

Inter-Communal conflict between Guji and Koore, Southern Ethiopia

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Abstract

Inter-Communal conflict is serious challenges in any multi-community federation like Ethiopia. This study deals with the inter-communal conflict between the Guji and Koore ethnic groups. The aim of this manuscript is to examine the underlying causes, contributing factors, actors, dynamics, and impacts of the communal conflict in the study area. Methodologically, the researcher employed a qualitative research approach with an exploratory research design. The manuscript relied on both primary and secondary sources of data. The analysis of qualitative data was made using thematic data analysis. The findings of this study reveal that the Guji and Koore have had a long history of friendly coexistence and occasional conflict. In earlier times, the Guji-Koore conflict was caused by competition over land resources for farming and grazing. Nevertheless, after three decades, conflicts have intensified and changed due to a range of factors. The actors involved in the conflict were individual agriculturalists and agro-pastoralists, youth and adults, the OLF fighters, the political elites and women, who played a role by aggravating and encouraging the people. Indeed, the study revealed and analyzed the consequences and impacts of Guji-Koore conflict on social, economic, and political life the both groups. To manage the conflict and build peace in the study area, formal and indigenous mechanisms of conflict management and peacebuilding were undertaken. However, the attempts failed to address the root causes of the conflict and build lasting peace. The current study shows that the area needs immediate attention from all concerned bodies and should implement different mechanisms and strategies to bring peace to the study area.

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1. Background

Conflict and disagreement is a natural part of human interaction and can arise between individuals, groups and even nations. It is a natural result that happens when peoples are competing for the same resources, power, or recognition [1]. Since colonial rule come to an end, Africa has been grappling with various forms of conflict, including internal strife. The continent has witnessed numerous wars, ethnic clashes, and political turmoil that are reason for the displacement of millions of people and a severe humanitarian crisis in many regions. For several centuries, the Horn of Africa, specifically Ethiopia has been home to a diverse array of human interactions and complex social dynamics. Where there is high human interaction, the same is true: the opportunity for conflict is high. Ethnic conflict has become widespread and significant aspect of political and social conflict in several countries globally. According to [2], in recent years, ethnic-nationalist conflicts have become the common forms of large-scale political violence.

Inter-communal conflict in southern Ethiopia holds significant implications for the stability and development of the region. The ongoing violence hampers economic growth, disrupts infrastructure projects, and undermines efforts towards social cohesion and peacebuilding. Moreover, the displacement of innocent civilians exacerbates existing difficulties in offering fundamental services like healthcare, education and food security. Resolving this conflict is crucial for fostering sustainable development and ensuring the well-being of all communities in southern Ethiopia.

Competition for resources, including land and water, has fueled tensions between different communal groups in the region. This has led to violent clashes and ongoing instability, hindering progress and hindering the region's potential for economic growth. Additionally, the conflict has created a climate of fear and mistrust among communities, making it difficult to build the necessary social cohesion for long-term peace and development.

While there is some research on conflicts between inter-communal communities in southern Ethiopia, there are still some gaps in our understanding. The aim of this research is to examine the disagreement between Guji-Oromo and Koore in Southern Ethiopia. Most studies for instance, [3,4,5,6,7,8], are only provide a general overview of the tendency towards conflict in the region and its neighboring areas, without delving into specific case studies, such as the Guji-Koore conflicts. Other researchers, such as [9,10,11], have studied the same area, but they have mainly focused on the nature of the conflict between Guji and Koore communities, with less emphasis on identifying the contributing factors, actors, dynamics, and impacts of the conflict. The Guji-Koore inter-communal conflict has not been extensively studied, and there is a lack of research on its underlying causes, contributing factors, actors, dynamics, and impacts. This study aims to address this knowledge gap and provide a deeper understanding of the conflict.

1.1. Historical Context of the Guji-Oromo and Koore communities

The Guji Oromo and Koore communities have a long history of coexistence in the region, sharing cultural traditions and intermarrying. The Guji people are traditionally agro-pastoralists and are known for their unique culture and traditions. They have a strong musical heritage, with a unique style of singing and dancing that is

distinct from other ethnic groups in the region. They also have a rich tradition of storytelling, with stories passed down from generation to generation through oral tradition. The Koore people, on the other hand, are known for their expertise in agriculture and farming. Both communities have a long history of interaction and cooperation, with intermarriage and cultural exchange being common practices.

