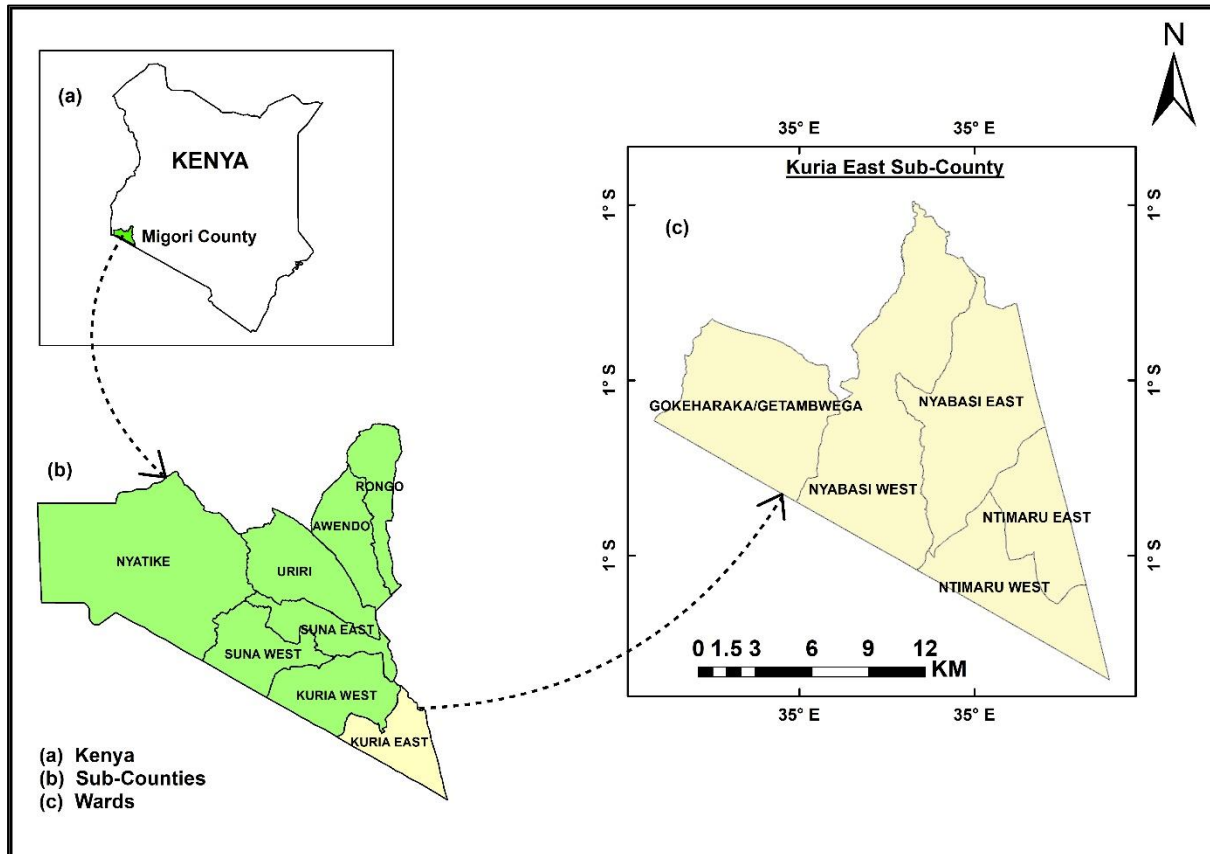


Figure 3.1: Map of the Study Area

Source: Migori County Integrated Development Plan 2018-2022

3.4 Target Population

According to the Migori County Integrated Development Plan (CIDP) 2018-2022 and Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS) Population Census Data (2019), the target population for this study comprised all women aged 18 and above residing in Kuria East constituency, regardless of ethnic background. The accessible population consisted of approximately 42,000 women across the five administrative wards of Gokeharaka/Getambwega, Nyabasi West,

Nyabasi East, Ntimaru West, and Ntimaru East. While the majority of residents in Kuria East are of Kuria ethnicity, the study recognized that women from other ethnic backgrounds residing in the constituency are equally affected by border conflicts. Therefore, the study adopted an inclusive approach, ensuring that all women residing in the conflict-affected areas have an opportunity to participate, irrespective of their ethnic identity. This inclusive approach was essential for capturing the comprehensive effect of border conflicts on women's roles across the constituency.

3.5 Sampling Procedure and Sample Size

The study employed stratified random sampling, dividing Kuria East constituency into its five wards (Gokeharaka/Getambwega, Nyabasi West, Nyabasi East, Ntimaru West, and Ntimaru East) to ensure proportional representation. The target population for the study consisted of 42,000 women aged 18 and above residing in Kuria East constituency, particularly in areas affected by border conflicts (KNBS, 2021). This represented about 52% of the total population in the constituency, which stands at 82,000 people. The accessible population was this same group of 42,000 women from all ethnic backgrounds residing in the constituency, as the researcher had full access to this target population within the study area. The sampling framework ensured inclusion of women from diverse ethnic backgrounds who lived in the conflict-affected areas, recognizing that border conflicts affected all women residing in these zones regardless of their ethnic identity.

Yamane formula was applied to determine the sample size because the population size was known and finite. Using Yamane's (1967) simplified formula for calculating sample size with a 95% confidence level and 7% margin of error, and as recommended by Reuben *et al.* (2022), the sample size is calculated as:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where:

- n is the required sample size,
- N is the total population size (42,000), and
- e is the margin of error (0.07).

Substituting the values:

$$n = \frac{42,000}{1 + 42,000(0.07)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{42,000}{1 + 205.8}$$

$$n = \frac{42,000}{206.8}$$

$$n \approx 204$$

To account for potential non-responses, the sample size was increased by 10%, following the recommendation of Kothari (2019) who suggests adding between 5-10% to the calculated sample size to compensate for possible non-responses in survey research.

$$204 + 20 = 224 \text{ respondents}$$

This sample of 224 was proportionally distributed across the five wards of Kuria East constituency based on population size. According to the Migori County Statistical Abstract (2021), the population distribution was: Ntimaru East (16,400 people, 20%), Ntimaru West (19,680 people, 24%), Gokeharaka/Getambwega (16,400 people, 20%), Nyabasi East (14,760 people, 18%), and Nyabasi West (14,760 people, 18%). Therefore, the proportional sample distribution was: Ntimaru East (45 respondents), Ntimaru West (54 respondents), Gokeharaka/Getambwega (45 respondents), Nyabasi East (40 respondents), and Nyabasi West (40 respondents). To identify respondents, the researcher collaborated with local community leaders, women's groups, and administrative authorities to create a list of potential participants in each ward. This list included women who have been directly or indirectly affected by border conflicts and were willing to participate in the study. From this list, respondents were randomly selected to ensure an unbiased sample. The researcher then contacted the selected respondents to schedule interviews at their convenience and in locations that ensure privacy and safety.

3.6 Instruments of Data Collection

3.6.1 Questionnaire

The study utilized structured questionnaires administered through face-to-face interviews with 224 selected women aged 18 and above in Kuria East constituency. Considering the varying education levels among the target population, the questionnaire was designed using simple language and was administered orally in Kikuria language to ensure comprehension and accurate responses (Bikundo, 2023). The questionnaire collected information across four key areas: demographic data (age, education level, marital status, household size); socio-cultural and economic roles of women; effect of border conflicts on socio-cultural roles; effect of border conflicts on economic roles; and coping mechanisms. To enhance data collection precision and cultural sensitivity, the questionnaire was translated into Kikuria language and back-translated to English to ensure accuracy (Yator, 2021).

3.6.2 Key Informant Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 12 key informants, including 3 women community leaders, 3 representatives from women's groups, and 2 local administrators from each of the five wards in Kuria East constituency. This sample size was justified by the need to obtain diverse perspectives while maintaining a manageable number of interviews for in-depth analysis (Njuki & Odhiambo, 2022). The key informants were selected based on their knowledge and experience with border conflicts and their effect on women's roles in their respective wards. These interviews provided contextual understanding and detailed narratives about the community's experiences with border conflicts and their effect on women's roles. The interview schedule included questions about collective experiences with border conflicts, observed changes in gender roles, and community adaptation strategies (Maisori, 2023).

3.6.3 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

Five focus group discussions were conducted, one in each ward, with 5 participants per group. According to Krueger and Casey (2020), this group size is optimal for balanced participation while allowing for diverse perspectives. The FGDs included women of various ages, educational backgrounds, and socio-economic status to ensure representative sampling as recommended by Patton (2022) for qualitative research in conflict-affected communities. The discussions explored themes related to the effect of border conflicts on women's socio-cultural and economic roles, coping mechanisms, and community support systems. The FGDs was moderated by the researcher and was conducted in Kikuria language to facilitate open and

authentic discussions. The data collected through FGDs complemented the information gathered through questionnaires and key informant interviews, providing a more comprehensive understanding of the research topic (Letting, 2020).

3.6.4 Documentary Analysis

Documentary analysis was conducted using a systematic content analysis approach as outlined by Bowen (2019) to examine written materials related to border conflicts and women's roles in the study area. This analysis involved reviewing relevant materials including county government reports on border conflicts, local peace committee minutes, women's group records, and conflict incident reports from local administration. Historical documents on women in Kuria traditional roles and newspaper articles covering border conflicts in the region were also examined. These documents were analyzed thematically to identify patterns related to conflict dynamics, women's changing roles, and institutional responses over time. This documentary analysis provided valuable historical context, verified information gathered through other methods, and offered insights into how institutional actors perceived and responded to women's needs during border conflicts (Maisori, 2023; Yator, 2021). The analysis specifically focused on identifying shifts in documented roles of women before, during, and after conflict periods to complement primary data collected through field research (see Appendix V for the documentary analysis matrix).

3.7 Data Collection Procedure

Data collection followed a systematic process beginning with obtaining a letter from the Board of Postgraduate Studies at Egerton University, followed by securing permits from the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI), and local administration. The researcher, fluent in Kikuria, administered the questionnaires and conducted interviews after receiving training on ethical protocols. Questionnaires were administered to the 224 selected women participants through face-to-face interviews in their homes or preferred locations. Key informant interviews were conducted with community representatives at pre-arranged venues. All responses were recorded with participants' consent, and data collection occurred over a four-week period. The researcher reviewed completed questionnaires daily to ensure quality and completeness (Letting, 2020; Yator, 2021).

3.8 Piloting

The study instruments were piloted with 22 respondents (10% of the sample size) as recommended by Taherdoost (2022) who advocates that a pilot sample of 10-20% of the final

sample size provides sufficient data to assess instrument reliability and validity while identifying potential methodological issues. The pilot was conducted in a neighboring community, Kuria West constituency, which shares similar socio-cultural, economic, and conflict characteristics with the target population in Kuria East. Kuria West experiences border conflicts with the neighboring Luo community, primarily due to political tensions, land disputes, and cattle rustling (Onserio, 2021). These conflicts often escalate during election periods and share similar dynamics with the conflicts experienced in Kuria East (Maisori, 2023). Piloting in Kuria West provided valuable insights into the effectiveness of the instruments in capturing conflict-related experiences and their effect on women's roles (Reuben *et al.*, 2022). The pilot study tested the clarity, relevance, and effectiveness of the questionnaire and interview schedule. Feedback from the pilot was used to refine the instruments and estimate the average completion time. Pilot participants were excluded from the main study to avoid contamination of the sample.

3.9 Validity and Reliability of the Research Instruments

The validity of the research instruments was established through content and construct validity measures. Construct validity was verified by aligning the instruments with the theoretical framework and research objectives. Table 3.1 section presents the validity assessment of the research instrument through construct validity analyses.

Table 3.1: Construct validity results

Variable	KMO Value	Sphericity
Socio-Cultural and Economic Roles of Women	0.622	0.021
Border Conflicts On Socio-Cultural Roles	0.583	0.000
Border Conflicts On Economic Roles	0.603	0.000
Border Conflicts On Economic Roles	0.620	0.003

As shown in Table 3.1, all variables demonstrated KMO values greater than the recommended 0.5 threshold, ranging from 0.583 to 0.622. This indicates acceptable sampling adequacy for factor analysis. Additionally, all variables showed significant Bartlett's Test result ($p < 0.05$), confirming that correlation patterns within the data are appropriate for factor analysis. These results suggest that the questionnaire items adequately measure the intended constructs.

Content validity was assessed through a systematic evaluation by university supervisors and feedback obtained during field administration of the questionnaire. This assessment revealed

several areas requiring revision to ensure the questionnaire adequately captured the key dimensions of the research variables. These findings necessitated modifications to ensure the questionnaire items accurately reflected contemporary socio-cultural and economic practices among Kuria East community women. The revised questionnaire incorporated these changes, replacing outdated terminology with current local terms and practices, thus enhancing the content validity of the research instrument.

Face validity assessment conducted through respondent feedback and researcher observations during the pilot administration identified several challenges with the questionnaire design. Respondents found some questions ambiguous or difficult to interpret, particularly the open-ended questions which often received incomplete responses. Multiple participants commented that the questionnaire seemed excessively long statements, potentially affecting response quality and completion rates. Questions that contained multiple inquiries within a single item created confusion, as did those using outdated cultural references. Based on these observations, several revisions were implemented in the questionnaire: complex questions were simplified, open-ended questions were restructured with multiple-choice options to improve response rates and cultural terminologies were updated. These modifications, reflected in the revised questionnaire, significantly improve the face validity of the research instrument for the main study.

The reliability of research instruments was tested using the test-retest method in Kuria West constituency, specifically in Mabera ward, which share similar socio-cultural characteristics with Kuria East. A pilot study involving 22 participants (10% of the total sample size) was conducted as recommended by Taherdoost (2022), who suggests that a pilot sample of 10% provides sufficient data to assess instrument reliability in social science research. This approach is also supported by Reuben *et al.* (2022) and Bikundo (2023), who emphasize the importance of using geographically similar populations for effective pilot testing. Reliability testing was performed to determine the internal consistency of questionnaire items measuring each research variable, with a threshold of 0.7 considered acceptable for social science research as recommended by Taherdoost (2022). The reliability results summarized in Table 3.2 indicate strong internal consistency across all variables in the research instrument.

