

Critical Study on the Relationship Between Community Security and Sustainable Peace in the Northern Region of Uganda

Ndungutse Andrew¹, Mbabazi Mbabazize² & Ojo Olusola Matthew³
^{1,2&3}Kampala International University, Uganda

Abstract

This study sought to understand the relationship between community security and sustainable peace in Northern Uganda and how these relationships manifest and is perceived by the people most affected by the incessant conflict in the region. To achieve the purpose of this study, four research questions were raised and answered, namely; How does an effective police force help in achieving sustainable peace? What role does the judiciary play in achieving sustainable peace? And, What role does community-based security play in ensuring sustainable peace? To answer these questions, a mixed method approach was adopted where both survey and interview guides were used. The finding showed a positive correlation between community security and sustainable peace, $r(381) = .705$, $P < .001$, indicating that the higher the level of community security, the more likely sustainable peace will be achieved. This was also supported by the responses gotten from the interviews. The researcher recommended that the government should ensure the equitable distribution of security apparatus throughout the country instead of favouring one region over the other. People should be able to access the police force without fear or intimidation and irrespective of their economic or professional status. Also, there is a need to create a government-recognized and active local police force that sees the safety and security of community members. Finally, it is important that community members feel the government and police work for them in the sense that justice must be seen to be fair, objective and effective. The government, judiciary and law enforcement must ensure that they are not used as a tool to intimidate or oppress the less advantaged in society and that those charged are given a fair trial.

Keywords: Sustainable peace, Northern Uganda, Community Security, Western Uganda

Introduction

The 1994 UNDP annual development report expressed misgivings about how the issue of peacebuilding is approached and proffered a solution to unending wars by suggesting an approach to peacebuilding that focuses on the provision and protection of individual rights as against state rights and security. According to Act Alliance (2020 as cited in Annan, et al., 2021), engaging with the people at the grassroots level to solve their human security needs positively impacts their ability to survive, and earn a livelihood in dignity, and then durable peace can be achieved. Therefore, in an ideal situation, where the needs of the people are met, then issues of conflict will be a long-forgotten memory.

One of the recommendations by the 1994 UNDP annual development report was that there is a need for governments in conflict-prone regions to ensure and promote community security. Community security emphasizes the threats to family, immediate community, tribe and loved ones., threats to community or group integration, culture, cohesiveness, and survival. Also, the vulnerability to marginalization and exclusion and the pressure to conform to a dominant cultural value and practices all fall under community security or insecurity.

Despite the above suggestion and its implementation in a lot of nations, the world still experiences its fair share of wars. And conflicts. According to the Advisory Consortium on Conflict Sensitivity (ACCS) (2013 as mentioned in Arjona, 2017), Uganda enjoys relative peace, but there is still a lot

of division in the country politically and economically that has led to a legacy of consistent and incessant conflicts that has been accompanied by gross violations of human rights, especially in Northern Uganda. The consortium went on to explain that this has led to a ‘weak sense of national identity that has laid the foundation for even more conflicts soon. Between 2002 and 2006, thousands of people from the Lango community and Acholi were displaced with the death toll running in the thousands (Dolan, 2010). By 2006, over 1.2million out of 1.8million internally displaced people in Uganda were from Acholi ethnic groups, representing over 90% of internally displaced people in the local population (Angom, 2018). In the mid-2003s, ethnic militias were created in regions like Lango, Teso and Kitgum to repel the advances of the LRA which saw over 30,000 young men sign up to become part of the militia. This further escalated the violence in the region (Peace Research Institute Oslo, 2021).

Today, there is relative peace, compared to the 2000s, however, the question remains whether or not this peace can be sustained. Despite the heavy costs and immense efforts by both the national and international communities to establish a stable civil society within Northern Uganda, there appear fragile loopholes in the strategies that are being employed to promote sustainable peace in the region. Since this study is premised on the idea that if certain factors are in place, then sustainable peace should be achievable, the researcher, therefore, sought to find out the level of availability of community security and how this translates to sustainable peace conceptualized in this study.

Theoretical Perspective

This study was guided by two theories, namely; the rational choice theory as theorized by George Homans, Peter Balu and James Coleman (1950s-60s) (as cited in Goldfield & Gilbert, 1995) and Galtung’s theory of peace.