Overall, the Guji and Koore communities are an important part of Ethiopia's cultural heritage, and their unique traditions and practices are an important part of the country's rich cultural diversity. In the past, reveals that they have been deep-rooted economic inter-dependence, trade transactions and a variety of economic relations. The diversity of products and their proximity to one another leads to a reliance on local markets for the exchange of crops and livestock, which in turn affects their economic relationships. Additionally, they have socio-cultural similarities, including language, religion, food, historical memories, and traditional practices. Among different factors for harmonious relations, inter-marriage relations have been the most influential factor between two ethnic groups.

However, they have also had their share of conflicts, particularly over land and resource use. The issue of land ownership and resource allocation has been a recurring source of tension between them. This conflict dates back to colonial times when boundaries were drawn without considering the traditional territories of these communities, leading to disputes over land rights. Additionally, the legacy of past conflicts and unresolved grievances has further fueled animosity between the Guji Oromo and Koore communities

The conflict between Guji Oromo and Koore in southern Ethiopia has been a longstanding issue rooted in historical tensions and territorial disputes. Both ethnic groups have competing claims over land and resources, leading to frequent clashes and violence. The conflict has not only caused significant loss of life but has also resulted in the displacement of many innocent civilians, exacerbating an already dire humanitarian situation in the region. Additionally, in recent years, the Guji and Koore communities have faced challenges related to climate change, deforestation, and encroachment by large-scale agricultural projects. These challenges have threatened their traditional ways of life and have forced many to adapt to new circumstances. This Manuscript attempts to answer the key questions such as: What are the causes of the Guji and Koore inter-communal conflict? Who are the key actors in the inter-communal conflict of the study area? How does the conflict affect the study area? What are the changing circumstances of the inter-communal conflict in the study area?

2. Methodology

2.1. Description of the Study area

The research was conducted in two locations: Guji in the Oromia Regional State and Koore in the Southern Ethiopia regional states.

The Guji people are a clan of the Oromo nation who mainly live in the Guji and Borana zones of the Oromia regional state. They speak the Oromo language, which is the most widely spoken Cushitic language in the Horn of Africa. The Guji region is bordered by several other ethnic groups, including the Arsi-Oromo to the east and the Ganale river to the west and northwest. It's also bordered by Lake Abbaya to the northwest, which separates

the Borena zone from other zones in the SNNPRs. Additionally, the Guji region is bordered by the Gedeo people to the north, the Sidama people to the east and northeast, the Koore people to the west and southwest, and the Borena-Oromo people to the south. In the West Guji zone, there is a woreda called Gelana, which is bordered by the Koore people. Gelana woreda is located in the south of Oromia regional state and has 19 kebeles (sub-districts). The administrative town of Gelana woreda is Toore. The woreda is situated 400km south and 60km north of Addis Ababa and Bule Hora zonal cities, respectively.

According to [12], in the past, the Guji people relied solely on pastoralism for their economic livelihood. However, some groups began to shift towards an agro-pastoralist system, while others in the highlands transitioned to agriculture. Because of their pastoralist lifestyle, the Guji encountered resource competition with neighboring communities that were both agrarian and pastoral. These interactions had both conflicting and interdependent aspects, and the Guji had a history of conflict with neighboring Oromo and non-Oromo communities, except for the Gedeo.

The Koore people inhabit the South Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples Regional State. Koore is situated near several other regions, including Burji special woreda to the south, Konso special woreda to the southwest, Drashe special woreda to the west, Gamo Gofa and Lake Chami to the northwest, Lake Abaya to the north, and Oromia Region to the east and northeast. The total area of Koore is approximately 107,980 hectares and is divided into 33 rural kebele peasant associations and one town administration. Interestingly, more than 25 kebeles of Koore share a border with 19 kebeles of Gelana woreda in the west Guji zone. The political and economic center of Koore District is located in Kelle town. Linguistically and culturally, the Koore people are part of the Omotic family and share similarities with the Wolaita and Gamo people of the Horn of Africa [13].

The Koore society's main economic activity has been and still is subsistence agriculture, with enset being the most important crop. Since enset is crucial to their livelihood, the Koore people have always sought productive land for its cultivation. Additionally, enset has become an integral part of Koore's culture, serving as a stable food source for a long time. While other foods like wheat, barley, sorghum, peas, and teff are also consumed, they are considered supplementary to enset [9].

2.2. Methodology approach

This study is framed by social research methods. To understand what goes on in society that is unresolved and to identify the literature gap, inconsistency between studies, or unresolved issues in the literature, the social research method is selected. The researchers also used a purely qualitative research approach, which involves gathering data that describes the phenomena and then organizing and describing the meaning of the collected data. The intent of qualitative research is to understand a particular social situation, event, role, group, or interaction. It is also the means for exploring and understanding the meanings individuals or groups ascribe to social or human problems [14]. To achieve my research goal, the researchers used a qualitative approach that focuses on explaining subjective perspectives, processes, and contextual meaning [15].