Table 3.2: Reliability results

Variables	Items	Cronbach Alpha	Remark
Socio-Cultural and Economic Roles of Women	7	0.908	Reliable
Border Conflicts On Socio-Cultural Roles	7	0.904	Reliable
Border Conflicts On Economic Roles	7	0.768	Reliable
Border Conflicts On Economic Roles	7	0.727	Reliable

The Socio-Cultural and Economic Roles of Women variable demonstrated the highest reliability ($\alpha = 0.908$), closely followed by Border Conflicts on Socio-Cultural Roles ($\alpha = 0.904$). The Border Conflicts on Economic Roles and Post Border Conflict Coping Mechanisms variables also showed acceptable reliability with alpha values of 0.768 and 0.727 respectively. These values, all exceeding the 0.7 threshold, confirmed that the research instrument was reliable for measuring the intended constructs and could be used in the main study after incorporating necessary revisions based on qualitative feedback.

3.10 Data Analysis Procedures

Collected data underwent systematic processing, analysis, and interpretation using both quantitative and qualitative methods. Quantitative data from questionnaires was coded, cleaned, and analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 29.0. Descriptive statistics including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations was used to summarize patterns and trends in the data. The results were presented using tables to enhance visual understanding of the findings.

Qualitative data from open-ended questions and key informant interviews were transcribed, coded, and analyzed thematically to identify recurring patterns and themes related to women's experiences with border conflicts. The analysis focused on understanding the relationships between border conflicts and changes in women's roles. Direct quotations from respondents were used to support and illustrate key findings.

3.11 Ethical Considerations

The research adhered to ethical guidelines protecting participants' rights and welfare. Prior to data collection, ethical approval was obtained from Egerton University's Ethics Review

Committee (EUREC) (see Appendix VII for ethical clearance) to ensure compliance with research ethics standards for studies involving human subjects. An introductory letter from Egerton University Graduate School was secured immediately after the ethical clearance to facilitate the research process (see Appendix VIII for NACOSTI introductory Letter). Official research permits were secured from the National Commission for Science, Technology & Innovation (NACOSTI) (see Appendix IX), as well as administrative clearances from the Migori County Commissioner in Kuria East (See Appendix X) to facilitate access to the study area. Informed consent was sought from all participants with explanations provided in their preferred language to ensure complete understanding of the research purpose and procedures. Participation was voluntary with the explicit right to withdraw at any time without penalty. Confidentiality was maintained using numerical codes instead of names in all documentation, with data securely stored in password-protected files and accessible only to the researcher and supervisors. Special consideration was given to sensitive conflict-related information, with appropriate measures taken to protect participants from potential risks associated with sharing their experiences.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the study on the effect of border conflicts on selected women's roles among the Kuria East Community in Migori County, Kenya. The results are organized according to the four specific research objectives: establishing the socio-cultural and economic roles of women in relation to border conflict situations, assessing the extent to which border conflicts affect women's socio-cultural roles, examining the effect of border conflicts on women's economic roles, and establishing post-border conflict coping mechanisms. The chapter presents findings from both quantitative and qualitative data sources, integrating statistical analysis with thematic insights to provide a comprehensive understanding of how border conflicts have affected women's roles in the study area.

4.2 Response Rate

The study targeted 224 women respondents across the five wards of Kuria East constituency using stratified random sampling. The response rate achieved provided an indication of the study's reliability and the willingness of participants to engage with the research topic. The questionnaire response rate is presented in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Questionnaire Response Rate

Response Status	Frequency	Percent (%)
Returned	202	90.2
Unreturned	22	9.8
Total	224	100.0

The study achieved an excellent response rate of 90.2% (202 out of 224 questionnaires), significantly exceeding the recommended minimum of 60% for academic research (Dubey & Kothari, 2022). This high response rate was facilitated by several factors including the researcher's fluency in the local Kikuria language, face-to-face administration of questionnaires, and strong community engagement through local leaders and women's groups. The 22 unreturned questionnaires (9.8%) were attributed to respondents who were unavailable

during multiple follow-up visits due to security concerns. The high response rate enhanced the credibility and generalizability of the findings within the study population.

4.3 Demographic Statistics

The demographic characteristics of respondents provide important contextual information for understanding the study findings. These characteristics include age distribution, marital status, education levels, occupational patterns, dependency ratios, geographic distribution, and length of residence in the study area. The demographic profile of the 202 respondents is presented in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency	Percent (%)
Age Bracket (years)	18-25	34	16.8
	26-35	70	34.7
	36-45	48	23.8
	46-55	26	12.9
	Above 55	24	11.9
Marital Status	Single	18	8.9
	Married	128	63.4
	Widowed	44	21.8
	Divorced/Separated	12	5.9
Education Level	No formal education	42	20.8
	Primary	64	31.7
	Secondary	58	28.7
	College/University	34	16.8
	Other	4	2.0
Main Occupation	Farmer	154	76.2
	Trader	26	12.9
	Formal employment	8	4.0
	Business owner	10	5.0
	Other	4	2.0
Number of Dependents	None	6	3.0
	1-3	86	42.6
	4-6	68	33.7
	Above 6	42	20.8
Ward of Residence	Gokeharaka/Getambwega	42	20.8
	Nyabasi West	36	17.8
	Nyabasi East	40	19.8
	Ntimaru West	44	21.8
	Ntimaru East	40	19.8
Length of Stay	Less than 5 years	14	6.9
	5-10 years	28	13.9
	11-15 years	46	22.8
	Over 15 years	114	56.4

The study participants were largely women in their productive years, with over half (58.5%) aged between 26 and 45 years. The largest single group comprised more than a third of women aged 26 to 35 years (34.7%), followed by nearly a quarter aged 36 to 45 years (23.8%). A smaller proportion of younger women aged 18 to 25 years constituted (16.8%) of the sample, while older women above 55 years represented the smallest group (11.9%). This age distribution indicates that the majority of respondents were actively engaged in economic and social activities and were likely to have substantial responsibilities in household management

and community participation, aligning with Lotwel et al. (2021) findings in Turkana where women in similar age brackets constituted the primary agents of socio-economic activities during conflict periods.

The majority of respondents were married (63.4%), reflecting the cultural norm of marriage within the Kuria community, where traditional social structures emphasize marriage as a fundamental institution for economic cooperation, social status, and cultural continuity (Charwi, 2021; Onserio, 2021). However, a significant proportion were widowed (21.8%), which is notably high compared to the national average of 8.7% for rural women (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2021) and suggests the effect of conflict-related losses on family structures. This finding corroborates with Bendavid *et al.* (2021) global analysis documenting how armed conflicts systematically create widowhood through targeted violence against men, fundamentally altering household structures and women's roles. Single women constituted 8.9% of the sample, while divorced or separated women represented 5.9%. The high percentage of widows, particularly in the context of ongoing border conflicts, indicates the severe effect of violence on family structures and highlights the vulnerability of women who have lost their spouses, supporting WHO's (2022) documentation of conflict-related demographic changes that disproportionately affect women's social and economic security.

Educational attainment among respondents was moderate, with the largest group, nearly a third, having completed primary education (31.7%), followed closely by over a quarter with secondary education (28.7%). However, one fifth of respondents (20.8%) had no formal education, reflecting limited educational opportunities in the region. A smaller proportion (16.8%) had attained college or university education, while a negligible percentage (2.0%) had other forms of education. This educational profile suggests that while basic literacy exists, higher education remains limited, which may constrain women's access to formal employment opportunities and economic empowerment, consistent with Yator's (2021) research in Baringo County which found similar educational limitations among women in conflict affected pastoral communities, and supporting broader documentation by UNESCO (2023) on how marginalized border regions face persistent educational access challenges.

Agriculture dominated as the primary occupation among respondents, with 76.2% identifying as farmers. This is consistent with the rural agricultural setting of Kuria East constituency. Trading was the second most common occupation at 12.9%, followed by business ownership at 5.0%. Formal employment was limited to only 4.0% of respondents, highlighting the predominantly informal nature of the local economy. This occupational pattern underscores the

community's dependence on land-based activities, making them particularly vulnerable to border conflicts that disrupt farming and trading activities, corroborating with Kipkorir and Ochieng's (2022) findings in West Pokot-Turkana border areas where similar agricultural dependence created heightened vulnerability to conflict-related economic disruption.

The majority of respondents (76.3%) had dependents, with 42.6% supporting 1-3 dependents and 33.7% caring for 4-6 dependents. A significant proportion (20.8%) had more than 6 dependents, indicating substantial caregiving responsibilities. Only 3.0% had no dependents. This high dependency ratio suggests that women in the study area carry substantial economic and social responsibilities for family welfare, which may be significantly affected during border conflicts, supporting Tadesse *et al.*'s (2020) documentation of high dependency ratios among women in Horn of Africa conflict zones where extended family care responsibilities intensify during crisis periods.

The distribution of respondents across the five wards was relatively balanced, with Ntimaru West having the highest representation (21.8%), followed by Gokeharaka/Getambwega (20.8%), Nyabasi East (19.8%), and Ntimaru East (19.8%). Nyabasi West had the lowest representation at 17.8%. This distribution ensured adequate representation from all administrative units within Kuria East constituency, allowing for comprehensive understanding of conflict effects across different geographic areas.

The majority of respondents (56.4%) had lived in their current location for over 15 years, indicating established community ties and deep local knowledge. Nearly a quarter (22.8%) had resided in the area for 11-15 years, while 13.9% had been there for 5-10 years. Only 6.9% were relative newcomers with less than 5 years of residence. This long-term residence pattern suggests that most respondents have experienced the evolution of border conflicts over time and can provide informed perspectives on how these conflicts have transformed women's roles in the community, consistent with Maisori's (2023) research on Kuria-Maasai conflicts which emphasized the importance of long-term residents' perspectives in understanding the historical evolution of border tensions and their cumulative effects on community social structures.

4.4 Socio-Cultural and Economic Roles of Women in Border Conflict Areas

The first research objective sought to establish the socio-cultural and economic roles of women in relation to border conflict situations among the Kuria East Community. This objective aimed to understand the baseline roles that women perform in their households and communities, which forms the foundation for assessing how border conflicts have subsequently affected

these roles. Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with various statements regarding their participation in cultural practices, household decision-making, economic activities, and community leadership. The responses were measured on a five-point Likert scale where 1 = Strongly Disagree and 5 = Strongly Agree. The findings on women's socio-cultural and economic roles are presented in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3: Socio-Cultural and Economic Roles of Women

Statements	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	Std. Dev
I actively participate in cultural practices in the community	28.2% (57)	19.3% (39)	22.8% (46)	21.3% (43)	8.4% (17)	2.62	1.31
I am responsible for teaching cultural values to younger family members	11.4% (23)	8.9% (18)	16.8% (34)	39.1% (79)	23.8% (48)	3.55	1.29
I make decisions regarding household resource allocation	24.8% (50)	23.3% (47)	26.2% (53)	18.8% (38)	6.9% (14)	2.60	1.25
I participate in local market trading of agricultural produce	35.1% (71)	22.8% (46)	20.3% (41)	16.3% (33)	5.4% (11)	2.34	1.28
I maintain control over food storage	7.9% (16)	12.4% (25)	18.8% (38)	41.1% (83)	19.8% (40)	3.52	1.20
I participate in family-level conflict resolution	22.3% (45)	21.8% (44)	28.7% (58)	19.8% (40)	7.4% (15)	2.68	1.24
I have a role in community decision-making processes	42.1% (85)	28.2% (57)	19.3% (39)	8.4% (17)	2.0% (4)	1.99	1.09
Average						2.76	1.24

The findings reveal a pattern of women's roles that demonstrates clear gender-based divisions between private domestic responsibilities and public community participation. Women's engagement varies significantly across different spheres of activity, with distinct patterns of empowerment and constraint that both align with and contradict existing scholarship on women's roles in conflict-affected communities.

Women demonstrated strong engagement in traditional domestic responsibilities, particularly in areas related to cultural preservation and household management. The majority of

respondents (62.9%) agreed or strongly agreed that they are responsible for teaching cultural values to younger family members (mean=3.55, SD=1.29), indicating their central role as cultural custodians within the household. This finding corroborates with Charwi's (2021) documentation of Kuria women's central role in cultural transmission, though the current study reveals how conflict conditions have constrained this traditional authority. Similarly, 60.9% maintained control over food storage (mean=3.52, SD=1.20), reflecting their traditional authority in household food security management. These high means suggest that despite ongoing conflicts, women continue to fulfill their traditional roles as cultural transmitters and food managers within the domestic sphere, supporting Wambura's (2023) findings on the persistence of certain traditional gender roles even under crisis conditions.

In contrast to their domestic authority, women's participation in public and community spheres was significantly constrained. The majority (70.3%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with having roles in community decision-making processes (mean=1.99, SD=1.09), representing the lowest mean score across all measured variables. This finding directly contradicts Aroussi's (2021) research in Israeli-Palestinian border areas where women gained formal decision-making authority during conflicts, and challenges Loken and Matfess's (2022) documentation of women's expanded public roles in Myanmar border regions. The stark contrast suggests that agricultural communities may maintain more rigid gender hierarchies during conflicts than urban contexts. Additionally, 47.5% disagreed with actively participating in cultural practices in the community (mean=2.62, SD=1.31), suggesting that while women preserve culture within households, their participation in public cultural events may be restricted due to security concerns or cultural constraints, contradicting Tadesse *et al.*'s (2020) findings in Somali communities where women maintained some public cultural authority despite conflicts.

Women's economic roles showed significant limitations, particularly in market-based activities. The majority (57.9%) disagreed with participating in local market trading of agricultural produce (mean=2.34, SD=1.28), indicating restricted economic mobility and market access. This finding contrasts sharply with Parshotam and Balongo's (2020) research on East African border communities where women maintained active trading roles, and contradicts Kipkorir and Ochieng's (2022) documentation of women's continued market participation in West Pokot-Turkana border areas. The constraint is further evidenced by mixed responses regarding household resource allocation decisions, where 48.1% disagreed with having decision-making authority (mean=2.60, SD=1.25), indicating limited financial

autonomy even within domestic settings, challenging Lotwel *et al.* (2021) findings in Turkana where women retained some economic decision-making authority during conflicts.

Women's authority in family-level conflict resolution showed moderate engagement, with 27.2% agreeing to participate in such activities (mean=2.68, SD=1.24). However, the relatively neutral responses (28.7%) and high disagreement rates (44.1%) suggest that even within families, women's mediation roles may be limited or inconsistent. This finding partially supports Alemu's (2020) research in Ethiopian border communities where women maintained some mediation authority, though the Kuria context shows more constrained participation than documented in pastoralist societies.

The overall mean score of 2.76 (SD=1.24) across all role measures indicates that women's roles are generally constrained, falling below the neutral midpoint of 3.0. This finding fundamentally challenges Feminist Conflict Theory's core proposition (Enloe, 1989; Tickner, 1992) that conflicts create transformative opportunities for women's empowerment, instead supporting emerging critical scholarship that questions linear empowerment narratives in conflict literature. The high standard deviation (1.24) indicates considerable variation in individual experiences, suggesting that some women may have maintained or expanded their roles while others have experienced significant restrictions, aligning with Bendavid *et al.* (2021) documentation of heterogeneous conflict effects on women globally.