The proponents of the rational choice theory suggest that a rational calculation of an exchange of costs vs rewards is what influences social behaviour. The following are the underlying assumptions of the theory; All actions or human behaviour are rational and well calculated taking into consideration of cost and rewards, the reward of a relationship, action, activity or behaviour must outweigh the cost for the action to be completed when the value of the reward becomes lower than the value of the cost incurred, then an individual will end a relationship or stop an action, Individuals will use the resources at their disposal to improve or optimize their rewards.

The theory posits that people can control their decisions and are not driven by environment or unconscious drives, they rationally weigh consequences and potential benefits, which in turn influence how they will behave.

Although the rational choice theory is more commonly used in economics, marketing and business fields, it remains relevant in sociology and behavioural science. Scholars such as Gibbs (1975), Cornish and Clarke (1986), and Jacobs (1996) have studied the theory about the decision of individuals to engage in criminal behaviour. The theory has been proven to be relevant in these instances. Since this study sought to understand how the availability of specific human security factors influences people’s decision to engage in conflict, then this theory is relevant. The theory posits that people weigh the cost and reward before embarking on an action or engaging in a certain activity or behaviour. This study, therefore, posits that individuals when confronted with human security failures will weigh their options properly before engaging in conflict. The research assumes that for people to engage in conflict (in whatever form), the cost of the conflict (human,

material, pecuniary etc.) will be weighed against the reward. Therefore, if the reward outweighs the cost, then the individual will most likely engage in that activity (in this case, conflict behaviour), but the opposite will be the case if the cost outweighs the reward.

Galtung's theory of peace was proposed by Johan Galtung who explained that the basic point and factor in peace are based on how two or more parties relate. These parties may be in a state, a nation, a civilization, a person, or a region and each is pulling the other in different directions. According to Galtung, peace is not the reserve of any one individual but is based on the relationship between parties. In essence, Galtung is saying that there are not necessarily good or bad people in a conflict, but rather what causes conflict is the relationship these individuals share. For example, in a civil war, there are no good guys or bad guys, rather they are individuals in a situation that is simply not tenable and in essence, this forced or coerced relationship can break out into a major conflict.

Galtung goes on to explain that the relationship shared can be categorized into three types, namely, negative, indifferent and positive. He however clarifies that in reality, individual relationships can be a mix of any of these three types. That means a relationship can both be harmonious and indifferent sometimes. For instance, two tribes share a harmonious relationship but are indifferent to a third tribe.

When there is a negative relationship brought about with intent, then direct violence, harm and war are always a possibility. That means if violence against one party was intentional then this is referred to as direct violence, when it is unintentional, it is referred to as indirect violence. Whatever the case, the negative relationship often leads to some sort of violence or the other. Based on the following, Galtung proposed two concepts of peace, namely, negative peace and positive peace. He describes negative peace as simply "the absence of violence, absence of war" and describes positive peace as "the integration of human society" (Galtung, 1964, p.2). studies have shown that the absence of war does not necessarily mean that there is peace, since the underlying issues have not been properly assured. Galtung advocated for the adoption of positive peace.

This theory is particularly relevant to this study because it hints at a different possibility of war or violence in the northern part of Uganda and helped the researcher to ascertain whether or not Northern Uganda is currently enjoying negative peace or positive peace and whether or not community security plays a role in the promotion of a harmonious relationship within communities in Northern Uganda.

Contextual Perspective

The study was carried out in the Northern region of Uganda. This region is one of the five regions in Uganda with a population of about a 7.1million people (2014 census of Uganda). The region is made up of 30 districts. This region suffered major conflict for close to 18 years that led to the deaths of thousands and the displacement of more than a 1.5million people (The New Humanitarian, 2005). This conflict though abated in recent times, its impact persists even today and has had deleterious effects on the economic and political stability of the region, in terms of a mass exodus of the people in search of greener pastures, stunted development due to investors shying away from the conflict-prone region amongst others. Cattle rustling and land grabbing are other issues that persist in this region and threaten fragile peace. All these factors lead to a major problem in terms of human security. This prompted the research to focus on this region. In

particular, the Acholi and Lango sub-regions were the main focus of this study. These two regions were selected because they are the two of the most affected regions in terms of conflicts in the whole Northern region of Uganda. In a recent report by the Daily Monitor, Lango was described as the “new hotbed of land conflict”. Similarly, the LRA, which are the major antagonists against the Ugandan government, claims to fight for the rights of the Acholi people, making them the recipients of much of the brunt of the Ugandan government. Based on this, the researcher opted to select these two regions as the main study area for this research.

REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

At the local level, community security is a concept that aims to operationalize human security, human development, and state-building paradigms. This is in keeping with the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document, which said that "development, peace and security, and human rights are interconnected and mutually reinforcing." A variety of techniques, including citizen security, community safety, armed violence prevention/reduction, and community security, have been created to aid in the implementation of these principles in various circumstances. There are no apparent conceptual distinctions between these techniques, which are extremely similar. In reality, several terminologies are employed interchangeably or in tandem in many situations (e.g. community safety and security).

The term 'community security is not a new one. One of the seven elements of human security emphasized in the 1994 Human Development Report is community security (HDR). Community security, according to the study, is primarily concerned with preventing the disintegration of communities (such as clubs, tribes, or extended families) that give members a reassuring sense of identity and a common value system. The HDR prioritized the protection of ethnic minorities and indigenous peoples. Another aspect of human security was considered personal security, which included; threats from the government (physical torture), threats posed by other countries (war), threats from other people's groups (ethnic tension), Persons or gangs making threats against other individuals or gangs (crime, street violence), threats made towards females (rape, domestic violence), threats used against children because of their fragility and reliance (child abuse), and Self-inflicted threats (suicide, drug use).

The modern idea of community security, when narrowly defined, encompasses both collective and individual safety. The strategy is centred on ensuring that communities and their people are "fear-free." However, a more recent definition emphasizes work on a broader variety of social concerns to achieve 'freedom from want.' It advocates a multi-stakeholder strategy that is motivated by an understanding of local requirements, like community safety and citizen security.

The community security idea has the benefit of bridging the gap between the state's focus and other conceptions that focus on the person. And the goal of building functional governments that are accountable to citizens for good service delivery is at the heart of it. The development of inclusive political mechanisms to govern state-society interactions is a major concern (Pearce, 1997). By stressing the 'community' component, it aims to encompass both 'individual-oriented' cultures and situations, such as many in Latin America, and 'group-oriented' cultures and circumstances, such as those in Africa and South Asia. While this is a simplified depiction of complex cultural and contextual phenomena, the notion of community security may be phrased in such a manner that it allows for interpretation depending on the situation.

From the 2015 HIPPO report to the 2018 Declaration of Shared Commitments under the Action for Peacekeeping initiative, the importance of political solutions for international peace and security issues has been repeatedly emphasized: both national and sub-national political solutions are at the heart of any UN strategy to bring peace to conflict-affected countries (Arjona, 2017). Furthermore, it is widely acknowledged that the long-term viability of such political solutions is contingent on their inclusion, as this is essential to develop a common societal agreement on what peace means and involves. "Sustaining peace' should be broadly interpreted as a goal and a process to establish a common vision of a society, ensuring that the needs of all segments of the people are taken into consideration," says Security Council Resolution 2282 (2016).

Top-down tactics, such as formalizing elite deals and brokering power-sharing agreements, are ineffective in the absence of widespread buy-in. As a result, community involvement – not only as the first step in outreach but as a genuine process of participation in decision-making – is central to the notion of maintaining peace. Therefore, it is not unusual that the HIPPO also ascertained it to be such a significant topic in its evaluation of the efficacy of UN peacekeeping operations, continuing to insist on more people-centred and field-focused UN peacekeeping operations.

Indeed, as part of their mandates and efforts to promote long-term peace, peacekeeping missions engage in community engagement activities. Participating in community-based peacekeeping is not a goal in and of itself but a technique of achieving and fostering more inclusion and resilience in communities that have been subjected to recurring cycles of violence and limited social participation (Narayan et al., 2000). According to a 2018 DPKO Practice Note on Community Engagement, peacekeeping missions are charged and encouraged to develop certain skills and carry out some mandated tasks such as developing strategies for civilian engagement, ensuring, and supporting inclusive political systems and processes, encouraging, and actively working towards strengthening the legitimacy of state's institutions, improving their situational awareness among others. Some of these actions are taken to improve the UN peacekeeping mission's responsiveness, while others are directly related to the mission's strategic goals.

To ensure and sustain peace, the following community engagement activities have been used, especially performed as part of a clear strategic objective and vision, that is implemented through integrated interventions.

- a) Promoting and encouraging inclusivity in policy making that address the root cause of much of the grievances community members might have against the state or other communities. This process includes the reintegration and absorption of ex-combatants into society and countering the narratives about exploitation, and disenfranchisement that breeds radicalization and extremism.
- b) Promoting and encouraging opportunities for dialogue between the local population and the government so that there is a sense of belonging and strengthened community resilience.

Before going into the many methods in which peacekeeping operations help to maintain peace via community participation, it's a good idea to go over some of the tactics that have been utilized in the past.