Moreover, for this study, an exploratory research design was used. Exploratory research is conducted when not

enough is known about a phenomenon or a problem that has not been clearly defined. Exploratory research is also aimed at exploring all sources of information based on a range of evidence, discovering new ideas, and using qualitative data. Thus, the focus of exploratory research design is to discover new problems on which little or no previous research has been done [16].

2.3. Data Collection Methods

The researchers used qualitative data collection techniques to gather information for this study. They used various sources and double-checked the data to ensure its validity and reliability. The data came from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data was collected through in-depth interviews with community elders, security officials, administrative officers, and religious leaders. A total of 24 interviews were conducted, with 14 of them being with government officials from both Guji and Koore. The researchers made sure to balance the ethnic backgrounds of the interviewees. Additionally, 10 key informants were selected from the community elders and religious leaders who had valuable information on the conflict issue. Two focus group discussions were conducted, one with Guji community members and the other with Koore community members. Finally, the researchers used document analysis to gather information from secondary sources about the assessment of the conflict in the study area.

3. Results and discussion

3.1. The Causes of the Inter-Communal Conflict in Guji-Koore

Conflicts can arise from a variety of sources, and researchers generally agree that there are many different factors that can contribute to conflict. It can arise from a variety of sources, and while the specific causes may differ from place to place and community to community, common issues that can contribute to conflict includes economic, political and socio-cultural factors. Ethiopia has experienced inter-ethnic conflict for different reasons. There is multidimensional and complex causes. The inter-communal conflict between the Guji and Koore communities in southern Ethiopia reveals that the issue at hand is a multifaceted one, influenced by various factors such as cultural and identity differences, economic and political inequalities, and historical grievances. To resolve this issue, a holistic approach is necessary, one that considers the viewpoints and requirements of both communities.

3.1.1. Cultural and Identity Factors

The Guji and Koore communities in southern Ethiopia have a long history of inter-communal conflict, and cultural and identity factors play a significant role in these tensions. The examination of cultural and identity differences between Guji and Koore communities can shed light on how these factors have been exploited by external actors to fuel the conflict. Understanding the cultural dynamics and historical tensions between these communities can help identify underlying causes of the conflict and inform strategies for reconciliation and peacebuilding. Additionally, exploring how cultural and identity factors intersect with political manipulation can reveal the complex web of influences that have contributed to the escalation of the conflict.

Analysis of how cultural and identity factors intersect with political manipulation can also shed light on the motivations and tactics used by external actors to exploit the conflict. By examining how these external actors have capitalized on existing cultural divisions and grievances, we can gain a deeper understanding of their role in perpetuating the conflict. Furthermore, understanding the historical context and power dynamics between these external actors and the communities involved can provide insights into their motivations and long-term goals in fueling the conflict.

The Guji Oromo and Koore communities have a rich cultural heritage, including traditional conflict resolution methods that have been effective in preventing damage. The analysis reveals that for an extended period, they have been using the “Gondoro and Gate chima” system of traditional conflict resolution mechanisms to reconcile conflicts and ensure future coexistence. However, the traditional conflict resolution methods that have been effective for the Guji and Koore communities are being undermined by the imposition of government institutions from outside. As a result, the conflicts between these two communities remain increased.

One of the main factors is the differences in their cultural and religious practices. This has led to tensions and conflicts, particularly around issues of land ownership and resource sharing. Additionally, there are also differences in lifestyle which have contributed to the conflict. Analysis of this study reveals that the Guji and Koore communities have different lifestyles. They are agro-pastoralist and agriculturalist groups, respectively. This has led to disputes over grazing land and water resources, which are essential for the survival of both communities.

Additionally, the Guji and Koore communities have a history of conflict, with revenge being a major trigger. The study reveals that personal and group conflicts can escalate into larger-scale inter-communal conflicts. For example, if one group kills someone from another group, the victim's family or ethnic group members may feel compelled to seek revenge, leading to further violence and escalation. The study reveals that in both Guji and Koore communities, there is a strong sense of family, clan, and ethnic ties. This bond is evident in their social interactions and during conflicts, as they form alliances and support one another. The families and clan members of victims killed or wounded in the conflict are closely connected to the persons involved in the conflict. As a result, they play a direct or indirect role in fueling the inter-communal conflict. The Guji-Koore inter-communal conflict has intensified due to the victims' families and clan members sharing information and seeking revenge through their respective ethnic groups.

Furthermore, there are also political and historical factors that have contributed to the conflict. The Guji people have historically been marginalized and excluded from power, which has led to feelings of resentment and frustration. This has been exacerbated by the fact that the Koore people have historically been more politically and economically powerful.