These findings demonstrate that while women retain important responsibilities in cultural transmission and household management, their broader participation in economic and community activities remains significantly limited, likely reflecting both traditional gender constraints and conflict-related security concerns. This pattern contradicts the optimistic assumptions in much women, peace, and security literature that assumes conflicts automatically create space for female empowerment, instead revealing what this study identifies as "selective disempowerment" where women maintain some traditional domestic authority while losing broader social and economic agency. This finding corroborates with Cockburn's (2007) concept of "constrained agency" where women's crisis responsibilities occur within severely limited parameters that reinforce existing power structures, and El-Bushra's (2007) documentation of "responsibility without power" in post-conflict contexts where women's expanded burdens rarely translate into formal authority or sustained empowerment, capturing the essence of how increased responsibilities coexist with diminished agency in conflict-affected communities.

To better understand the evolution of women's roles in the context of ongoing border conflicts, respondents were asked to identify specific changes they had experienced in their roles over the past five years. This timeframe was selected to capture recent transformations that could be attributed to conflict dynamics while allowing respondents to reflect on meaningful changes in their responsibilities and activities, following methodological approaches used by Nyabola and Nanjala (2022) in their Kenya-Somalia border research which demonstrated that five-year retrospective assessments provide optimal balance between recency of memory and sufficient time depth to identify substantive role transformations, and supporting Odera and Mwangi's (2021) recommendation that conflict-related role changes require medium-term observation periods to distinguish temporary adaptations from permanent structural shifts. The responses, which allowed for multiple selections, reveal patterns of role transformation and adaptation. The changes in women's roles over the past five years are presented in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4: Changes in Women's Roles in the Past Five Years

Role Changes	Frequency	Percent of Cases
Increased household responsibilities	168	83.2%
More involvement in income-generating activities	164	81.2%
Greater decision-making power in the family	142	70.3%
Reduced participation in community activities	108	53.5%
Took on new leadership roles	8	4.0%
No significant changes	2	1.0%

The results demonstrate significant role transformation among women over the past five years, with the vast majority experiencing increased burdens rather than empowerment. Over four-fifths of respondents reported increased household responsibilities (83.2%) and greater involvement in income-generating activities (81.2%), indicating women's expanding economic necessity driven by conflict circumstances. While 70.3% gained greater family decision-making power, this was accompanied by reduced community participation (53.5%), suggesting women's roles expanded within private spheres but contracted in public engagement. Only 4.0% took on new leadership roles, and merely 1.0% reported no changes, highlighting that role transformation was widespread but largely confined to survival-oriented adaptations rather than formal empowerment opportunities. This pattern contradicts optimistic assumptions in Feminist Conflict Theory (Enloe, 1989; Tickner, 1992) about conflicts creating empowerment opportunities, instead supporting Bendavid *et al.*'s (2021) global documentation of how armed

conflicts primarily increase women's survival burdens without corresponding formal authority gains, and aligning with Tadesse *et al.*'s (2020) findings in Horn of Africa conflict zones where women's expanded domestic responsibilities occurred alongside systematic exclusion from public decision-making processes, revealing what this study identifies as "constrained expansion" where crisis-driven role changes increase women's workload without enhancing their formal power or community status.

The quantitative findings were further illuminated by insights from key informant interviews and focus group discussions, which provided deeper understanding of women's traditional roles within the Kuria community context. The survey findings on women's strong engagement in cultural transmission were supported by both interview and focus group data that emphasized women's central role in preserving Kuria traditions. A local administrator from Gwitembe explained the nature of women's cultural responsibilities:

"Taking care of the family in terms of cooking, nurturing. Singing/dancing/chanting during special cultural events like traditional marriages. Women are the backbone of our cultural ceremonies, without them, these events cannot take place properly because they know all the traditional songs and the proper ways to conduct rituals." (KII-04, July 11, 2025)

A women's group representative from Ntimaru West elaborated on women's ceremonial responsibilities, highlighting their specialized knowledge:

"Participating in cultural ceremonies like circumcision where women are involved in cooking for those circumcised and dancing/chanting during the ceremonies. Women play a central role during wedding ceremonies popularly known as 'Inyangi' in singing and dancing/ 'iritungu' cooking. These ceremonies cannot happen without women because they are the ones who know the traditional protocols." (KII-07, July 13, 2025)

Focus group participants across all wards consistently emphasized women's role as cultural custodians. In Nyabasi East, participants noted that *"women are the ones who teach children our language, our songs, and our customs. If women don't do this, our culture will die."* (FGD-03, July 12, 2025) Similarly, participants in Gokeharaka/Getambwega highlighted that *"during traditional ceremonies, women have specific roles that only they can perform, the ululating, the preparation of traditional foods, and the welcoming of guests according to our customs."* (FGD-01, July 10, 2025)

Interview respondents consistently described women's economic roles as centered on subsistence and small-scale activities. A local administrator from Gwitembe detailed these activities while noting their importance to family survival:

"Growing maize, beans, growing banana, growing sweet potatoes and Irish potatoes, chicken rearing. These activities may seem small, but they are what feed our families. Women know which crops grow well in different seasons and they manage all the planting and harvesting." (KII-04, July 11, 2025)

A women's group representative from Nyabasi East confirmed this pattern, emphasizing women's entrepreneurial spirit within traditional constraints:

"They practice and participate in farm produce and engage in businesses for better living standards. Even though their businesses are small, women are very creative in finding ways to make money, they know which vegetables sell well in the market and when to sell them for the best prices." (KII-08, July 14, 2025)

Focus group discussions revealed additional dimensions of women's economic activities. Participants in Ntitaru West explained that *"women work together in groups where we help each other on farms during planting and harvesting seasons. This way, we can accomplish more work and support each other."* (FGD-04, July 15, 2025) In Ntitaru East, focus group participants described how *"women control the kitchen gardens and small livestock like chickens and goats. We decide when to sell eggs or milk to get money for household needs."* (FGD-05, July 16, 2025)

The quantitative findings showing restricted community decision-making roles were consistent with traditional Kuria gender structures. A women community leader from Ntitaru West stated:

"Kuria women do not play a huge role within the household and community decision making. This is how our culture has been structured, men are expected to make the major decisions while women are expected to support and implement these decisions within their households." (KII-01, July 9, 2025)

A local administrator from Gwitembe provided more nuanced insight into the gendered division of authority:

"The authority within the household is mainly centered around food storage and dietary at home while the authority within the community in decision making is minimal. But this does not mean women have no influence, they advise their husbands privately and often their opinions are considered, just not in public forums." (KII-04, July 11, 2025)

Focus group discussions provided deeper insights into the informal nature of women's influence. Participants in Nyabasi West explained that *"although men make the final decisions in public, women discuss issues with their husbands at home and give advice. Sometimes our advice is taken, but we cannot speak in public meetings."* (FGD-02, July 11, 2025) In Gokeharaka/Getambwega, participants noted that *"women have authority over certain things*

like food preparation, child care, and managing household resources, but for big decisions about land or community matters, men are the ones who decide." (FGD-01, July 10, 2025)

The focus groups also revealed generational differences in women's roles. Younger participants in several wards mentioned that "*nowadays some women are becoming more educated and want to participate more in decision-making, but the traditional expectations are still strong, especially among older community members.*" (FGD-03, July 12, 2025; FGD-04, July 15, 2025)

These qualitative insights revealed that while the quantitative data showed overall constraints in women's roles, the traditional Kuria system did provide women with specific spheres of authority, particularly in cultural preservation, food management, and domestic guidance, even as it limited their participation in formal economic and political structures. This finding aligns with Charwi's (2021) documentation of Kuria women's central role in cultural transmission and language preservation, supporting the persistence of certain traditional gender roles even under crisis conditions. The spheres of authority identified here support Wambura's (2023) research on Kuria women's continued influence in domestic decision-making despite broader patriarchal constraints, though the current study reveals how conflict conditions have intensified these limitations. However, these findings contrast with Tadesse *et al.* (2020) documentation of women's formal authority in conflict mediation among Somali communities, and challenge Alemu's (2020) research in Ethiopian contexts where women maintained broader decision-making roles during conflicts, suggesting that agricultural communities may maintain more rigid gender hierarchies than pastoralist societies.

The focus group discussions particularly highlighted the collective nature of women's work and the informal channels through which they exercised influence within the constraints of traditional gender hierarchies, supporting Onserio's (2021) documentation of traditional Kuria governance systems that provided women with indirect influence, though contradicting Lotwel *et al.* (2021) findings in Turkana where women developed more formal collective action mechanisms during conflicts. This pattern reveals what this study identifies as "constrained agency," where women maintain meaningful influence within specific domains while being systematically excluded from formal power structures, aligning with Tadesse *et al.* (2020) findings in Somali communities where women exercised authority through informal channels despite formal exclusion from decision-making, and supporting Charwi's (2021) documentation of how Kuria women navigate cultural constraints to maintain influence in specific spheres. This challenges binary frameworks in gender and development literature that

typically categorize women as either empowered or marginalized without recognizing the nuanced ways women navigate patriarchal constraints to exercise authority within culturally sanctioned spaces.

4.5 Effect of Border Conflicts on Women's Socio-Cultural Roles

The second research objective aimed to assess the extent to which border conflicts affect socio-cultural roles of women among the Kuria East Community. This objective examined how ongoing territorial disputes and resource conflicts have disrupted or transformed women's traditional participation in cultural practices, family relationships, decision-making processes, and community leadership. Understanding these effects is crucial for comprehending how conflict situations reshape gender roles and social structures within the community. Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with statements describing various ways border conflicts have affected their socio-cultural responsibilities and participation. The responses were measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The effects of border conflicts on women's socio-cultural roles are presented in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5: Effect of Border Conflicts on Women's Socio-Cultural Roles

Statements	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	Std. Dev
Border conflicts have reduced my ability to participate in traditional ceremonies	8.9% (18)	12.4% (25)	18.8% (38)	39.1% (79)	20.8% (42)	3.51	1.18
I have taken on new leadership roles in community peace-building initiatives	45.0% (91)	28.7% (58)	16.3% (33)	7.9% (16)	2.0% (4)	1.93	1.05
Conflicts have changed how I make decisions about children's education	6.4% (13)	11.9% (24)	21.8% (44)	42.1% (85)	17.8% (36)	3.53	1.12
My role in conflict mediation has expanded beyond family to community	38.1% (77)	31.2% (63)	19.8% (40)	8.9% (18)	2.0% (4)	2.06	1.06
Border conflicts have affected my relationships with extended family members	5.9% (12)	9.4% (19)	16.8% (34)	45.0% (91)	22.8% (46)	3.70	1.10
I now participate more actively in community security decisions	41.6% (84)	29.2% (59)	18.3% (37)	8.9% (18)	2.0% (4)	2.01	1.07
The conflicts have changed how I teach cultural values	7.4% (15)	13.9% (28)	23.8% (48)	37.1% (75)	17.8% (36)	3.44	1.15
Average						2.88	1.10

The findings reveal that border conflicts have fundamentally disrupted women's socio-cultural lives, creating a pattern of cultural erosion and family strain while failing to generate meaningful empowerment opportunities in formal leadership roles. Border conflicts have had their most severe effect on family relationships (mean=3.70), with the majority of respondents (67.8%) reporting that conflicts have affected their relationships with extended family members. This represents the highest mean score among all measured variables, indicating that

family cohesion, traditionally a cornerstone of Kuria social structure, has been severely compromised. These findings align with Bendavid *et al.* (2021) global analysis documenting how armed conflicts systematically destroy family support networks, though the Kuria East context shows even more severe disruption than reported in their multi-country study. The disruption extends beyond immediate family units to broader kinship networks that traditionally provided social support, economic cooperation, and cultural continuity.

A significant majority of women (59.9%) reported that border conflicts have reduced their ability to participate in traditional ceremonies (mean=3.51). This finding indicates a serious threat to cultural preservation, as women traditionally serve as key custodians of Kuria cultural practices. This contradicts Björkdahl and Selimovic's (2022) findings in Ukraine-Russia border regions where women maintained cultural transmission despite conflicts, suggesting that territorial disputes in agricultural communities may create more severe cultural disruption than conflicts in more urbanized settings. Additionally, 54.9% of respondents indicated that conflicts have changed how they teach cultural values to younger generations (mean=3.44). This dual effect reduced ceremonial participation and altered cultural transmission suggests that border conflicts are undermining the intergenerational transfer of cultural knowledge that women have historically facilitated, supporting Tadesse *et al.* (2020) documentation of similar cultural breakdown in Somali communities, though the Kuria context shows more systematic erosion.

The conflicts have forced substantial changes in women's approach to children's education (mean=3.53), with 59.9% reporting altered decision-making in this area. This finding corroborates with Aroussi's (2021) research in Israeli-Palestinian border areas where security concerns similarly overrode educational priorities, though the Kuria women show less adaptive capacity in developing alternative educational strategies. This suggests that security concerns and conflict-related disruptions have overridden traditional educational priorities, forcing mothers to make difficult choices between their children's safety and educational advancement. Such changes represent a significant departure from normal family planning and child-bearing practices, supporting UNESCO's (2023) global documentation of how armed conflicts systematically disrupt educational decision-making patterns in households, with mothers bearing disproportionate responsibility for managing these impossible choices, and aligning with Bendavid *et al.*'s (2021) findings that conflict-affected women face intensified trade-offs between immediate family safety and long-term child development outcomes, fundamentally altering traditional maternal roles and educational investment strategies.

Despite the significant disruptions caused by border conflicts, women have not gained meaningful roles in formal conflict resolution or community leadership. The vast majority (73.7%) disagreed with having taken on new leadership roles in community peace-building initiatives (mean=1.93), while 70.8% denied increased participation in community security decisions (mean=2.01). These findings directly contradict Aroussi's (2021) research where 78% of women assumed expanded leadership roles during conflicts, and challenge Loken and Matfess's (2022) documentation of women developing "dual identities" as caregivers and security coordinators in Myanmar border regions. This stark contrast suggests that agricultural communities may face more restrictive gender hierarchies during conflicts than urban or semi-urban contexts, revealing that traditional gender hierarchies persist even during crisis periods. Women's traditional roles in family-level conflict resolution have not expanded to community-level mediation (mean=2.06), with 69.3% disagreeing that their mediation roles have extended beyond family settings. This finding contrasts sharply with Tadesse *et al.* (2020) documentation of women's continued conflict mediation authority in Somali communities and Ndungu's (2020) findings in northern Kenya where women maintained informal influence during conflicts. This indicates that while women may maintain some influence in domestic dispute resolution, they remain excluded from formal community-level peace processes where their insights and mediation skills could be valuable.