Grassroots' level contribution to sustainable peace

Ensuring sustainable peace can be achieved by involving the community at the grassroots level in the peace process and the following are some of the ways this can be achieved.

Improving community resilience and local ownership: Effective peacekeeping techniques include structured and persistent community participation to counter risks to civilian populations, irrespective of where they come from, be it from armed civilian groups or as a direct result of inter or intra-communal conflict. To this end, UN peacekeeping missions have used a variety of tools, but one of the most common has been to encourage the formation of committees at the village level, which not only serve as an early warning system but also as threat analysts and initiators of mitigation measures, which may include dialogue with potential perpetrators or between communities in the aftermath of incidents. Community Liaison Assistants (CLAs) were introduced in 2009 in some of the world's largest and most difficult peacekeeping missions, bringing missions closer to communities and allowing them to play an important role in helping communities strengthen or develop local mechanisms that allow them to better understand and address their security needs.

In September 2019, community alert networks in the Central African Republic informed MINUSCA about rising inter-ethnic tensions in the aftermath of violent local clashes between the "Le Front Populaire pour la Renaissance de Centrafrique" (FPRC) and the "Mouvement des Libérateurs Centrafricains pour la Justice." This is a good example of how missions engage local communities through CLAs to set up community-based early warning mechanisms (MLCJ). As a result of expanded and combined patrols by police and military components, as well as CLAs, MINUSCA was able to avoid tensions from escalating. UNMIL helped Liberia develop and operationalize fifteen County and District Security Councils as early warning systems and forums to address local security concerns (Allansson, et al., 2017). The National Security Council receives situational security information from the sub-national level councils. Local conflict resolution activities are even more illustrative of how peacekeeping may contribute to both supporting processes that generate the environment for long-term peace and increasing local capacity to assist peace efforts more effectively.

To further enhance the virtuous cycles of responsiveness and accountability within the host country, these efforts must not be confined to communities, but must also include local and national authorities, as well as civil society players. In Renk County, for example, UNMISS hosted an intercommunal conversation in 2018 to promote cohesion and communication between locals and returning IDPs and refugees (Anna, et al., 2021). Fifty people came, including women, youth, elders, and traditional and county leaders, and they all agreed that national identity should take precedence over ethnic and tribal identities. The various tribes agreed to take part in each other's cultural activities and to allow marrying. These locally driven forums have sparked interest and passion, as well as helped the resolution of land disputes and reconciliation (Bouzar, 2021). Simultaneously, they improve the role of traditional authority in communal dispute resolution, bolstering the community's ability to settle similar problems in the future if the need arises after the mission has concluded.

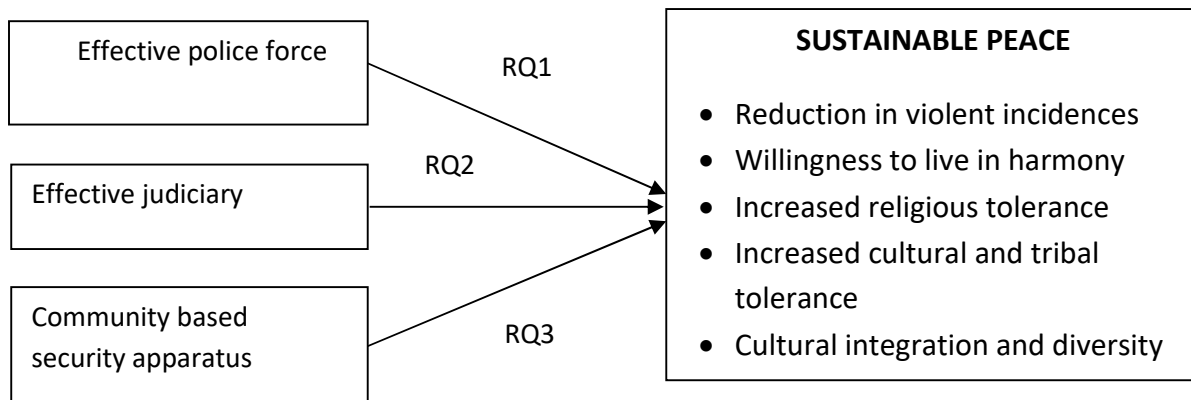
Promoting inclusivity and dialogue: If long-term peace is to be established, local capacity for reconciliation and conflict resolution must be strengthened. Local political solutions, on the other hand, are limited and susceptible to national dynamics, and relapse into conflict is always a possibility in the absence of a realistic and complete political resolution. Supporting local stakeholders' participation in the political peace process, particularly those who are often disadvantaged or even excluded is a critical step toward broader inclusion, long-term peace, collaborative leadership, and more legitimacy for the offered solutions (Arjona & Kalyvas, 2012). Peacekeeping missions, in this sense, play a key role in campaigning for the inclusion of a wide range of voices, including women and youth, as well as other parts of society, who have