3.1.2. Socio-economic Factors

Socio-economic factors play a significant role in inter-communal conflicts, as they often involve disputes over resources, land, and economic opportunities. These conflicts can arise when different communities have different levels of access to resources such as water, land, and jobs, leading to feelings of resentment and

competition. Additionally, economic inequality and poverty can exacerbate existing tensions between communities, leading to violence and conflict.

Inter-communal conflicts between the Guji and Koore communities in southern Ethiopia are complex issues that involve a variety of socio-economic factors. One of the main factors contributing to these conflicts is land ownership and resource competition. The Guji and Koore communities have historically had different land use patterns, with the Guji community practicing agro-pastoralist and the Koore community relying on agriculture. This has led to conflicts over land ownership and access to resources such as water and grazing land.

Another examination of the socio-economic disparities between Guji Oromo and Koore communities reveals a stark contrast in access to resources and opportunities. The Guji Oromo community, historically marginalized and economically disadvantaged, faces limited access to education, healthcare, and employment opportunities. On the other hand, the Koore community enjoys relatively better socio-economic conditions, leading to a significant power imbalance between the two groups. These disparities further exacerbate tensions and contribute to the underlying causes of the conflict.

Analysis of resource competition, such as land, water, and grazing areas, reveals that the Guji Oromo community often faces displacement and loss of livelihood due to encroachment by the Koore community. This unequal distribution of resources adds fuel to the existing conflict and deepens the grievances felt by the marginalized group. Additionally, the lack of representation and inclusion of the Guji Oromo community in decision-making processes perpetuates their marginalization and hinders any progress towards resolving the conflict.

Discussion of economic opportunities and access to resources that have fueled the conflict is crucial in addressing the root causes of the conflict. By exploring ways to promote equitable resource allocation and economic development for both communities, it may be possible to alleviate tensions and create a more sustainable and inclusive future for all. Furthermore, involving representatives from the Guji Oromo community in decision-making processes can help ensure their voices are heard and their needs are taken into account, fostering a sense of ownership and empowerment that can contribute to long-term peacebuilding efforts.

Explorations of the factors that have led to the competition between the two communities economic disparities and limited access to resources have also played a significant role in exacerbating the tensions. The Guji Oromo and Koore communities have often found themselves vying for control over fertile lands, water sources, and other valuable natural resources, intensifying the competition between them. Furthermore, political manipulation and external influences have further complicated the situation, as some actors have taken advantage of these divisions to exploit the communities for their own gain.

The past incidents or events that have contributed to the conflict include instances of land disputes, clashes over access to water resources, and historical grievances between the Guji Oromo and Koore communities. These incidents have fueled a cycle of resentment and mistrust, deepening the animosity between the two groups. Additionally, the lack of effective conflict resolution mechanisms and government intervention has allowed

these tensions to persist and escalate over time.

Lastly, the role of external actors in exacerbating the conflicts cannot be ignored. In some cases, government policies and actions have inadvertently fueled the conflicts, such as the government's decision to relocate Guji people from their ancestral lands to make way for a new dam project.

Overall, the socio-economic factors contributing to the inter-communal conflicts between the Guji and Koore communities in southern Ethiopia are complex and multifaceted, and require a comprehensive and nuanced approach to address them effectively.

3.1.3. Political Factors

Political factors can play a significant role in inter-communal conflicts. For instance, disagreements over power sharing, resource distribution and territorial boundaries can often lead to tensions between different communities. Another political factor is the role of local leaders and administrators. In some cases, local leaders have exploited these tensions for their own gain, stirring up conflict and fueling ethnic divisions. Additionally, the government's response to these conflicts has sometimes been inadequate or biased, further exacerbating the situation.

The Guji and Koore communities in southern Ethiopia have a long history of inter-communal conflict, and political factors play a significant role in exacerbating these tensions. One major reveals that political factor is the competition for land and resources. The population has grown and resources have become scarce, tensions have risen over access to land, water, and grazing areas.

Furthermore, there are also historical grievances that have contributed to the conflict. For example, the Guji community has long felt marginalized and excluded from power, leading to feelings of resentment and mistrust towards the Koore community, who have historically held more political and economic power. Additionally, the analysis reveals that before the creation of the NNP in 1974, both Guji and Koore claimed to have been using the place for hunting, farming, pasturing, and dwelling long before the creation of the NNP. There has been traditional enmity between these two ethnic groups since the imperial regime, but the establishment of the NNPs is a significant factor in the conflict between the Guji-Oromo and Koore communities. Guji and Koore see little benefit from having the land protected as a National Park. Informants from both sides were interviewed about the inter-ethnic conflict between Guji and Koore. They told the researcher the NNP increases the conflict between them and that they do not see any benefit from the park's existence. In contrast to the benefits, the creation of the NNP creates and escalates grievances between Guji and Koore communities.