The overall mean score (mean=2.88) across all socio-cultural measures indicates that border conflicts have generally constrained rather than enhanced women's socio-cultural roles. This pattern contradicts the optimistic assumptions in Feminist Conflict Theory (Enloe, 1989; Tickner, 1992) that conflicts create transformative opportunities for women's empowerment, instead supporting emerging critical scholarship that questions linear empowerment narratives in conflict literature. The findings demonstrate that border conflicts have created a destructive cycle where women lose their traditional sources of social authority and cultural influence without gaining access to new forms of formal power or leadership opportunities.

To gain deeper insights into the specific ways border conflicts have affected women's cultural and family activities, respondents were asked to identify from a list of possible effects those they had personally experienced. This question allowed for multiple responses to capture the nature of conflict effects on women's socio-cultural roles. The findings provide concrete examples of how theoretical disruptions manifest in women's daily lives and responsibilities. The specific effects of border conflicts on women's cultural and family activities are presented in Table 4.6.

Table 4.6: How Border Conflicts Have Affected Women's Cultural and Family Activities

Effects of Border Conflicts	Frequency	Percent of Cases
Increased my responsibility for family protection	142	70.3%
Disrupted family gatherings and relationships	128	63.4%
Limited my participation in important community ceremonies	115	56.9%
Reduced my ability to maintain cultural practices	98	48.5%
Changed how I teach cultural values to children	87	43.1%
Forced me to take on new community leadership roles	14	6.9%
No significant effect	12	5.9%

Border conflicts have fundamentally altered women's family and cultural responsibilities, with the majority experiencing increased burdens rather than expanded opportunities. The most significant effect was increased responsibility for family protection (70.3%), indicating women's adaptation to insecurity by taking on protective roles traditionally held by men. This finding aligns with Loken and Matfess's (2022) documentation of women developing security coordination roles in Myanmar border regions, though the Kuria East context shows these responsibilities remained confined to family rather than community levels. However, this contradicts Björkdahl and Selimovic's (2022) findings in Ukraine-Russia border areas where women's protective roles evolved into formalized community security positions, suggesting that rural agricultural settings may limit women's ability to transform crisis responsibilities into formal authority.

Social cohesion suffered considerably, as conflicts disrupted family gatherings and relationships (63.4%) and limited participation in community ceremonies (56.9%), undermining traditional support networks and cultural continuity. These findings support Bendavid *et al.* (2021) global analysis of how armed conflicts systematically destroy social networks, though the Kuria East context shows particularly severe ceremonial disruption compared to their multi-country study. This pattern contrasts with Tadesse *et al.* (2020) research in Somali communities where women maintained some ceremonial authority despite conflicts, indicating that territorial disputes may create more comprehensive cultural breakdown than resource conflicts alone.

Nearly half (48.5%) reported reduced ability to maintain cultural practices, while 43.1% changed their approach to teaching cultural values, suggesting adaptive strategies to preserve

culture under constrained circumstances. This finding contradicts Aroussi's (2021) research in Israeli-Palestinian border areas where women developed innovative cultural preservation methods, and challenges Alemu's (2020) documentation of women's continued cultural authority in Ethiopian border communities. The Kuria context suggests that agricultural communities may face more severe constraints on cultural adaptation than urban or pastoralist societies, where mobility and established support networks provide greater flexibility for cultural innovation.

Only 6.9% were forced into new community leadership roles, confirming that conflicts primarily imposed additional domestic responsibilities rather than creating formal empowerment opportunities. This finding directly contradicts the assumptions in Feminist Conflict Theory (Enloe, 1989; Tickner, 1992) that conflicts automatically create leadership opportunities for women, and challenges Hossain and McSherry's (2021) findings in Bangladesh-India border regions where crisis situations generated more formal female leadership roles. The stark contrast with Mengesha and Berhe's (2021) documentation of women's expanded decision-making authority in Ethiopia-Eritrea border areas suggests that the nature of territorial disputes and community structures significantly influences whether conflicts create empowerment opportunities or simply impose additional burdens on women.

The quantitative findings were corroborated by key informant interviews and focus group discussions, which revealed the profound ways border conflicts had disrupted the social and cultural fabric of Kuria women's lives. A local administrator from Gwitembe provided vivid details about how conflicts had affected traditional celebrations that were central to women's cultural roles:

"The border conflicts have put on hold various socio-cultural activities that have in turn affected women's participation. For instance, in Kuria culture 'embutura' which means the celebration of dowry payment that involves officially releasing the woman to the family that is marrying is held with high regards. The dowry in terms of cows is brought to the girl's family and a cow is slaughtered and people celebrate overnight. This event is very significant to women, it's a sign of respect to women who chant, cook, dance, ululate, ensure all the guests are well taken care of. But that has been significantly affected because the event no longer takes place; everything is done in haste because the attackers have had a tendency of attacking us during such ceremonies." (KII-04, July 11, 2025)

Another local administrator from Ntimaru West described how even basic cultural practices had been compromised:

"We are unable to conduct weddings, only small celebrations to officiate weddings, symbolize the taking away of the brides. Women have reduced participation in cultural practices due to fear of their safety, for instance the issue of 'ubhugheni' traditional visitation by Kuria women, that is highly valued, is something that has had to be put on hold." (KII-05, July 12, 2025)

Focus group participants across wards confirmed these disruptions. In Nyabasi East, participants lamented that *"we can no longer gather for traditional ceremonies because we fear attacks. Even when we try to have small celebrations, people are always looking over their shoulders and rushing to finish quickly."* (FGD-03, July 12, 2025) Participants in Ntitaru East explained that *"the traditional dances and songs that women perform during ceremonies are being forgotten because we cannot practice them together anymore. The younger women are not learning these important cultural practices."* (FGD-05, July 16, 2025)

The severe effect on family relationships revealed in the survey data was dramatically illustrated by accounts from the field. A local administrator from Gwitembe described the devastating human cost:

"The effect has been adverse in the family and community relationship in the sense that families have been broken, husbands have been killed in the conflict, women left widowed, children have been killed. Like for instance last year a class 8 index 1 KCPE candidate in Gwitembe primary was shot dead in class. Similarly, a CBC pupil was shot dead while at their farm while carrying out a school project, this is even after he had pleaded with attackers not to kill him. A young child was also recently shot. Various families and communities have lost their lands, families have been separated, the community is broken, nothing communal can take place, people have lost their loved ones." (KII-04, July 11, 2025)

A women community leader from Ntitaru West confirmed the widespread nature of family disruption:

"Yes, family and community relationships have been affected in the sense some ties have been broken, relations have been left without loved ones. The old have been left without children, women without husbands, mothers without children." (KII-01, July 9, 2025)

Focus group discussions revealed the emotional toll of these losses. Participants in Gwitembe shared that *"many of us are now taking care of orphaned children whose parents were killed in the conflict. We have lost our own family members and now we must care for others who have no one left."* (FGD-01, July 10, 2025) In Nyabasi West, participants described how *"extended family relationships have been broken because families are scattered. Some relatives have fled to other areas and we cannot visit each other because of the danger."* (FGD-02, July 11, 2025)

Despite the severity of the conflicts, interview data confirmed that few women had gained formal leadership roles. A local administrator from Gwitembe explained the constraints:

"No, we have not seen any women leadership emerge due to these conflicts. I think it's because this is mostly a physical conflict and we are always on the run and there seems to be no platform to give women an audience. We have young widowed women who are wounded/hurt and lack the strength to voice or lead the fight against the conflict, and plus past advocacy from women have failed. Also, in our culture women are mostly subordinates." (KII-04, July 11, 2025)

However, some limited leadership had emerged in specific contexts. A women community leader from Ntimaru West noted:

"In Ntimaru West, we have seen the emergence of prominent women like Betty Samburu who has been vocal in the fight against conflict. This is because during the conflict at hand, women have been the ones that have been affected most with both the elderly and the young widowed left with no alternative sources of income." (KII-01, July 9, 2025)

Another local administrator mentioned religious leadership as one area where women had found voice:

"Religious leadership has emerged over time, women have been meeting to pray against the war. Some women have gained leadership positions like chiefs, village elders and so on." (KII-06, July 13, 2025)

Focus group participants in Gokeharaka/Getambwega noted that *"some women have tried to speak up in community meetings about peace, but often they are not taken seriously by the men. The traditional leaders still prefer to listen to male voices when it comes to decisions about the conflict."* (FGD-01, July 10, 2025) However, participants in Ntimaru West acknowledged that *"there are a few women who have become more vocal, especially those who have lost their husbands and have to speak for their families now."* (FGD-04, July 15, 2025)

The conflicts had forced women to take on new responsibilities, particularly in household management and family protection. A local administrator from Gwitembe explained:

"A lot has changed in the sense that women have to ensure the survival of their young family while the men are in the field protecting the community against the attackers. Therefore, it is in order to say that women have taken charge of households, even in the shortest time that they can access their homes." (KII-04, July 11, 2025)

A women's group representative from Nyabasi East described how women had to unite for survival:

"Women have decided to unite as a way of looking for a solution towards settlement of the conflict. It has brought about disintegration among families affecting the ability of the involved families to make decisions." (KII-08, July 14, 2025)

Focus group discussions revealed the complexity of these new responsibilities. Participants in Ntitaru East explained that *"when our husbands go to guard the borders, we become the heads of households. We must make decisions about everything, what the children eat, whether they go to school, how to protect the family if there is an attack."* (FGD-05, July 16, 2025) In Nyabasi East, participants shared that *"some of us have never made these kinds of decisions before, but we have no choice. We must learn quickly how to manage everything alone while also worrying about whether our husbands will come back alive."* (FGD-03 July, 12, 2025) These qualitative insights revealed that while the quantitative data showed general patterns of disruption and constraint, the lived reality for Kuria women involved profound trauma, loss, and forced adaptation to circumstances that had fundamentally altered their social and cultural roles within the community. This finding mirrors with Bendavid *et al.* (2021) global documentation of how armed conflicts create deep psychological wounds that extend far beyond immediate physical violence, though the Kuria context reveals particularly severe cultural disruption compared to their multi-country analysis.

The profound trauma documented among Kuria East women supports WHO's (2022) research on conflict-related mental health effects, which found that women in conflict zones experience disproportionate psychological distress, yet the systematic cultural erosion identified in this study suggests that agricultural communities may face more comprehensive identity threats than recognized in existing literature. However, these findings contrast with Aroussi's (2021) research in Israeli-Palestinian contexts where women developed innovative cultural preservation strategies despite trauma, and challenge Tadesse *et al.* (2020) documentation of cultural resilience among Somali women during conflicts, suggesting that the nature of territorial disputes in agricultural settings may create more devastating cultural breakdown than resource conflicts in pastoralist societies. The forced adaptation documented here contradicts the empowerment narratives found in much conflict and gender literature, instead revealing what this study identifies as "adaptive incapacity" where the severity of disruption exceeds women's ability to develop meaningful alternatives within existing constraints, aligning with Bendavid *et al.* (2021) global analysis documenting how certain conflict contexts overwhelm

traditional coping mechanisms, while contrasting with Lotwel *et al.* (2021) findings in Turkana where women maintained some adaptive capacity despite severe constraints, challenging optimistic assumptions about women's inherent resilience during crisis periods.

4.6 Effect of Border Conflicts on Women's Economic Roles

The third research objective examined the effect of border conflicts on economic roles of women among the Kuria Community in Migori County. This objective sought to understand how territorial disputes and resource conflicts have disrupted women's traditional economic activities, including farming, trading, resource access, and income generation strategies. Given that the majority of women in Kuria East are engaged in agriculture and small-scale trading, understanding the economic effects of border conflicts is crucial for comprehending the overall effect on women's livelihoods and household welfare. Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with statements describing various ways border conflicts have affected their economic activities and responsibilities. The responses were measured on a five-point Likert scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The effects of border conflicts on women's economic roles are presented in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7: Effect of Border Conflicts on Women's Economic Roles

Statements	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	Std. Dev
Border conflicts have forced me to change my traditional farming practices	7.4% (15)	11.9% (24)	16.3% (33)	42.6% (86)	21.8% (44)	3.59	1.16
I have lost access to crucial market centers due to border conflicts	5.9% (12)	9.4% (19)	14.9% (30)	45.0% (91)	24.8% (50)	3.74	1.12
The conflicts have pushed me to seek alternative sources of income beyond farming	12.4% (25)	18.8% (38)	21.8% (44)	32.2% (65)	14.9% (30)	3.18	1.26
Border tensions have affected my ability to store and trade agricultural produce	8.4% (17)	12.9% (26)	19.3% (39)	38.1% (77)	21.3% (43)	3.51	1.19
I have become the primary provider for my household due to conflict situations	19.8% (40)	23.3% (47)	24.8% (50)	22.8% (46)	9.4% (19)	2.79	1.24
The conflicts have affected my ability to maintain traditional trading partnerships	6.9% (14)	10.4% (21)	17.8% (36)	43.1% (87)	21.8% (44)	3.63	1.14
I have developed new economic skills due to the changing conflict situation	28.2% (57)	26.7% (54)	22.8% (46)	16.8% (34)	5.4% (11)	2.45	1.22
Average						3.27	1.19

The findings reveal that border conflicts have severely disrupted women's economic activities, creating widespread economic destabilization while limiting opportunities for meaningful adaptation and empowerment. The most severe economic effect has been the loss of access to crucial market centers (mean=3.74), with nearly 70% of respondents reporting this disruption. This finding represents the highest mean score among all economic variables, indicating that market access fundamental to women's trading activities has been fundamentally compromised. This finding contrasts sharply with Parshotam and Balongo's (2020) research on East African border communities where women maintained some market access through adaptive strategies, suggesting that territorial disputes may create more severe market disruption than resource conflicts alone. The inability to reach traditional markets has cascading effects on women's entire economic livelihood system, as markets serve not only as

selling points but also as centers for social networking and information exchange essential for economic activities.

Traditional economic systems have been extensively damaged, with 64.4% of women reporting being forced to change their traditional farming practices (mean=3.59). This disruption goes beyond simple inconvenience to represent a fundamental alteration of agricultural systems that have been developed and refined over generations. This finding corroborates with Kipkorir and Ochieng's (2022) documentation of farming practice changes in West Pokot-Turkana, though the Kuria East context shows more complete abandonment rather than adaptive modification of agricultural methods. Similarly, 64.9% experienced disrupted trading partnerships (mean=3.63), indicating that the social and economic networks that traditionally facilitated women's commercial activities have been severely compromised. This contrasts with Adejumobi *et al.* (2023) findings in Nigeria-Niger border areas where women developed mobile market systems to maintain trading relationships, suggesting that the nature of territorial disputes in Kuria East has been more destructive to inter-community economic cooperation. These partnerships, often built over years and spanning ethnic boundaries, were crucial for accessing diverse products and maintaining stable income streams.