historically been excluded from national processes. Peacekeeping missions, in particular, may be attributed to furthering the agenda of youth, women and other vulnerable and minority groups in the political processes, as well as the critical role played by women in peacebuilding, in collaboration with other local and international partners such as the United Nations.

In the year 2019, MINUSCA in the Central African Republic, supported peace process activities at the local level, such as sensitization of community leaders, and intercommunity dialogue that brought together and engaged well over 7000 people, including 2,870 women (Annan, et al., 2021). Women’s organizations were specifically targeted to increase their ability to engage in conflict mitigation, local mediation, and dialogue initiatives. In the case of Grimari, where women were critical in consolidating the local peace process, efforts by peacekeeping missions to build trust among local authorities and women and youth representatives undoubtedly contributed to giving more legitimacy and prominence to their engagement in peace processes (Arjona, 2017).

Based on the foregoing, this study, therefore, sought to find out the relationship between community security and sustainable peace from a Ugandan perspective. A gap that had not been addressed in recent literature.

Below is a conceptual framework detailing the relationships this study seeks to study.



Source: Authors (2022)

Based on the foregoing, the researchers aim to answer the following research questions.

1. How does an effective police force help in achieving sustainable peace?
2. What role does the judiciary play in achieving sustainable peace?
3. What role does community-based security play in ensuring sustainable peace?

METHODS

Research Approach

This study made use of the pragmatism paradigm, as it is most suitable for this study because both qualitative and quantitative approaches will be needed to achieve the study objectives. This study sought to understand the relationship between community security and sustainable peace in

Uganda. And to properly understand and study this phenomenon, data on the access to and availability of community security components by the people in the communities under study needed to be collected and analyzed. To get a more holistic view of this phenomenon, it was also important that key informants that can provide relevant information on this issue were also interviewed. Based on the foregoing, it was clear that the pragmatism paradigm that adopts the use of both survey and in-depth interviews was the one to be used.

Study population and sample size

The study population for this study included residents of the Acholi and Lango sub-regions of Northern Uganda and South Western Uganda sub-region of Western Uganda. The sample size frame was individuals living in these communities that are at least 18 years old. By being 18 years old, the residents would be aware and knowledgeable about the history of their communities and have a more vested interest in the peace within the same community.

According to the Minority right Group International (2018), the population of the Acholi sub-region in Northern Uganda is about 1.5 million and those of the Lango sub-region are almost a 2.1million people while the population of South Western Uganda sub-region is almost a 4.3million people. Therefore, the study population was approximately 7,900,000 individuals from Northern and South Western Uganda. Using an online sample size calculator available on www.calculator.net and a confidence level of 95%, a margin of error of 5% population proportion of 47% - Population proportion was derived based on the statistical fact that people aged 18 and above represent 46.6% of the total population in Uganda (www.worldpopulationreview.com). Therefore, based on these parameters, and based on the population proportion, a sample size of 383 was arrived at. Therefore, the sample size for this study was 383.

Sampling techniques

This study made use of both purposive and stratified random sampling. For the quantitative data, stratified random sampling was used. In the case of this study, the population of the study was subdivided based on the districts. Therefore, in this study, three strata were identified. Once these sub-regions were identified and selected, the researcher then randomly distributed a predetermined number of questionnaires to each stratum identified in this study. Furthermore, to ensure that only relevant and qualified candidates fill the questionnaire, the researcher made ensured that only people aged 18 and above, and only individuals that are culturally from these regions were allowed to complete the questionnaire. The reason for selecting this demographic of individuals is because they are more likely to have a vested interest in the security of the region than an outsider or very young adults. In the questionnaire, respondents were asked to state their age and their tribe. If they did not meet the minimum requirement as stated above, then such a questionnaire was disqualified from the dataset.

Table 1 Computation of respondents for quantitative data

Category of Respondents	Target population	Sample size	Percentage
Acholi sub region	1,500,762	73	19.2
Lango sub region	2,061,694	101	26
South Western Uganda sub-region	4,272,405	209	54.8
Total	7,834,861	383	100

Source: Authors (2022)

To collect qualitative data, purposive sampling was used. In this study, key informants such as community leaders, political leaders, farmers, climate change experts, security personnel, market leaders and health experts were consulted and interviewed to collect their professional and personal opinion on the issue being discussed and researched.