The current political climate in Ethiopia has also played a role in the conflict. The country has been experiencing political instability and transition, which has created an environment of uncertainty and mistrust. Since 1991, the Guji-Koore conflicts have taken on a different dimension, emphasizing ethnic dichotomies. The introduction of ethnic federalism has significantly altered the relationship between the Guji Oromo and Koore, introducing new factors that have contributed to conflict. The nature, behaviors, and trends of conflict have become increasingly complex and dynamic, with significant consequences following the introduction of ethnic

federalism. The main issue at hand revolves around self-determination and the division of the two groups under ethnic federalism. This has led to an increase in ethnic tensions and conflicts, including those between the Guji Oromo and Koore communities.

Exploration of political factors that have exacerbated the conflict could reveal underlying power dynamics and systemic issues that need to be addressed. This could involve analyzing the role of political parties, government policies, and historical grievances in fueling tensions between the two communities. Additionally, promoting dialogue and negotiation between political leaders from both sides can help find mutually beneficial solutions and create a more stable political environment conducive to peaceful coexistence.

Analysis of political representation and power dynamics in the region can also shed light on the underlying causes of conflict and help identify ways to promote equitable distribution of resources and opportunities. Furthermore, addressing socio-economic disparities and investing in development initiatives can contribute to reducing intercommunity tensions and fostering a sense of shared prosperity.

Discussion of how political manipulation or interference has influenced the conflict can provide insight into the role of external actors in exacerbating or perpetuating the conflict. Additionally, examining the historical context and examining the grievances of marginalized groups can help to understand how political manipulation has deepened divisions and hindered peacebuilding efforts.

Overall, the political factors contributing to the inter-communal conflicts between the Guji and Koore communities in southern Ethiopia are complex and deeply rooted in history, land and resource competition, local leadership, and broader political instability. To address these complex issues, we need a thoughtful and considerate approach that considers the viewpoints and requirements of all parties involved.

3.2. Actors of Guji - Koore inter-communal conflict and their interests

Understanding the parties involved in a conflict is crucial in conflict analysis, as it allows us to better comprehend the underlying issues and dynamics at play. In conflicts, there are various individuals or groups that play a role in shaping the outcome. These actors have different objectives and interests, and they may hold different positions or having varying levels of influence within a particular conflict. This is especially true in conflicts between different communities or groups, where actors may have different levels of authority or resources at their disposal [17]. The analysis reveals that youth and adults, individual farmers and pastoralists, political elites, The OLF fighters, and women's are engaged in the conflict directly or indirectly, playing shadow roles by facilitating inputs for conflicts.

In today's world, conflicts are largely driven by young people and adults. According to [18], factors such as limited economic opportunities, lack of political representation, sense of community belonging, and ease of mobilization by others motivate these groups to engage in conflicts. The analysis revealed that in the Guji-Koore inter-communal conflict, young people and adults were the main participants, actively involved on the frontlines. They were also affected by the conflict, either directly or indirectly. The motivation behind their participation was the desire for better economic opportunities. Additionally, in the Guji community, informants

revealed that young people and adults are the primary actors in the conflict between Guji and Koore inter-communal groups. They are motivated to engage in conflict with Koore and other neighboring ethnic groups due to cultural reasons. Guji men are driven to participate in warfare because they desire recognition for their bravery. In fact, if a Guji man kills someone from Koore or any other outside group, he will be praised by his family and community, and the girls in the community will even sing songs about his bravery.

In the Guji-Koore inter-communal conflict, individual farmers and pastoralists played a significant role. They were motivated by a desire to control and expand their farmland holdings, which were essential for their livelihoods. As a result, they were willing to mobilize and make land a central issue in the conflict.

In addition, the political elites are also involved in the Guji-Koore inter-communal conflict. According to [19], political elites are individuals or small groups that have a disproportionate amount of power to influence national and international political outcomes. They hold top positions in large organizations, institutions, and social movements, and they participate in or influence political decision-making. In the case of the Guji-Koore conflict, political elites played a supporting role by aggravating, encouraging, and ideally supporting the actions of the primary actors. In this context, political elites refer to government officials at various levels, such as kebele, woreda, and zone. The political elites took advantage of the ethnic differences between Guji and Koore for their own political gain, exploiting those differences to further their own interests.