Border tensions have significantly affected women's ability to store and trade agricultural produce (mean=3.51), with 59.4% reporting such effects. This finding highlights how conflicts disrupt not only production but also post-harvest activities that are crucial for maintaining food security and generating income. This aligns with Mengesha and Berhe's (2021) documentation of disrupted agricultural value chains in Ethiopia-Eritrea border regions, though the Kuria East women show less capacity for developing alternative storage and trading mechanisms. The inability to properly store and trade produce means that even successful farming efforts may not translate into economic benefits, creating a cycle of economic vulnerability.

While 47.1% of women were pushed to seek alternative sources of income beyond farming (mean=3.18), this adaptation appears to have been more reactive than transformative. The moderate mean score suggests that many women recognized the need for economic diversification but faced significant barriers in implementing such changes. This finding contradicts Khodary's (2022) research in South Asian conflict zones where women successfully established alternative cross-border trading networks for agricultural produce and handicrafts, creating mobile market systems that operated through women-only trading cooperatives spanning multiple villages, and challenges Kyomuhendo and Nyamnjuh's (2022) documentation of women's innovative economic adaptations in Democratic Republic of Congo

border areas, specifically their development of alternative agricultural processing enterprises for cassava and maize that bypassed disrupted formal markets while creating new value-added products for local consumption. More revealing is that only 22.2% developed new economic skills (mean=2.45), indicating that despite the pressure to find alternatives, women lacked access to training, resources, or opportunities necessary for meaningful economic transformation. This limited skill development aligns with Yator's (2021) findings in Baringo County where socio-cultural constraints and inadequate institutional support severely limited women's capacity for economic adaptation during crises, and supports the broader pattern documented by Lotwel *et al.* (2021) in Turkana where women's economic innovations were constrained by lack of technical training and capital access, revealing how structural barriers can prevent adaptive capacity from translating into meaningful economic transformation

Despite the severe economic disruptions, only 32.2% of women became primary household providers (mean=2.79), suggesting that conflicts disrupted existing economic activities more than they created new economic empowerment opportunities. These finding challenges assumptions that crisis situations automatically lead to women's economic empowerment through expanded roles. This contradicts Loken and Matfess's (2022) findings in Myanmar border regions where women assumed expanded economic leadership roles, and challenges Hossain and McSherry's (2021) documentation of women's economic empowerment in Bangladesh-India border areas. Instead, it indicates that conflicts primarily destroyed existing economic capacity rather than opening new pathways for women's economic advancement.

The overall mean score (mean=3.27) across all economic measures indicates that border conflicts have had substantial negative effects on women's economic roles. This pattern fundamentally challenges optimistic assumptions in development economics about women's adaptive capacity during crises, contradicting the resilience narratives found in much of the conflict and gender literature. The pattern suggests that conflicts have created an economic environment characterized by disruption, loss, and constrained adaptation rather than transformation and empowerment. Women appear to be struggling to maintain basic economic functions rather than developing enhanced economic capacity or authority, highlighting the destructive rather than transformative nature of border conflicts on women's economic lives. This finding corroborates with Mengesha and Berhe's (2021) documentation of systematic economic destruction in Ethiopia-Eritrea border areas where women's traditional livelihoods were completely dismantled rather than transformed, while contrasting sharply with Kipkorir and Ochieng's (2022) research in West Pokot-Turkana where some women successfully

adapted farming practices despite conflicts, suggesting that the severity and duration of territorial disputes may determine whether conflicts destroy or reshape women's economic agency.

To provide a more detailed understanding of the specific economic challenges women face as a result of border conflicts, respondents were asked to identify from a comprehensive list the particular difficulties they had encountered in their economic activities. This question allowed for multiple responses to capture the nature of economic disruptions caused by ongoing conflicts. The findings reveal the range and severity of economic obstacles that constrain women's livelihood activities. The specific economic challenges women face due to border conflicts are presented in Table 4.8.

Table 4.8: Economic Challenges Women Face Due to Border Conflicts

Economic Challenges	Frequency	Percent of Cases
Personal security concerns when conducting business	168	83.2%
Reduced market opportunities	154	76.2%
Higher transportation costs	141	69.8%
Limited access to farms/land	132	65.3%
Theft/destruction of produce	118	58.4%
Loss of livestock/property	89	44.1%
Difficulty accessing credit/loans	76	37.6%

Personal security emerged as the overwhelming economic challenge, with 83.2% of women expressing safety concerns when conducting business, effectively constraining their economic participation and mobility. Market-related disruptions were extensive, as 76.2% faced reduced market opportunities and 69.8% encountered higher transportation costs, resulting to economic barriers that undermined traditional livelihood systems. Agricultural activities, fundamental to the local economy, were severely compromised with 65.3% experiencing limited farm access and 58.4% suffering theft or destruction of produce, directly threatening food security and income generation. While property losses affected 44.1% of respondents and credit access was limited for 37.6%, the predominance of security and market-access challenges indicates that border conflicts created a hostile economic environment that prioritized survival over growth, fundamentally constraining women's economic agency and opportunities. This pattern aligns

with WHO's (2022) global documentation of how security concerns become the primary constraint on women's economic participation in conflict zones, systematically undermining productive activities, and supports Mengesha and Berhe's (2021) findings in Ethiopia-Eritrea border areas where women's fear-based economic restrictions created similar cascading effects on household food security and income generation, while contradicting resilience narratives in development economics that assume women's adaptive capacity can overcome security-related constraints without addressing underlying safety concerns.

The quantitative findings were reinforced by key informant interviews and focus group discussions, which provided stark accounts of how border conflicts had devastated women's economic lives and livelihoods. A local administrator from Gwitembe painted a dire picture of women's economic situation in the conflict epicenter:

"Women have nothing to do they just sit without doing anything. Everything has been put on hold. Women are unable to plant bananas, sweet potatoes. Whenever women are planting and the maize starts growing that is where the warring community starts attacking women, they get killed, physically attacked, their young men get killed thus attacking farm productivity. Women in Gwitembe which is the hotspot of conflict are unable to participate in any income generating activities, this is because in Kuria for someone to be considered as engaging in economic activities she has to be doing large scale farming." (KII-04, July 11, 2025)

The severity of agricultural disruption was further detailed by the same administrator, who explained the systematic nature of attacks on farming activities:

"The Kipsigis community often attacks them while they are planting crops, with some Kuria people being killed during such incidents. Their crops are destroyed when the Kipsigis deliberately graze their large herds on cultivated farms. Kuria people, including women, are sometimes forcibly evicted from their land. The land is either taken over for grazing or left idle. In some cases, when maize grows tall enough, aggressors use the fields as cover to ambush and kill Kuria men and assault Kuria women. This has instilled fear among the Kuria people, discouraging them from farming altogether." (KII-04, July 11, 2025)

Focus group participants from Gwitembe area confirmed the complete breakdown of agricultural activities. They shared that *"we used to have large farms where we could grow enough food to sell, but now we can only plant small gardens near our houses. Even then, we are afraid because attackers can come anytime."* (FGD-01, July 10, 2025) Participants from areas bordering the conflict zone explained that *"some of us have lost our land completely. We cannot go back to our farms because the Kipsigis have taken them over for their cattle."* (FGD-01, July 10, 2025)

A women's group representative from Nyabasi East described how conflicts had affected basic agricultural activities and market access:

"It has affected accessibility to the farms, meaning women are unable to make a living from farming. Perishable goods get spoilt due to the conflict, this is because most of the time movement is always limited and transport expensive and dangerous. The production of most agricultural produce has reduced drastically and it is at its lowest from both communities, we cannot sell to the Kipsigis women and they no longer bring their maize here in Kuria." (KII-08, July 14, 2025)

The breakdown of traditional trading relationships was emphasized by a local administrator from Gwitembe, who highlighted the mutual economic dependence that had been destroyed:

"Women used to trade with the Kipsigis community, they would sell bananas, sweet potatoes, while the Kipsigis women would sell maize, charcoal, ballast to Kuria women and other things. Kipsigis women do not know how to plant bananas and sweet potatoes, hence the reliance on the produce from the Kuria women. Due to war women are unable to access markets or even resources and are sometimes forced to go to trade in far towns like Kehancha incurring high transport costs. The nearest markets and trading centers are dead because of the war as such women have been reduced to be beggars relying on help from generous community members and this is not something that is guaranteed." (KII-04, July 11, 2025)

Focus group participants across wards described the devastating effect on local markets. In Ntitaru West, participants explained that *"the market days that we used to look forward to no longer exist. The market centers are empty because people are afraid to travel."* (FGD-04, July 15, 2025) In Nyabasi East, focus group participants shared that *"we used to have good relationships with Kipsigis women traders. We would exchange our products and both communities benefited. Now we cannot even see each other because of the fighting."* (FGD-03, July 12, 2025)

Another local administrator from Ntitaru West described the severe constraints on women's economic activities and the forced adaptation to limited opportunities:

"Limited access to the farm, loss of business opportunities leading to low profit. Women look insecure when in the market due to conflict. Sometimes women are unable to access or come to the market due to the lack of resources. Getting new loans through joining women groups, chicken rearing, vegetable growing because the extensive agricultural lands cannot be accessed because of war." (KII-05, July 12, 2025)

The economic dependency that conflicts had created was starkly illustrated by the local administrator from Gwitembe:

"In my assessment the Kuria community and women per se need the neighboring community (Kipsigis community) more than the community in question while we sell most of our agricultural produce to them and thrive economically as result, we only get ballast, charcoal and so on, our economy benefits from a peaceful co-existence of the two communities. Traditional economic support systems have been affected massively, there is no peace and when there is no peace people here are always thinking of how to keep themselves alive, we exclusively rely on agriculture it is the backbone of our economy and therefore with the constant attacks, the inability to farm/trade the traditional economic system have been broken." (KII-04, July 11, 2025)

Focus group discussions revealed the desperate nature of economic adaptations. Participants in Gokeharaka/Getambwega explained that *"some women have started very small businesses like selling groundnuts or making local brew, but even these are risky because you need to travel to get supplies."* (FGD-01, July 10, 2025) In Ntimaru East, participants described how *"women are now keeping chickens and small animals closer to home because we cannot go to the big farms. But even the chickens get stolen and killed sometimes during attacks."* (FGD-05, July 16, 2025)

A women's group representative from Nyabasi East confirmed the breakdown of economic support systems:

"A lot of losses have been incurred due to irregular marketing of produces. Women have decided to be in control of some other businesses or activities." (KII-08, July 14, 2025)

Focus group participants in several wards described how traditional economic cooperation systems had collapsed. In Nyabasi West, participants explained that *"the system where women worked together on each other's farms has stopped because we cannot access the farms. Now each woman tries to survive on her own."* (FGD-02, July 11, 2025) Participants in Ntimaru West shared that *"the women's savings groups that we had are struggling because no one has money to contribute. Some groups have completely stopped meeting because members have fled the area."* (FGD-04, July 15, 2025)

These qualitative accounts revealed that the quantitative data, while indicating severe economic disruption, actually understated the devastating reality on the ground. Women in the most affected areas had essentially been forced out of economic activity entirely, reduced to dependency and survival strategies rather than productive economic engagement. This finding fundamentally contradicts the resilience narratives dominating development economics literature, particularly challenging Khodary's (2022) documentation of women's successful economic adaptations in South Asian conflict zones and Adejumobi *et al.* (2023) findings of innovative mobile market systems in Nigeria-Niger border areas. The complete economic

paralysis documented here contrasts sharply with Kyomuhendo and Nyamnjoh's (2022) research in Democratic Republic of Congo border regions where women created alternative agricultural value chains, and challenges Parshotam and Balongo's (2020) documentation of women's continued cross-border trading activities in East African contexts.

The interviews and focus group discussions demonstrated that border conflicts had not merely disrupted women's economic roles but had fundamentally destroyed the economic foundation upon which their livelihoods depended, supporting Mengesha and Berhe's (2021) documentation of systemic economic destruction in Ethiopia-Eritrea border areas, though the Kuria context shows even more comprehensive collapse than their findings. This economic devastation reveals what this study identifies as "adaptive incapacity," where the severity of destruction exceeds women's ability to generate meaningful alternatives, challenging core assumptions in development literature about women's entrepreneurial capacity and informal sector resilience that typically emphasize adaptation rather than acknowledging contexts where conflicts can completely eliminate economic agency rather than simply constraining it.

4.7 Post Border Conflict Coping Mechanisms on Women's Roles

The fourth research objective sought to establish the post-border conflict coping mechanisms on women's roles among the Kuria East Community. This objective aimed to understand the strategies that women have developed to adapt to and recover from the effects of border conflicts on their socio-cultural and economic roles. The examination of coping mechanisms is crucial for identifying both the resilience strategies that women employ and the institutional support systems that facilitate recovery and adaptation. Respondents were asked to evaluate various coping mechanisms including individual skill development, community support systems, government interventions, NGO programs, and collaborative initiatives. The responses were measured on a five-point Likert scale to assess the effectiveness and accessibility of different coping strategies. The post-border conflict coping mechanisms employed by women are presented in Table 4.9.