Table 2: Respondents for qualitative data

Category of Respondents	Region	Number Sampled	Sampling Technique
community leaders	Acholi sub region	3	Purposive
	Lango sub-region	3	Sampling
	South Western Uganda sub-region	3	
political leaders	Acholi sub region	2	Purposive
	Lango sub-region	2	Sampling
	South Western Uganda sub-region	2	
security personnel	Acholi sub region	2	Purposive
	Lango sub-region	2	Sampling
	South Western Uganda sub-region	2	
	Lango sub-region	3	
	South Western Uganda sub-region	3	
	Lango sub-region	2	
	South Western Uganda sub-region	2	
Total		41	

Source: Authors (2022)

The participants above were purposively selected for the in-depth interviews because they could provide their professional and personal opinions (based on their unique experiences) on the issue being discussed and researched and were instrumental in ensuring that the study objectives were achieved. These individuals included community leaders, health experts, climate change experts, farmers, market leaders and other key stakeholders that contribute to or are impacted by the availability or lack, of human security. These individuals were selected because it was assumed that they would be able to provide much-needed and in-depth information on the subject matter.

In arriving at 41 participants, the researcher ensured that each study area was properly represented in each category. Also, with a total of 41, saturation was achieved and there was no need to include more individuals in the study.

Data collection tools

The study measured 2 variables, namely; community security (which was broken down into 3 sub-variables) and sustainable peace. The researchers made use of a self-developed questionnaire that was validated by employing a content validity index and reliability measures. The questionnaire collected quantitative data from respondents in the study areas of Acholi, Lango and South-Western Uganda sub-regions. A total of 400 questionnaires were distributed to the respondents. This was meant to ensure that even after damaged or disqualified questionnaires were discarded, the minimum sample size was still met. The questionnaire was structured into 7 parts. Section A introduced the respondent to the study. Section B sought to collect demographic data from the respondents. This data included age, tribe, region of origin, length of stay in the region, marital

status, and religion. Section C collected data on community security. Finally, Section D collected data on sustainable peace.

Furthermore, an interview guide was used to guide the discussion with the 41 key informants. This allowed the researchers to have a more holistic view of the issue being discussed. The study made use of open-ended questions, where the researcher asked key informants questions in line with the study objectives. The target respondent for the interviews included community leaders, political leaders, and security personnel.

PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

To serve as a starting point for this study, the researchers first carried out statistical analysis to ascertain the relationship between community security and sustainable peace. To confirm if there is indeed a relationship between community security and sustainable peace, a Pearson correlation coefficient was carried out and the result is presented in the table below.

Table 3: Correlation between community security and sustainable peace

Correlations		Sustainable Peace	Community Security
Sustainable Peace	Pearson Correlation	1	.705**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	383	383
Community Security	Pearson Correlation	.705**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	383	383

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The table above shows a positive correlation between community security and sustainable peace, $r(381) = .705$, $P < .001$. This indicates that the higher the level of community security, the more likely sustainable peace will be achieved.

While the results above indeed show that there is a relationship between community security and sustainable peace, it does not tell us how specific measures of community security help achieve sustainable peace. To ascertain this, the researcher opted to make collect data from key stakeholders and informants. The data has been thematically presented below according to the research questions of this study.

RQ1: How does an effective police force help in achieving sustainable peace?

To answer this question, security operatives, community leaders and political leaders were interviewed. The consensus, based on the data received from the interviews was that the police force in Uganda needs to do better and to be seen to be equitable and fair in the execution of their duties. The respondents generally shared the sentiment that despite the sometimes-high presence of police, they do not feel safe, instead, they sometimes feel threatened. Furthermore, they feel that the youths in the community should be actively involved in the protection of life and property in their communities since they often know who the delinquents are within the community.

Some of the responses of the respondents are discussed below.

Firstly, the researchers asked the participants to describe what they understand about community security and then they were asked to explain how community security can impact or influence

sustainable peace. In an attempt to conceptualize ‘community security, a community leader from Lango explained that:

Community security can be described as a situation where the security apparatus meant to be protecting the lives and properties of people living within a community is working at full capacity. It is about ensuring that the police and other security agencies are equitably distributed within the country. (Personal Communication, July 14, 2022).