The OLF fighters were also involved in the Guji-Koore inter-communal conflict, supporting their own ethnic/clan group members by providing them with firearms. The analysis reveals that, the OLF Fighters are invisible actors in the Guji-Koore inter-communal conflict. Irgansa kebele of Guji community up to the NNPs place is controlled by OLF and they repeatedly encouraging the primary actors of the conflict, youth and adults of the Guji to claim territories from the Koore.

In the conflict between the Guji and Koore ethnic groups, women played a significant role in escalating the situation, although they were not directly involved in the conflict itself. Further analysis shows that women are not just victims, but also active participants who can influence their husbands and sons, and even act as catalysts for the conflict by encouraging their male relatives. In the Guji community, women play a significant role in encouraging their husbands to engage in violence against other ethnic groups, such as the Koore. They do this by singing songs that celebrate their bravery and using proverbs and sayings that motivate men to participate in inter-communal conflicts. In this way, women can be seen as secondary actors in the conflict, as they use psychological motivation to support their husbands' violent actions.

3.3. Effects of the inter-communal conflict of the Guji and Koore

Conflicts have a significant impact on socio-economic and political activities, and inter-communal conflicts can have long-lasting consequences. These consequences can be devastating, including the loss of life, destruction of property, and the diversion of human and financial resources away from development [20]. In the case of the Guji-Koore inter-communal conflict, our analysis reveals that it has had a significant impact on socio-economic and political activities.

The social dynamic between the Guji and Koore communities has deteriorated, with growing distrust and restrictions on movement in the affected areas. The analysis suggests that the once-strong relationships between these groups have broken down, leading to a lack of trust and confidence. The things they once shared in common have also changed. The Guji and Koore communities have had a long history of peaceful coexistence, with a strong culture of mutual respect, care for one another, and freedom of movement. However, recent conflicts have led to a significant number of deaths, injuries, and displacement of people from their homes, damaging this once-strong relationship and having a negative impact on the psychological and social well-being of both communities.

Apart from its social effects, the Guji-Koore inter-communal conflict has had economic effects. The community's economic activities were hindered due to the insecurity caused by conflict, which negatively impacted the livelihoods of the people in the conflict area. As a result, farmers did not prepare their land for cultivation, and pastoral groups were forced to terminate their activities due to fear of moving from place to place. This disrupted the flow of agricultural products and cattle products (such as milk and butter), significantly reducing the incomes of farmers and pastoralists. The analysis suggests that the conflicts between Guji and Koore communities resulted in significant loss of life and property, which hindered the economic growth of the region. The violence also led to an increase in theft, looting, and the proliferation of illegal weapons among the communities.

In addition to Social and economic consequences, the inter-communal conflict of Guji and Koore also has political consequences. After the establishment of ethnic-federalism in Ethiopia, the Guji-Koore inter-communal conflicts became increasingly politicized. During conflict resolution efforts, government officials from both sides tended to favor their own ethnic groups rather than maintaining neutrality and addressing the issues at the local level. This created a lack of trust in political leadership and reduced the accountability of government officials in managing and resolving the conflicts.

3.4. The Dynamics of Guji-Koore Inter-Communal conflict

Conflict dynamics refer to the factors that trigger the intensification or de-escalation of conflicts, or those that arise from the interaction between the conflict profile, actors, and underlying causes [21]. These dynamics include the initial stage and the subsequent development of the conflict. In other words, conflict is a constantly evolving social process where the original structure and actors are transformed, allowing for the possibility of conflict to escalate, de-escalate, or remain stable.

The conflicts between Guji and Koore communities not only affect their respective regions but also strain relationships between neighboring ethnic groups. The current conflict is not a new phenomenon, but it has intensified in recent times, with differences in frequency, severity, causes, and impact on the community. The relationship between the Guji and Koore communities is characterized by resource-based conflicts, which have become a daily occurrence and have led to territorial expansion. This new trend of conflict federalism has transformed the question of land ownership in the border areas between the two communities. The study's findings suggest that the nature of the inter-communal conflict between Guji and Koore has escalated to a

serious level, with an increase in disagreements, hostilities, and violence. Unlike in the past, the conflict now involves a variety of actors with different personal interests and missions, which has complicated the situation. The conflict between Guji and Koore has become a persistent issue, with a growing number of actors involved and a heightened sense of hatred and relative deprivation. The conflict has also become more intense, with points of contention including the involvement of different actors with competing interests and the complexity of their provocation.

The research suggests that the conflict between communities is getting worse over time, with multiple parties involved, complex factors contributing to the issue, and a diverse range of conflicts.