Table 4.9: Post Border Conflict Coping Mechanisms on Women's Roles

Statements	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	Std. Dev
I have developed new skills to maintain my roles after border conflicts	18.3% (37)	24.8% (50)	28.2% (57)	21.3% (43)	7.4% (15)	2.75	1.18
Women's support groups in my community have helped me recover from conflict effects	14.9% (30)	16.8% (34)	22.8% (46)	32.7% (66)	12.9% (26)	3.12	1.24
Government peace programs have helped restore my ability to carry out normal activities	31.7% (64)	26.2% (53)	23.8% (48)	14.4% (29)	4.0% (8)	2.33	1.16
NGO initiatives have provided resources that support my economic recovery after conflicts	28.7% (58)	23.8% (48)	25.7% (52)	17.8% (36)	4.0% (8)	2.45	1.18
Community peace dialogues have improved security	12.4% (25)	15.8% (32)	24.8% (50)	34.7% (70)	12.4% (25)	3.19	1.20
I have collaborated with other women to develop alternative livelihood strategies	22.8% (46)	21.3% (43)	26.7% (54)	22.3% (45)	6.9% (14)	2.70	1.22
I have access to conflict early warning information on conflict	35.1% (71)	28.2% (57)	21.8% (44)	12.4% (25)	2.5% (5)	2.19	1.13
Average						2.68	1.16

The findings reveal that women's post-conflict coping mechanisms rely primarily on community-based initiatives and informal support networks, while formal institutional interventions have proven largely ineffective in supporting women's recovery and adaptation. Community peace dialogues emerged as the most effective coping mechanism (mean=3.19), with 47.1% of respondents agreeing that these initiatives have improved security conditions. This finding indicates that grassroots peace-building efforts, often involving traditional conflict resolution methods and inter-community dialogue, have been more successful than formal interventions in creating an environment where women can begin to resume their normal activities. This aligns with Odera and Mwangi's (2021) findings in West Pokot and Turkana where community-based peace initiatives proved more effective than formal programs, though the Kuria East context shows even greater reliance on informal mechanisms. The relatively higher effectiveness of community dialogues suggests that locally-driven, culturally appropriate approaches to conflict resolution resonate more strongly with community needs

than externally imposed solutions, supporting Musau and Kosgei's (2023) documentation of successful community-led recovery in Busia border areas.

Women's support groups represented the second most helpful mechanism (mean=3.12), with 45.6% of respondents acknowledging their role in recovery from conflict effects. This finding highlights the critical importance of peer networks and mutual support systems in helping women cope with the trauma and disruption caused by border conflicts. This corroborates with Baines and Paddon's (2019) research in Uganda-South Sudan border regions where women's self-organization proved crucial for recovery, though the Kuria East women show less formal organization compared to their documented cases. These support groups appear to provide not only emotional and social support but also practical assistance in developing survival strategies and maintaining social connections during difficult periods.

However, formal institutional support has proven largely inadequate in supporting women's recovery. Government peace programs received particularly low ratings (mean=2.33), with 57.9% of respondents disagreeing that these programs have helped restore their ability to carry out normal activities. This finding contrasts sharply with Hossain and McSherry's (2021) research in Bangladesh-India border areas where government programs showed moderate effectiveness in supporting women's recovery, suggesting that the Kenyan institutional response may be particularly inadequate. The low effectiveness rating indicates that government interventions may be poorly designed, inadequately implemented, or simply not reaching the women who need them most, contradicting Nyabola and Nanjala's (2022) findings along the Kenya-Somalia border where formal peace programs showed some success.

NGO initiatives also showed limited effectiveness (mean=2.45), with 52.5% of respondents disagreeing that these programs have provided meaningful resources for economic recovery. This finding is particularly concerning given that NGOs are often expected to fill gaps left by government programs and provide more targeted, community-focused interventions. This contrasts with Baines and Paddon's (2019) documentation of effective NGO interventions in Uganda-South Sudan border areas, and challenges the assumptions in much development literature about NGO effectiveness in conflict-affected communities. The low ratings suggest that either NGO presence is limited in the study area or that their programs are not effectively addressing women's specific recovery needs.

Individual and collective adaptation strategies showed mixed results in supporting women's coping efforts. Skill development initiatives received moderate ratings (mean=2.75), with only

28.7% of women agreeing that they have developed new skills to maintain their roles after conflicts. This finding contradicts Hossain and McSherry's (2021) research where women successfully developed new capabilities, and challenges Odera and Mwangi's (2021) documentation of skill development in West Pokot and Turkana. This suggests that while some women have been able to adapt and acquire new capabilities, the majority lack access to skill development opportunities or face barriers in applying new skills within the constrained conflict environment.

Collaboration among women to develop alternative livelihood strategies also showed limited success (mean=2.70), with only 29.2% reporting effective collaboration. This finding indicates that while women recognize the potential value of collective action, they face significant challenges in organizing and implementing collaborative economic initiatives, possibly due to security concerns, resource constraints, or lack of technical support. This contrasts with Musau and Kosgei's (2023) findings in Busia where women's collaborative initiatives proved more successful, suggesting that the severity of conflict in Kuria East may create more barriers to collective action than in other border areas.

Access to conflict early warning information remained severely limited (mean=2.19), with 63.3% of respondents disagreeing that they have access to such information. This represents the lowest mean score among all coping mechanisms and highlights a critical vulnerability in women's ability to prepare for and respond to conflict escalation. This finding aligns with broader documentation of early warning system failures in Kenya's border regions, though it contradicts Nyabola and Nanjala's (2022) findings along the Kenya-Somalia border where some early warning access existed. The lack of early warning access leaves women reactive rather than proactive in their conflict response strategies, unable to take preventive measures to protect themselves, their families, and their economic assets.

The overall mean score (mean=2.68) across all coping mechanisms indicates that women's recovery and adaptation strategies are generally inadequate for addressing the scale and difficulties of challenges posed by border conflicts. This pattern fundamentally challenges assumptions in post-conflict recovery literature about the effectiveness of formal support systems, instead supporting emerging scholarship that emphasizes the importance of community-based approaches. The findings suggest that women are largely left to rely on their own resources and informal community networks, with limited support from formal institutions that should be providing systematic assistance for conflict recovery and peace-building efforts. This institutional inadequacy aligns with Baines and Paddon's (2019) findings in Uganda-South

Sudan border regions where formal recovery programs consistently failed to meet women's actual needs, forcing reliance on autonomous coping mechanisms, while contrasting with Hossain and McSherry's (2021) documentation of more effective institutional support in Bangladesh-India contexts, suggesting that the quality of governance structures significantly influences whether formal systems complement or substitute for women's self-organization during recovery processes. A local administrator from Gwitembe described the minimal institutional support available to women in the most affected areas:

"Sometimes business people help women to survive, business collect food items and distribute them to affected women. Some women work within a major sugarcane company that was set up as a strategy to end war, they work as cooks, cleaners in the company. No, the programs have been slow and don't work at all. There has been no help from any known NGO within Gwitembe." (KII-04, July 11, 2025)

The same administrator highlighted the failure of peace dialogues and the corruption that undermined even well-intentioned assistance:

"Community peace dialogues have failed to fully address the conflict and therefore the socio-cultural and economic activities continue to be affected by the conflict, the two communities have not embraced dialogue. When making any donations towards the victims of the border conflict, is it possible for the donors to do it through collaboration with the affected women rather than using local authorities like chiefs who have been hoarding donations then reselling to the business people within Gwitembe? We find the act to be quite unethical, like the recently donated food staffs by the Area MP that was handed to the area chief was resold to business people instead of helping the women." (KII-04, July 11, 2025)

Focus group participants across wards confirmed the inadequacy of formal support systems. In Gwitembe area, participants shared that *"we have heard about government programs to help us, but we never see them. The chiefs and other leaders take everything for themselves."* (FGD-01, July 10, 2025) Participants in Ntitaru East explained that *"when organizations come to help, they only meet with the men leaders. We women are never consulted about what we really need."* (FGD-05, July 16, 2025)

A women community leader from Ntitaru West acknowledged some government efforts but noted their limited effect:

"The government has tried to initiate joint peace programs between the neighbouring communities, although it hasn't been 100% successful it has been instrumental in providing women a space to undertake their cultural roles. The intervention of non-governmental organization has been minimal, except for the setting up of the sugarcane factory that has helped in offering an alternative source of income for women who cook for factory workers." (KII-01, July 9, 2025).

However, she also pointed to the failure of peace dialogues in the current context:

"No, the dialogues have failed to contribute to women's ability to resume their socio-cultural and economic roles after conflict, especially in the current state of affairs." (KII-01, July 9, 2025).

Some positive examples of government support were mentioned, though their reach appeared limited. A local administrator from Ntitaru West noted:

"Grants by the county government through Gov. Ochillo Oyacko to Women groups have helped women by empowering them to thrive economically." (KII-05, July 12, 2025)

Focus group participants in Gokeharaka/Getambwega mentioned that *"some women's groups have received small grants from the county government, but it's not enough and it doesn't reach everyone. Many groups are still waiting for support that was promised years ago." (FGD-01, July 10, 2025)*

Women's own initiatives had shown some promise, though they operated under severe constraints. A women's group representative from Nyabasi East described grassroots efforts:

"They have decided to formulate women group enterprises to foster them for example the Getongoroma Women Enterprise. By providing them with loans and grants to help them recover from the effect of conflict. Skill trainings/donations. People from both communities are gathered together and trained over positive and negative effects of conflicts. There was common market that was built to enable peaceful coexistence, however due to the failure of the warring communities to have fruitful dialogue, it failed." (KII-08, July 14, 2025)

Another local administrator from Ntitaru West described women's adaptive strategies within their limited options:

"Forming women groups, venturing into simple businesses, developing new skills like tailoring, hairdressing. Getting new loans through joining women groups, chicken rearing, vegetable growing because the extensive agricultural lands cannot be accessed because of war. Growing of improved yams, a project that was brought about by a non-governmental organization." (KII-05, July 12, 2025)

Focus group discussions revealed both the creativity and limitations of women's self-help efforts. Participants in Nyabasi West explained that *"we have formed small groups where we pool our little money together to help each other start small businesses. But it's very difficult because none of us have much money to contribute." (FGD-02, July 11, 2025)* In Ntitaru East, participants shared that *"some women have learned new skills like hairdressing and tailoring,*

but there are not enough customers because everyone is poor due to the conflict." (FGD-05, July 16, 2025)

The interviews revealed a clear pattern where women had been forced to develop their own coping mechanisms with minimal external support. A women community leader from Ntimaru West outlined what additional support was needed:

"There is need to have serious dialogue in terms of farmer to farmer, women to women, men to men, leaders to leaders, joint dialogue meetings between communities and it should cut across the affected counties. The affected people should create room for serious dialogue, all the stakeholders need to clearly walk the talk and truly deliberate on the issues." (KII-01, July 9, 2025)

A local administrator from Gwitembe emphasized the particular vulnerability of young widows and the need for targeted support:

"Since most of the women within Gwitembe are widowed, I would recommend that Government empowers these young women that are left without husbands with one or two children, unable to educate them. The widowed women are mostly very young women aged with most of them being around 18-25 years, these are the most affected widowed young because their husbands are the men that sleep out in the fields/borderline protecting us from the aggression of the warring community." (KII-04, July 11, 2025)

Focus group participants consistently emphasized the need for more inclusive and transparent support systems. In Nyabasi East, participants noted that *"we need programs that involve women directly, not through male leaders who take everything. We know what we need better than anyone else."* (FGD-03, July 12, 2025) Participants in Gokeharaka/Getambwega stressed that *"peace programs should include women's voices because we are the ones who suffer most when there is conflict, and we are the ones who want peace the most."* (FGD-01, July 10, 2025)

Focus group discussions revealed how traditional coping mechanisms had also been disrupted by the conflicts. Participants in Ntimaru West explained that *"the traditional ways we used to help each other during difficult times have been broken. Extended families are scattered, and we cannot travel to support relatives in other areas."* (FGD-04, July 15, 2025) In Nyabasi West, participants shared that *"the community support systems that our mothers and grandmothers relied on no longer work because the community itself is broken by the conflict."* (FGD-02, July 11, 2025)

The qualitative data revealed that while the quantitative results showed limited effectiveness of formal coping mechanisms, the reality on the ground was even more stark. Women were essentially operating without meaningful institutional support, relying on their own

resourcefulness and limited community networks while facing active corruption and dysfunction in the systems that should have been supporting them. This finding contradicts the complementary recovery models documented by Hossain and McSherry (2021) in Bangladesh-India border areas where formal and informal support systems worked together, and challenges Baines and Paddon's (2019) research in Uganda-South Sudan regions where external interventions showed moderate effectiveness in supporting women's recovery.

The systematic corruption and institutional failure documented here contrasts sharply with Nyabola and Nanjala's (2022) findings along the Kenya-Somalia border where some government programs proved helpful, and contradicts Odera and Mwangi's (2021) documentation of functional peace initiatives in West Pokot and Turkana, suggesting that certain border regions may be systematically excluded from effective institutional support. However, the women's demonstrated capacity for self-organization corroborates with Musau and Kosgei's (2023) research in Busia border areas where community-based initiatives proved more sustainable than external interventions. The focus group discussions particularly highlighted how women had to develop entirely new survival strategies while traditional support systems had simultaneously collapsed, leaving them more vulnerable than ever before, revealing what this study identifies as "institutional abandonment with grassroots innovation" a phenomenon that challenges assumptions in post-conflict recovery literature about the necessity of external support for effective community-based initiatives and suggests that institutional failure may paradoxically create conditions for more autonomous and potentially more sustainable approaches to women's recovery.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the summary of key findings, conclusions, and recommendations based on the research objectives. The chapter is organized into four sections: summary of findings organized by research objective; conclusions that interpret the findings; recommendations for policy, practice, and future research; and areas for further studies. The summary synthesizes how border conflicts have affected women's socio-cultural and economic roles among the Kuria East Community, while recommendations provide actionable solutions for stakeholders to support women's recovery and empowerment in conflict-affected areas.

5.2 Summary of Findings

5.2.1 Socio-Cultural and Economic Roles of Women in Border Conflict Areas

The study revealed that women in Kuria East maintain strong authority in traditional domestic responsibilities, particularly in cultural preservation and household management, serving as primary cultural custodians who teach values to younger generations and control food storage systems. However, their participation in public and community spheres remained significantly constrained, with minimal representation in formal community decision-making processes and limited participation in public cultural events due to security concerns and traditional gender constraints. Women's economic roles showed severe limitations, particularly in market-based activities, with restricted access to agricultural trading and limited decision-making authority over household resources despite the community's agricultural foundation. The findings demonstrated that while women retained important responsibilities in cultural transmission and household management, their broader participation in economic and community activities was significantly limited, reflecting both traditional gender constraints and conflict-related security concerns that created an environment where women's traditional roles were disrupted without corresponding empowerment opportunities.

5.2.2 Effect of Border Conflicts on Women's Socio-Cultural Roles

Border conflicts fundamentally disrupted women's socio-cultural lives, creating widespread cultural erosion and family strain while failing to generate meaningful empowerment opportunities in formal leadership roles. The conflicts had their most severe impact on family relationships, with the majority of women reporting significant effects on their relationships

with extended family members, indicating that family cohesion, traditionally a cornerstone of Kuria social structure, had been severely compromised. Women experienced reduced ability to participate in traditional ceremonies and altered approaches to teaching cultural values to younger generations, threatening cultural preservation as women traditionally serve as key custodians of Kuria cultural practices. The conflicts forced substantial changes in women's decision-making regarding children's education, with security concerns overriding traditional educational priorities and forcing mothers to choose between children's safety and educational advancement. Despite these significant disruptions, women did not gain meaningful roles in formal conflict resolution or community leadership, with the vast majority reporting no new leadership roles in peace-building initiatives or increased participation in community security decisions, revealing that traditional gender hierarchies persisted even during crisis periods and excluding women from formal community-level peace processes where their mediation skills could have been valuable.