A community leader from Acholi described community security as, “The grassroots participation in the area of security”. He explained that for a community to be safe and secure, it is the collective duty of all concerned and not just the job of the government. He however cautioned that “community security remains the main duty of the government but that the citizens being protected needs to support government efforts by not harbouring criminals and reporting crime as they occur”.

Having decided on the definition of community security, the researcher proceeded to get feedback on policing in the local communities and how it affects sustainable peace. Some of the responses are detailed below:

Community leader 1:

For me, what kind of peace can exist when people do not feel safe? There is no way people will live in peace and harmony with one another when everybody suspects their neighbour. Sustainable peace and community security go hand in hand. You cannot have one without the other. (Personal Communication, July 16, 2022).

In a similar vein, community leader 6 from Southwestern Region explained the following:

When people feel like they are being targeted by the police force that is supposed to be protecting them, and are made to feel like second-class citizens in their own country, of course, they will protest, they will agitate, and they will call for change. A lot of the protests and mumblings I have witnessed in the last few years have stemmed from clashes between security operatives and the citizens. People not only feel unsafe due to criminal elements but they must now also contend with bad policing in some areas. All these affect the peaceful coexistence in our communities. (Personal Communication, July 18, 2022).

A security officer working with the police force in northern Uganda explained the following:

One of the major jobs of the police is to maintain peace. That means, it is very likely that when there are security challenges, peace will also be challenged. Our job as police officers is to ensure that the people we serve feel protected and are active participants in the peace process in their communities. Unfortunately, very few officers have become lords and masters unto themselves and break laws that they should be enforcing. Which has made a lot of people lose faith in and respect for the police which in turn has affected the peace in society because people now take laws into their own hands since they feel the police will not do anything. (Personal Communication, July 21, 2022).

In a similar vein, an NGO worker also from Acholi Region explained the following:

It is a right of everyone to feel safe in their communities and their homes, and not the preserve of a small minority or a certain social class. In a society where it seems the security apparatus is dedicated to protecting the lives and properties of those in power or those connected to power, then it is only a matter of time before such a society self-implodes. People are going to take laws into their hands and the result of such actions will be pure anarchy. We have seen it in other countries-like South Sudan, Central Africa Republic, D.R.Congo and even Somalia. If sustainable peace is to be achieved, then it is important that people feel safe and free to go about their regular business without any fears. (Personal Communication, July 13, 2022).

RQ2: What role does the judiciary play in achieving sustainable peace?

The second research question sought to find out the role of the judiciary in all of these and how sustainable security can be achieved or threatened by the actions or activities of those that are supposed to interpret the law.

Key informants were interviewed and they generally agreed that the for the police to be effective at their job and for people to have confidence in the security apparatus in the country and specifically, in their communities, there is a need for the judiciary to do their part. The community leaders alluded to the fact that their traditional methods of conflict resolution appear to be more effective by the judiciary since a lot of people everyone knows are guilty are often left off the hook by what they described as a corrupt system’.

Some of the responses provided have been highlighted and discussed below.

When asked about their perception of the judiciary, the judiciary process and sustainable peace, a local community leader commented the following:

For me, I do not even care about the judiciary because the process is unnecessarily complicated and expensive. The system was created for the rich and seems to negatively affect the poor. I have seen instances where rich men break the law, but are not punished, but a poor man is given 20 years imprisonment for a small offence. How then can we trust such as system? A system that appears to be created to protect one class and punish another. This is the main reason why people take the laws into their own hands. The few times we have had any major conflict, the reason for the conflict was partly because people felt going through the right channels will not provide the much-needed results. (Personal Communication, July 16, 2022).

In a similar vein, a security operative explained the following:

In my years as a police officer, I have seen instances of a victim withdrawing a suit against a prominent person because he/she fears for their life or reprisals from the rich person. People fear that the system will not protect them. Another common thing is people withdrawing their pleas because they lost confidence in the public defender but do not have the funds for a personal lawyer. The implication is that a lot of criminal actions are never prosecuted and this leads to more distrust in the system which fosters more conflict and laws being taken into people’s hands.

RQ3: What role does community-based security play in ensuring sustainable peace?

The third research question sought to understand the role community-based security play in ensuring sustainable peace. Key informants were interviewed and the discussions are summarized as followed. Majority of the participants thought that community security cannot be discussed outside of the need to create a government-recognized and government-funded local security apparatus. They believe that for a community to feel safe, they need to be confident that the people protecting them have a vested and personal interest in ensuring the protection of lives and properties. As a minimum requirement, some respondents suggested that police officers posted to stations around their communities should come from those communities since they will know that their failure to do their jobs well, will also affect their kids, and other family members. (Personal Communication, July 16, 2022).