3.5. Obstacles to Sustainable Peace of Guji-Koore Inter-Communal Conflict

The Guji-Koore inter-communal conflict in Ethiopia has several obstacles to sustainable peace. One of the obstacles to sustainable peace is lack of strong local government institutions. The study suggests that community groups in Guji and Koore are slow to respond to interpersonal conflicts before they escalate into full-blown inter-group conflicts. Local officials and those affiliated with a particular ethnic group often lack objectivity when dealing with conflicts in the area, which can exacerbate tensions and lead to further violence between communities.

Other obstacles to sustainable peace of Guji-Koore inter-communal conflict is lack of effective illegal arms control. In the Guji-Koore community, there's a widespread circulation of illegal weapons. These weapons are easily accessible to the local population, and they're often used in clashes between the Guji and Koore communities. The abundance of small arms poses a significant challenge to the peace process and exacerbates tensions between the communities, leading to full-blown conflicts. Moreover, the easy availability of illegal weapons has contributed to the militarization of ethnic groups, making it harder to achieve sustainable peace in the region. Ineffective arms control measures could therefore fuel further inter-communal conflicts and obstacles to peace.

Additionally, Lack of trust and communication is also other obstacles to sustainable peace of Guji-Koore inter-communal conflict which has been further exacerbated by the conflict. The study reveals building trust and communication between communities is crucial for sustainable peace, but this can be difficult when there are past conflicts or cultural differences that create mistrust. In some cases, external actors may be involved, which can further complicate the situation. These actors may have their own interests and agendas, and may seek to exploit ethnic tensions for their own benefit. This can make it challenging to negotiate and implement peace agreements.

Lastly, the analysis suggests that lack of involvement of all actors and hybrid peace in conflict resolution is also another obstacle to sustainable peace of Guji-Koore inter-communal conflict. Different approaches and actors are needed in the peacebuilding process to achieve sustainable peace. Hybrid peace processes can combine traditional methods like negotiations and military interventions with other approaches like grassroots peacebuilding, mediation, and reconciliation. By involving multiple actors and approaches, hybrid peace

processes can address the root causes of conflict and promote closer social integration, which is essential for a deep and permanent peace.

In peacebuilding, relationships are crucial. It's not just about the relationship between the conflicting parties, but also the relationship between the parties and external actors. This is important for creating fair and efficient peacebuilding. Because the conflict has also been influenced by external actors, such as neighboring countries and international organizations, which have their own interests and agendas that can complicate the peace process. The analysis reveals that in the case of the previous conflict resolution of Guji-Koore inter-communal conflict, the government officials and local actors didn't have a good relationship, and not all actors were involved in the resolution. This lack of involvement has created tension between the communities, and peace has not been sustained in Guji-Koore.

Addressing these obstacles will require a comprehensive and inclusive approach to peacebuilding that involves both communities, civil society, and the government. It will also require a long-term commitment to building trust, addressing historical grievances, and promoting sustainable development in the region.

4. Conclusion

Inter-communal conflict is a conflict that remains a significant problem in many regions of the world. Most of the time, communal conflict happens between two neighboring or more ethnic groups residing in close proximity in common political and socio-economic territory. The existing literature claims that ethnic groups get into conflict because of different factors, such as historical grievances due to past injustices such as colonization, land dispossession, or discrimination; scarce resources such as land, water, or jobs may be limited, causing ethnic groups to compete for these resources and creating tension; political power struggles: ethnic groups may compete for political power, with one group feeling excluded from the decision-making process. Moreover, all the above factors create relationships between ethnic groups and lead to ethnic conflict when ethnic differences are constructed and instrumentalized by different actors for personal or group interests.

Ethiopia is a multi-ethnic country which is more susceptible to inter-communal conflicts. As different research studies indicated, the southern part of the country is an inter-communal conflict-prone part of the country due to its multi-ethnic nature. Among the southern areas of Ethiopia, Guji and Koore are the two different ethnic groups that have their own language, culture, and religion, and the other identities show one ethnic group. These ethnic groups have a traditional enmity. Accordingly, because of a different range of factors, the conflict between Guji and Koore has continued until today.

As the findings of this study revealed, there are two major categories of factors that are responsible for the Guji-Koore communal conflict. These are structural and triggering (proximate) factors. The structural factors that caused the Guji-Koore communal conflict fall into three categories. The first factors that caused the Guji-Koore conflict were socio-cultural factors such as differences in lifestyle and the weakening of traditional conflict resolution mechanisms, which contributed to the outbreak of the conflict. Second, economic factors such as scarcity and competition over natural resources: land resources for farming and grazing, and water resources.