5.2.3 Effect of Border Conflicts on Women's Economic Roles

Border conflicts severely disrupted women's economic activities, creating widespread economic destabilization while limiting opportunities for meaningful adaptation and empowerment. The most severe economic consequence was the loss of access to crucial market centers, fundamentally compromising market access that was essential to women's trading activities and creating cascading effects on their entire economic livelihood system. Traditional economic systems suffered extensive damage, with women being forced to abandon established farming practices and experiencing complete breakdown of trading partnerships that had been built over years and spanned ethnic boundaries. The conflicts significantly affected women's ability to store and trade agricultural produce, disrupting not only production but also post-harvest activities crucial for maintaining food security and generating income. While many women were pushed to seek alternative income sources beyond farming, this adaptation proved more reactive than transformative, with few women successfully developing new economic skills despite pressure to find alternatives, indicating limited access to training, resources, or opportunities necessary for meaningful economic transformation. The conflicts primarily destroyed existing economic capacity rather than creating new economic empowerment opportunities, with women struggling to maintain basic economic functions rather than developing enhanced economic capacity or authority, highlighting the destructive rather than transformative nature of border conflicts on women's economic lives.

5.2.4 Post Border Conflict Coping Mechanisms on Women's Roles

The study found that women's post-conflict coping mechanisms relied primarily on community-based initiatives and informal support networks, while formal institutional interventions proved largely ineffective in supporting women's recovery and adaptation. Community peace dialogues emerged as the most effective coping mechanism, with grassroots peace-building efforts involving traditional conflict resolution methods and inter-community dialogue proving more successful than formal interventions in creating environments where women could begin resuming normal activities. Women's support groups represented the second most helpful mechanism, highlighting the critical importance of peer networks and mutual support systems in helping women cope with trauma and disruption while providing practical assistance in developing survival strategies and maintaining social connections during difficult periods. However, formal institutional support proved largely inadequate, with government peace programs receiving particularly low ratings due to poor design, inadequate implementation, or failure to reach women who needed them most, while NGO initiatives also showed limited effectiveness in providing meaningful resources for economic recovery. Individual and collective adaptation strategies showed mixed results, with limited success in skill development initiatives and collaboration among women to develop alternative livelihood strategies, while access to conflict early warning information remained severely limited, leaving women reactive rather than proactive in their conflict response strategies. Overall, women were largely left to rely on their own resources and informal community networks, with minimal support from formal institutions that should have been providing systematic assistance for conflict recovery and peace-building efforts.

5.3 Conclusions

Based on the study findings, border conflicts among the Kuria East Community have fundamentally disrupted women's traditional roles while failing to create meaningful empowerment opportunities, resulting in increased burdens without corresponding gains in formal authority or economic independence. The findings on women's baseline roles revealed that women maintained strong authority in domestic responsibilities, particularly cultural preservation and household management, but faced significant constraints in public participation and economic activities, with minimal representation in community decision-making processes and limited market participation despite the community's agricultural foundation.

The study's findings on socio-cultural effects demonstrate that border conflicts severely disrupted family relationships, reduced women's participation in traditional ceremonies, and compromised their ability to transmit cultural values to younger generations, while simultaneously denying them access to formal leadership and peace-building roles. These findings reveal what this study identifies as "selective disempowerment," where women retain certain traditional responsibilities while losing decision-making authority, indicating that border conflicts can strengthen patriarchal structures rather than create transformative opportunities for gender equality.

Regarding economic effects, the findings showed that border conflicts created widespread economic devastation rather than transformation, with women losing access to crucial markets, abandoning traditional farming practices, and experiencing breakdown of inter-community trading relationships that previously sustained their livelihoods. The findings demonstrated that fear of violence became the primary constraint on women's economic participation, effectively paralyzing productive activities while forcing women into dependency relationships rather than economic empowerment, with few women successfully developing new economic skills despite pressure to find alternatives.

Concerning coping mechanisms, the findings revealed that women were largely abandoned by formal institutional support systems, with government programs and NGO interventions proving inadequate while corruption undermined assistance efforts. However, the findings also showed that women demonstrated remarkable agency in developing grassroots coping strategies through self-organization and peer networks, with community-based initiatives consistently outperforming formal interventions, suggesting that effective post-conflict support requires community-designed rather than externally-imposed solutions.

5.4 Recommendations

Based on the study findings, the following recommendations are proposed for policy, practice, and future research to address the challenges faced by women in border conflict situations and support their recovery and empowerment.

5.4.1 Policy Recommendations

The national and county governments should develop a comprehensive Border Conflict Women's Protection Policy that specifically addresses the unique vulnerabilities of diverse groups of women identified in this study. Young widows, who constitute the most affected demographic, require direct financial assistance, income generation support, and psychosocial

counseling. Elderly women who have lost adult children need healthcare subsidies, food security programs, and support for caring for orphaned grandchildren. Young unmarried women should receive educational scholarships and skills training, while married women need couple counseling and household economic strengthening programs. Women with disabilities require specialized support including accessible aid distribution points, assistive devices, and inclusive economic programs. The policy framework should establish transparent aid distribution mechanisms that work directly with diverse women's groups, recognizing that border conflicts create distinct forms of gendered vulnerability across different demographic categories.

Peace building policies should be reformed to mandate meaningful participation of diverse women's groups at all levels of conflict resolution processes. Legislative reforms should require proportional representation of young women, elderly women, widows, married women, and women with disabilities on all peace building committees, early warning systems, and post conflict recovery planning bodies. Young widows should be specifically included in peacebuilding leadership given their direct experience of conflict losses, while elderly women should contribute traditional conflict resolution knowledge. Constitutional amendments should guarantee diverse women's participation in traditional conflict resolution mechanisms, ensuring that customary law practices align with gender equality principles.

Gender responsive budgeting should be implemented at county level with specific budget lines for young widows' entrepreneurship support, elderly women's food security programs, unmarried women's skills training, married women's cooperative development, and accessible infrastructure for women with disabilities. County governments must allocate minimum percentages of development budgets for women's economic empowerment across diverse groups, with performance indicators measuring actual outcomes for each demographic category.

5.4.2 Practice Recommendations

Development practitioners should prioritize community based approaches that recognize different constraints and strengths across young women, elderly women, widows, married women, and women with disabilities. NGOs and government agencies should establish permanent presence in conflict epicenters with interventions tailored to specific needs: young widows require immediate livelihood support and childcare assistance, elderly women need healthcare and social protection, young unmarried women benefit from education and skills

training, married women require household economic strengthening, and women with disabilities need accessible services and assistive technology.

Economic recovery programs should rebuild inter community trading relationships while accommodating diverse women's needs. This requires safe trading spaces accessible to women with disabilities, conflict sensitive approaches addressing mobility constraints of elderly women, and support for caregiving responsibilities of young widows. Programs must ensure that reconstruction of cross border economic relationships benefits all women's groups.

Capacity building programs should strengthen women's groups ensuring diverse membership representation, supporting evolution into formal economic enterprises through technical assistance while adapting traditional collective labor systems to accommodate elderly women's reduced physical capacity and providing childcare support for young widows and married women. Cultural preservation initiatives should recognize that elderly women hold critical traditional knowledge requiring transmission to younger generations, while providing widows access to community elders for continued cultural participation and transmission to their children.

5.4.3 Areas for Further Studies

Future research should examine whether the patterns of selective disempowerment documented in Kuria East represent broader phenomena across different border conflict contexts in East Africa, particularly investigating how ethnic identity, land tenure systems, and governance structures interact to shape gendered conflict outcomes. Longitudinal studies tracking women's role transformations over extended post-conflict periods would reveal whether documented disruptions represent temporary adaptations or permanent changes, while comparative research across different conflict types would determine the generalizability of findings about territorial disputes versus other forms of border conflicts.

Additional research should include both genders to capture the full scope of conflict effects, as men in the study area also experienced significant losses including land, sons, and property. Comparative research should include the Kipsigis community perspective to provide a more balanced understanding of the conflict dynamics and their gendered effects across ethnic boundaries. Future studies should also examine the role of leaders and authorities in conflict resolution, particularly investigating how governance structures either perpetuate or help resolve border conflicts like the Gwitembe situation.

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APPENDICES

Appendix I: Introduction Letter

Institute of Gender Women and Development Studies

Egerton University

P.O. Box 536-20115 Egerton, Kenya

16th June, 2024

Dear Respondent,

RE: RESEARCH ON THE EFFECTS OF BORDER CONFLICTS ON SELECTED WOMEN ROLES AMONG THE KURIA EAST COMMUNITY IN MIGORI COUNTY, KENYA

I am Nyakeri Jerida Gati, a Master of Arts student in Gender and Development Studies at Egerton University. I am conducting research on how border conflicts affect women's roles in the Kuria community, particularly in Kuria East constituency.

You have been selected to participate in this study. The information you provide was treated with utmost confidentiality and used solely for academic purposes. Your participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time without penalty.

The findings from this study will contribute to understanding how border conflicts affect women's roles and may inform policies and programs aimed at supporting women in conflict-affected areas.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Yours faithfully,

Nyakeri Jerida Gati

Appendix II: Questionnaire for Kuria Women

Dear Respondent, I am a postgraduate student at Egerton University conducting research on the effect of border conflicts on women's roles in the Kuria community. This questionnaire aims to gather information about your experiences and observations. Your responses will be treated with strict confidentiality and used solely for academic purposes. Your honest responses will be highly appreciated.

Instructions:

- Please answer all questions as honestly as possible
- Mark (✓) where appropriate
- Your responses will remain anonymous and confidential
- Feel free to seek clarification where needed

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

1. Age bracket (years): 18-25 26-35 36-45 46-55 Above 55
2. Marital Status: Single Married Widowed Divorced/Separated
3. Education Level: No formal education Primary Secondary College/University
 Other (specify) _____
4. Main Occupation (Select all that apply): Farmer Trader Formal employment
Business owner Other (specify) _____
5. Number of dependents: None 1-3 4-6 Above 6
6. Ward of residence in Kuria East: Gokeharaka/Getambwega Nyabasi West
Nyabasi East Ntimaru West Ntimaru East
7. Length of stay in current location: Less than 5 years 5-10 years 11-15 years
Over 15 years

OBJECTIVE 1: SOCIO-CULTURAL AND ECONOMIC ROLES OF WOMEN

Instructions:

- Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements using the scale: **5 = Strongly Agree (SA)**, **4 = Agree (A)**, **3 = Neutral (N)**, **2 = Disagree (D)**, **1 = Strongly Disagree (SD)**

	Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA
1.	I actively participate in cultural practices in the community.					
2.	I am responsible for teaching cultural values to younger family members.					
3.	I make decisions regarding household resource allocation					
4.	I participate in local market trading of agricultural produce.					
5.	I maintain control over food storage.					
6.	I participate in family-level conflict resolution.					
7.	I have a role in community decision-making processes.					

8. How have your roles as a woman changed in the past five years? (Select all that apply)

- Increased household responsibilities
- More involvement in income-generating activities
- Greater decision-making power in the family
- Reduced participation in community activities
- Took on new leadership roles
- No significant changes
- Other (please specify)

OBJECTIVE 2: EFFECT OF BORDER CONFLICTS ON SOCIO-CULTURAL ROLES

Instructions:

- Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements using the scale: **5 = Strongly Agree (SA), 4 = Agree (A), 3 = Neutral (N), 2 = Disagree (D), 1 = Strongly Disagree (SD)**

	Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA
1.	Border conflicts have reduced my ability to participate in traditional ceremonies.					
2.	I have taken on new leadership roles in community peace-building initiatives.					
3.	Conflicts have changed how I make decisions about children's education.					
4.	My role in conflict mediation has expanded beyond family to community.					
5.	Border conflicts have affected my relationships with extended family members.					
6.	I now participate more actively in community security decisions.					
7.	The conflicts have changed how I teach cultural values					

8. How have border conflicts affected your role in cultural or family activities? (Select all that apply)

- Limited my participation in important community ceremonies
- Disrupted family gatherings and relationships
- Changed how I teach cultural values to children
- Increased my responsibility for family protection
- Reduced my ability to maintain cultural practices
- Forced me to take on new community leadership roles
- No significant effect
- Other (please specify): _____

OBJECTIVE 3: EFFECT OF BORDER CONFLICTS ON ECONOMIC ROLES

Instructions:

- Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements using the scale: **5 = Strongly Agree (SA)**, **4 = Agree (A)**, **3 = Neutral (N)**, **2 = Disagree (D)**, **1 = Strongly Disagree (SD)**

	Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA
1.	Border conflicts have forced me to change my traditional farming practices.					
2.	I have lost access to crucial market centers due to border conflicts.					
3.	The conflicts have pushed me to seek alternative sources of income beyond farming.					
4.	Border tensions have affected my ability to store and trade agricultural produce.					
5.	I have become the primary provider for my household due to conflict situations.					
6.	The conflicts have affected my ability to maintain traditional trading partnerships.					
7.	I have developed new economic skills due to the changing conflict situation.					

8. What economic challenges do you face due to border conflicts? (Select all that apply)

- Limited access to farms/land
- Reduced market opportunities
- Loss of livestock/property
- Higher transportation costs
- Difficulty accessing credit/loans
- Theft/destruction of produce
- Personal security concerns when conducting business
- Other (please specify): _____

OBJECTIVE 4: POST BORDER CONFLICT COPING MECHANISMS

Instructions:

- Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements using the scale:
5 = Strongly Agree (SA), 4 = Agree (A), 3 = Neutral (N), 2 = Disagree (D), 1 = Strongly Disagree (SD)

	Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA
1.	I have developed new skills to maintain my roles after border conflicts.					
2.	Women's support groups in my community have helped me recover from conflict effects.					
3.	Government peace programs have helped restore my ability to carry out normal activities.					
4.	NGO initiatives have provided resources that support my economic recovery after conflicts.					
5.	Community peace dialogues have improved security					
6.	I have collaborated with other women to develop alternative livelihood strategies.					
7.	I have access to conflict early warning information on conflict					

8. What specific coping strategies have you found most effective after border conflicts? (Select all that apply)

- Forming/joining women's support groups
- Creating alternative income sources
- Participating in peace initiatives
- Relocating temporarily during conflicts
- Pooling resources with other families
- Using early warning systems
- Other (please specify): _____

9. What additional support would be most helpful for women affected by border conflicts? (Select all that apply)

- Financial assistance/loans
- Skills training programs
- Better security systems

- Improved conflict resolution mechanisms
- Counseling/psychosocial support
- Agricultural inputs/support
- Other (please specify): _____

Appendix III: Key Informant Interview Guide

Date of Interview: _____

Location: _____

Position of Informant: _____

Duration in Position: _____

Introduction: Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. As a key informant, your insights about the effect of border conflicts on women's roles in the Kuria community are valuable for this research.