When discussing the role of community-based security, a community leader explains that:

Yes, community security is very very important. We have been advocating for this for years but all our pleas and demands have fallen on deaf ears. The police officers posted to our communities come from other communities. Of course, they can not care for us as much as one of us. We believe that majority of the problems we have, in terms of security, will be a thing of the past if locals are employed to serve in these stations or better still, we should be allowed to create a local, but the government recognized and funded security outfit that will assist in policing our communities. (Personal Communication, July 18, 2022).

A political leader from Western Uganda explained,

I do not know why this is such a difficult concept for the central government to understand. But I guess, they fear that some people might turn local security operatives into a personal army which I understand. But our lives should also be important. These people they send to these villages do not care about us. Some do not even live here. They come and go as they wish without caring how people are surviving. Do you know how many times these cattle herders have destroyed crops and no one has come to our rescue? We even report sometimes and nothing is done, which only emboldens these guys. I think there is an urgent need to address this issue. (Personal Communication, July 12, 2022).

DISCUSSION

Based on the foregoing, it is clear that the consensus was that without community security, peace cannot be guaranteed or sustained. People cannot engage in productive activities when their security is not guaranteed and when they do not feel like the security apparatus works in their favour. In such a society, crime will be high and agitations will be an ever-present threat.

There is a need to explain that community and personal security go hand in hand, as the findings suggest that most of the respondents view community security from a personal lens and at the end of the day expect that their lives and properties are secured and that the security apparatus of the state is fair, objective and accessible to everyone. Absence of any of these and people will take up arms to defend their lives and those of their families.

Also, the findings show that some communities can feel alienated and targeted when they cannot get justice or when they are not included in ensuring their peace and security. This assertion supports those of the United Nations which has promoted grassroots participation in community security and has explained that if community security is to be achieved, then there is a need to ensure that the people are involved. This makes sense because a majority of the crimes committed are committed locally and therefore, there is a need to engage local communities in tackling crime at that level and to maintain the peace.

This supports the findings of Narayan et al. (2000) who concluded that a major factor in ensuring peace is the assurance of personal security and justice for all. They explained that economically disadvantaged people tend to feel like they are more affected by insecurity than their well-to-do counterparts and therefore are more likely to revolt against such a system. It should be noted that Narayan et al (2000) link personal security to economic security and believes they go hand-in-hand. This partly supports the hypothesis that “There is a significant positive relationship between human security factors and sustainable peace in Uganda”. Economic and community security are part of what makes up human security.

In a similar vein, the current study supports those by Kalyvas and Kocher (2007) who explained that people sometimes engage in bad behaviour or criminal activities to protect themselves and their families. For instance, a student might choose to join a cult group because they feel their security is at stake or threatened. This in turn will lead to an escalation of violence in a lot of cases which invariably threatens the personal security of community members. This further lends support to the theory of reasoned action which shows that people make rational choices when engaging in any form of behaviour. It also supports the theory of peace by Galtung which explains that people will have peace as long as both parties involved agree to live in peace and harmony. In this case, since people have chosen to engage in violent behaviour, other members of the community of also chosen to protect themselves by engaging in violent behaviour which invariably leads to more violence. The opposite will be true if both parties have chosen the path of peace.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The findings of this study showed that there is a positive significant relationship between community security and sustainable peace. The findings showed that the security apparatus of the country should be equitably distributed and accessible to all communities including those in the north and south.

Based on these findings, the researchers recommend that the government should ensure the equitable distribution of security apparatus throughout the country instead of favouring one region over the other. People should be able to access the police force without fear or intimidation and irrespective of their economic or professional status. Given this, the police force should also ensure that people from that region are sent to work in the region which will make communication and access a lot easier. Furthermore, there is a need for more deployment of police in conflict-prone regions of the country to ensure that people have equitable access to the security apparatus of the country.

Also, there is a need to create a government-recognized and active local police force that sees the safety and security of community members. This will ensure that those charged with securing the community, feel like they have a stake in the safety of said community since they come from there and have family and friends there.

Also, it is important that community members feel the government and police work for them in the sense that justice must be seen to be fair, objective and effective. The government, judiciary and law enforcement must ensure that they are not used as a tool to intimidate or oppress the less advantaged in society and that those charged are given a fair trial. More importantly, sentences should be meted out to offenders that are commiserate with the crime committed.

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