Political factors are the third cause of the inter-communal conflict in Guji-Koore; a lack of good governance is another pervasive factor. There are also triggering factors which are responsible for the escalation of the Guji-Koore inter-communal conflict. The findings of this study revealed that the formal creation of Nech Sar National Park (NNP) in 1974, the formation of the 1991 Ethnic Federalism of Ethiopia, revenge, and a lack of exposing perpetrators because of a lack of good governance have aggravated the conflict between the two ethnic groups.

The findings of the study revealed that Guji and Koore lived together for a long period of time and shared different socio-cultural activities. They had had peaceful and conflictual relations. Their cordial relationship demonstrated shared economic activities and social-cultural relations. The two ethnic groups shared common food and clothing traditions. Moreover, because of their proximity for a long period of time, the two ethnic groups shared some common terms, expressions and communication patterns. Moreover, in some border areas, members of one ethnic group speak the other language as a second language next to their mother-tongue, and vice versa.

For the Guji and Koore inter-communal conflict, different actors played direct or indirect roles in instrumentalizing (mobilizing) ethnic differences. In the Guji-Koore inter-communal conflict, different actors were involved directly or indirectly. The primary actors who participated in the conflict included individual farmers and pastoralists, as well as youth and adults. The secondary actors are political elites. The OLF's fighters and women participated in the conflict.

Conflict has its own positive and negative effects. Conflict becomes negative when it becomes violent. The inter-communal conflict between Guji and Koore ethnic groups has had a significant number of consequences for the socio-economic and political activities of both sides of the conflict. As the findings of this study revealed, the impacts of the Guji-Koore inter-communal conflict on the study area are categorized as: social impacts (the previous relationship being eroded, a sense of mistrust prevailed, free movement of the peoples in the conflicted kebeles restricted, disintegration of multi-ethnic families); economic impacts (damaged the economic resources of the areas, infrastructures, and hindrance to economic activities); and political impacts (creates mistrust of political activity and ethnic centeredness in government responsibilities).

Different attempts were made by the local governments (Woreda and Zone) and the federal level to manage the conflict and build sustainable peace in the study area. However, as the findings of this study revealed, the Guji-Koore inter-communal conflict is not resolved at the grass-roots level. The formal conflict management and peacebuilding efforts taken include litigation measures and, apart from formal efforts, traditional conflict reconciliation (Gondoro and Nohe systems) held in the post-conflict period in order to rebuild the broken peace. However, conflict reconciliation has not brought lasting peace yet, because the values of traditional conflict resolution have been weakened by local government politics.

As the findings of this study revealed, some factors which challenge sustainable peace in the inter-communal conflict of Guji and Koore are: weak local government institutions; lack of effective illegal arms control, lack of trust and communication; and lack of the involvement of all actors and hybrid peace in the conflict resolution.

5. Recommendations

Based on the summary of findings and conclusion of the study, the following recommendations are forwarded as a way to address the existing challenges of managing and resolving the conflict and effectively build sustainable peace between Guji and Koore.

- In the study area, as the findings of this study indicated, in the conflict between these two ethnic groups, there is a lack of exposing perpetrators. Responsible bodies of regional governments at any level should cooperate in bringing criminals to justice. By doing that, sustainable peace is created between these two groups.
- Promote dialogue and communication: As the findings of this study indicated, effective dialogue and communication were not held in the study area. Therefore, stakeholders who are involved in conflict management and peacebuilding in the study area should clearly encourage open and honest communication between the conflicting groups. This can be achieved through public forums, community meetings, and mediation.
- Promote government accountability from lower to higher level: Hold governments accountable for their role in promoting inter-communal conflict and ensure that they take appropriate action to address the underlying and proximate causes of the conflict. Other researchers in the study area indicated that competition over land resources is the major source of inter-ethnic conflict in the area. However, as the findings of this study indicated, the cause of Guji-Koore inter-communal conflict is not solely resources; rather, there are multiple factors.
- Promote economic and social development: invest in initiatives that promote economic and social development in the affected area. This can include job creation, infrastructure development and access to education and healthcare. Thus, as the findings of this study indicated, in conflicted areas, economic activities are damaged, social infrastructure is damaged, and previous relationships between groups are eroded. Therefore, joint sustainable development projects and investment opportunities in the border areas would link the two communities, mitigate economic-related potential conflict and poverty, and enhance food security.
- Non-governmental organizations and donors should increase their support for peace-building and conflict-sensitive development interventions that aim to address the factors and causes which contributed to the conflict.
- Increase the involvement of local actors and hybrid peace in conflict resolution. Peace is not built only by top-down action; rather, it involves local actors. As the findings of this study indicated in the previous conflict resolution in Guji-Koore, there is a lack of local actors. Involve community leaders and respected individuals to help mediate conflicts and work towards peaceful resolutions.

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