A. Traditional Roles of Women

1. What are the traditional socio-cultural roles of Kuria women in this community?
2. How do women traditionally participate in economic activities in this area?
3. What authority do women traditionally hold in household and community decision-making?

B. Effect of Conflicts on Socio-Cultural Roles

1. How have border conflicts changed women's participation in cultural practices?
2. What new leadership roles have emerged for women due to these conflicts?
3. How have family and community relationships been affected?
4. What changes have you observed in women's decision-making authority during conflicts?

C. Effect on Economic Activities

1. How have border conflicts affected women's farming and trading activities?
2. What changes have occurred in women's access to markets and resources?
3. How have traditional economic support systems been affected?
4. What new economic responsibilities have women taken on due to conflicts?

D. Post Border Conflict Coping Mechanisms

1. What strategies have women in this community developed to cope with the effects of border conflicts on their roles? (e.g., support groups, alternative livelihood approaches, informal security networks)
2. How have government peace programs helped women restore or adapt their traditional roles after border conflicts?
3. What specific NGO interventions have been most effective in supporting women's recovery from border conflicts in this community?
4. How have community peace dialogues contributed to women's ability to resume their socio-cultural and economic activities after conflicts?
5. What collaborations between women's initiatives and external stakeholders (government, NGOs) have been most successful in helping women cope with conflict effects?
6. What additional coping mechanisms or support systems do you think would better help women manage their roles during and after border conflicts?

Appendix IV: Focus Group Discussion Guide

Date of FGD: _____

Location: _____

Number of Participants: _____

Duration: _____

Introduction: Thank you for agreeing to participate in this focus group discussion. As women from the Kuria East community, your insights and experiences regarding the effect of border conflicts on women's roles are invaluable for this research.

A. Traditional Roles of Women

1. What are the main socio-cultural and economic roles of Kuria women in this community during peaceful times?
2. How much decision-making authority do women traditionally hold in households and the community?

B. Effect of Conflicts on Socio-Cultural Roles

1. How have border conflicts changed women's participation in cultural practices and family relationships?
2. What new responsibilities or leadership roles have emerged for women due to these conflicts?

C. Effect on Economic Activities

1. How have border conflicts affected women's farming, trading, and access to resources?
2. What new economic challenges or opportunities have emerged for women during conflict periods?

D. Post Border Conflict Coping Mechanisms

1. What strategies have you and other women developed to cope with conflict effects on your roles, and how effective have these been?
2. How have external support systems (government programs, NGOs, community dialogues) helped you recover after conflicts?
3. Based on your experiences, what additional support would help women better manage their responsibilities during and after border conflicts?

Appendix V: Documentary Analysis Matrix

Document Type	Source	Date	Key Findings Related to Women's Roles
Peace Committee Assessment Report	International Alert	November 2021	"Peace committees had been moribund since the culmination of 2017 elections" with minimal women's representation in leadership structures
Peace Committee Documentation	International Alert	November 2021	"The county faces many conflict issues including livestock theft, illegal female circumcision ceremonies, violent crimes using illegal firearms"
Peace Committee Activity Report	International Alert	November 2021	Peace committees "recovered 16 illegal firearms across the region" but no mention of women's participation in disarmament efforts
County Government Gender Report	Kenya News Agency	2024	"Cross border FGM remained the biggest hindrance to the eradication of the vice" affecting women and girls
Gender-Based Violence Assessment	Kenya News Agency	2024	"Gender Based Violence (GBV), Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and early marriage are some of the major problems affecting the girl child"
Women's Economic Empowerment Report	Women Enterprise Fund	November 2019	"58 women groups in Migori County received Ksh 11 million" with 634 beneficiaries from Kuria East and other sub-counties
Women's Enterprise Funding Data	Women Enterprise Fund	November 2019	"Women invested 56 percent of the loan in Trade while 36 percent was invested in Agriculture sector"
County Empowerment Initiative Documentation	Migori County Government	March 2024	International Women's Day celebrations highlighting "women's empowerment initiatives led by county leadership"
Women's Group Funding Report	Kenya News Agency	February 2024	"Loving sisters' women group" received Sh100,000 from NGAAF to "support Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)"
Electoral Participation Assessment	Kenya News Agency	2022	"Only 7 per cent of Women have been elected as Members of the County Assembly (MCAs) in Migori County"

Cross-Border Conflict Documentation	Kenya News Agency	June 2025	Government "moves to mop up illegal arms in Kuria" addressing "endless cases of killings related to land disputes, heightened cattle thefts"
Border Conflict Assessment	Nation Africa	October 2024	"4,000 acres of disputed land between Kipsigis, Maasai and Kuria communities has been a source of contention for nearly 40 years"
Community Response Documentation	Kenya News Agency	2025	"21 stolen cattle surrendered at the contentious 10 km border between Kuria and Kipsigis communities"
Health and Social Services Report	Network for Adolescents and Youth of Africa	April 2024	"Migori County has been leading in incidences of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), sexual and gender-based violence, teenage pregnancy"
Peace Committee Structure Report	International Alert	November 2021	Kuria East Sub County Peace Committee chaired by Mutatiro with limited mention of women members

Appendix VI: Content Analysis Summary

Objective	Key Themes	Findings
Objective 1: Traditional Roles	Cultural Custodianship	- Women central to cultural transmission and ceremonial responsibilities - Women are backbone of cultural ceremonies...know all traditional songs
	Domestic Authority	- Strong control over food storage and household management - Authority centered around food storage and dietary at home"
	Economic Participation	- Subsistence farming and small-scale trading - Traditional collective labor systems
	Limited Public Roles	- Minimal community decision-making authority - Women do not play huge role in household and community decision making"
Objective 2: Socio-Cultural Effects	Cultural Practice Disruption	- Traditional ceremonies cancelled or rushed due to security fears - Embutura celebrations no longer take place...attackers attack during ceremonies.
	Family Relationship Breakdown	- Widespread widowhood and family separation - Families broken, husbands killed, children killed...class 8 student shot dead
	Limited Leadership Emergence	- Minimal formal leadership roles despite crisis - No women leadership emerge...mostly subordinates...always on the run.
	Forced Role Changes	- Women taking charge of households during men's absence - Women ensure survival while men protect community
Objective 3: Economic Effects	Economic Collapse	- Complete cessation of farming in conflict epicenters - Women have nothing to do...unable to plant bananas, sweet potatoes.
	Security-Economic Nexus	- Fear-based restrictions on economic activities - Aggressors use fields as cover to ambush and kill

Objective	Key Themes	Findings
Objective 4: Coping Mechanisms	Trading Relationship Breakdown	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Loss of inter-community economic partnerships - Women used to trade with Kipsigis...now unable to access markets
	Forced Adaptations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Shift to small-scale, home-based economic activities - Limited success in alternative livelihood development
	Institutional Failure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Government programs ineffective, NGO absence - Programs slow and don't work...no help from any NGO in Gwitembe
	Corruption in Aid	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Local authorities misappropriating assistance - Chiefs hoarding donations then reselling to business people.
	Women's Self-Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Formation of women's groups and enterprise - Women decided to formulate enterprises...Getongoroma Women Enterprise.
	Traditional Support Breakdown	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Collapse of indigenous coping systems
	Community-Based Solutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Peace dialogues and religious mobilization - Limited effectiveness in current conflict context

Appendix VII: Ethical Clearance

EGERTON

TEL: (051) 2217808
FAX: 051-2217942



UNIVERSITY

P. O. BOX 536
EGERTON

**EGERTON UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL SCIENTIFIC AND ETHICS REVIEW
COMMITTEE**

EU/RE/DIR/009

Approval No. EUISERC/APP/434/2025

20th May 2025

Nyakeri Jerida Gati
P.O Box 7054-00200,
Nairobi
Telephone: +254(0)727761064
Email: gatijerida@gmail.com

Dear Jerida,

**RE: ETHICAL APPROVAL: EFFECT OF BORDER CONFLICTS ON SELECTED
WOMEN ROLES AMONG THE KURIA EAST COMMUNITY IN MIGORI COUNTY,
KENYA**

This is to inform you that the *Egerton University Institutional Scientific and Ethics Review Committee* has reviewed and approved your above research proposal. Your application approval number is *EUISERC/APP/434/2025*. The approval period is *20th May 2025 – 21st May 2026*. This approval is subject to compliance with the following requirements;

- i. Only approved documents including (informed consents, study instruments, MTA) will be used.
- ii. All changes including (amendments, deviations, and violations) are submitted for review and approval by *Egerton University Institutional Scientific and Ethics Review Committee*.
- iii. Death and life-threatening problems and serious adverse events or unexpected adverse events whether related or unrelated to the study must be reported to *Egerton University Institutional Scientific and Ethics Review Committee* within 72 hours of notification
- iv. Any changes, anticipated or otherwise that may increase the risks or affect safety or welfare of study participants and others or affect the integrity of the research must be reported to *Egerton University Institutional Scientific and Ethics Review Committee* within 72 hours.
- v. Clearance for Material Transfer of biological specimens must be obtained from relevant institutions.

"Transforming Lives through Quality Education"

- vi. Submission of a request for renewal of approval at least 60 days prior to the expiry of the approval period. Attach a comprehensive progress report to support the renewal.
- vii. Submission of an executive summary report within 90 days upon completion of the study to *Egerton University Institutional Scientific and Ethics Review Committee*.

Prior to commencing your study, you will be expected to obtain a research license from National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) <https://oris.nacosti.go.ke> and also obtain other clearances needed.

Yours sincerely,



Prof. Lawrence Kangogo Kibet PhD
VICE- CHAIRMAN, EUISERC
LKK/BK/



Appendix VIII: NACOSTI Introductory Letter

EGERTON
Tel: Pilot: 254-51-2217620
254-51-2217877
254-51-2217631
Dir. line/Fax: 254-51-2217847
Cell Phone



UNIVERSITY
P.O. Box 536 - 20115
Egerton, Njoro, Kenya
Email: bpgs@egerton.ac.ke
www.egerton.ac.ke

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR, GRADUATE SCHOOL

GM11/12006/22
Ref:.....

22nd July, 2025
Date:.....

The Director General
National Commission for Science Technology and Innovation,
P. O. Box 30623-00100
NAIROBI.

Dear Sir,

**RE: REQUEST FOR RESEARCH PERMIT – MS. NYAKERI JERIDA
GATI REG. NO. GM11/12006/22**

This is to introduce and confirm to you that the above named student is in the Department of Women, Gender & Development Studies, Faculty of Arts, Egerton University.

She is a bona-fide registered M.A student in this University. Her research topic is “Effect of Border Conflicts on Selected Women Roles among The Kuria East Community in Migori County, Kenya.”

She is at the stage of collecting field data. Please issue her with a research permit to enable her undertake the studies.

Your kind assistance to her will be highly appreciated.

Yours faithfully,


Prof. Charles M. M'Erumba. Ph.D
DIRECTOR, DIRECTORATE OF POSTGRADUATE STUDIES
CMM/mm



Transforming Lives Through Quality Education

Appendix X: Migori County Commissioner Research Authorization



**OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
MINISTRY OF INTERIOR AND NATIONAL ADMINISTRATION
STATE DEPARTMENT FOR INTERNAL SECURITY AND NATIONAL
ADMINISTRATION**

Telephone: (059) 20511

FAX (059)20361

Email:

countycommissionermigori@yahoo.com

THE COUNTY COMMISSIONER
MIGORI COUNTY
P.O. BOX 2 - 40400
SUNA - MIGORI

Ref. No: CC ED.12/19VOLIV/390

Date: 25th July, 2025

Deputy County Commissioner
Ntitaru Sub County
MIGORI COUNTY

Departments and Agencies (MDAs)
MIGORI COUNTY

RE: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION

This is to confirm that Ms. Jerida Gati Nyakeri of Egerton University, has been licensed to conduct research NACOSTI/P/25/4176074- *on Effect of Border Conflicts on Selected Women Role among the Kuria East Community in Migori County, Kenya* starting 20th May, 2025 and ending 21st May, 2026.

Accord her the necessary assistance.

P.P. 
KISILU MUTUA
COUNTY COMMISSIONER
MIGORI COUNTY

CC:
COUNTY DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION
MIGORI COUNTY





Border Conflicts and Socio-Cultural Roles of Women Among the Kuria East Community in Migori County, Kenya

Nyakeri Jerida Gati¹, Lilian Chesikaw², Shadrack Cheplogoi³

¹Postgraduate student at Egerton University, Kenya

²Institute of Gender Women and Development Studies, Egerton University, Kenya

³Department of Agricultural Education & Extension, Egerton University, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

Border conflicts fundamentally reshape women's socio-cultural roles in traditional communities, yet limited research examines these transformations in African agricultural settings. This study investigated how territorial disputes and resource conflicts affect women's socio-cultural roles among the Kuria East Community in Migori County, Kenya. The study employed Feminist Conflict Theory with a descriptive mixed-methods approach. The target population comprises 42,000 Kuria women aged 18+ in conflict-affected areas, with a sample size of 224 respondents. Data collection involved structured questionnaires administered to women participants, semi-structured interviews with key informants including community leaders and local administrators, and documentary review of relevant reports and records. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics while qualitative data was analyzed using thematic analysis to identify patterns related to role transformations. Findings reveal that border conflicts severely disrupted women's socio-cultural lives, with 67.8% experiencing affected family relationships and 59.9% reporting reduced ceremonial participation. The conflicts forced substantial changes in women's approach to children's education (59.9%) and altered cultural transmission practices (54.9%), threatening cultural preservation as women traditionally serve as key custodians of Kuria cultural practices. Despite significant disruptions, women gained minimal formal leadership roles (4.0%), revealing persistent gender hierarchies during crisis periods. The study concludes that border conflicts systematically erode women's traditional cultural authority while failing to create meaningful empowerment opportunities, resulting in increased burdens without corresponding gains in formal power. The research recommends developing comprehensive cultural preservation policies, reforming peace-building processes to include women's voices, and prioritizing community-based approaches that support women's roles as cultural custodians.

Keywords: Border conflicts, women's roles, socio-cultural transformation, Kuria community, cultural preservation, gender empowerment