



Promoting Alternative Peace Building Approaches in Oromo and Amhara Communities in Gidda Ayana and KIRAMU Districts

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Abstract

This study aims to investigate approaches to improve peace building in Gidda Ayana and KIRAMU districts among the Oromo and Amhara communities. The research methodology involves a comprehensive review of existing literatures, related to peace building, conflict resolution, and community engagement in similar contexts. This literature review serves as a theoretical framework guiding the research design and interpretation of findings. The results indicate several key factors contributing to conflicts between the Oromo and Amhara communities, in the area including historical grievances, competition over land and resources, identity-based tensions, and political marginalization. Existing peace building efforts were found to be limited and fragmented, highlighting the need for more inclusive and community-led initiatives. The study concludes that effective peace building requires addressing the underlying causes of conflicts and promoting inclusivity. It emphasizes the significance of addressing historical grievances, ensuring equitable access to land and resources, fostering dialogue and reconciliation, and empowering local communities in decision-making processes. Based on these findings, the study recommends specific actions to enhance peace building, such as establishing inclusive platforms for dialogue and reconciliation, promoting equitable access to resources, strengthening community-led initiatives, fostering intercommunity cooperation, and enhancing political representation and inclusion.

key words: Community, peace building, inclusivity, land resources, conflict

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Introduction

Community-based peace building has gained widespread recognition as an effective approach to fostering long-lasting peace, social cohesion, and development within communities (Barnes (2017). This approach centers on addressing the root causes of conflicts and actively involving community members in the peace building process. By engaging the affected community in decision-making processes, peace building initiatives can effectively address underlying grievances and foster a sense of ownership, thus contributing to sustainable peace. This perspective aligns with the findings of Paffenholz and Spurk (2006), which highlight the importance of local participation in peace building efforts for achieving comprehensive and respected peace agreements and reconciliation outcomes. By empowering communities and incorporating their perspectives, community-based peace building holds the potential to create lasting positive change.

Richmond,(2012) highlights that community-based peace building plays a crucial role in strengthening social cohesion within communities. This perspective emphasizes that through activities such as dialogue, reconciliation, and inclusivity, community-based peace building promotes the development of trust, understanding, and relationships among diverse groups within the community. The participation of community members in peace building initiatives fosters the building of bridges across social divisions and contributes to the creation of a more cohesive and harmonious society. This notion aligns with the findings of Barnes (2017), who also underscores the significance of community-based peace building in addressing social divisions and promoting social cohesion. By actively involving community members

and addressing their concerns, this approach enables the cultivation of stronger social bonds and a shared sense of belonging, thereby fostering a more united and cohesive community.

In addition, community-based peace building has been associated with promoting development. This approach often incorporates socio-economic development activities to address inequalities and provide opportunities for education, healthcare, and income generation, which in turn contribute to sustainable peace (Williams, 2017). By promoting economic empowerment, community-based peace building can alleviate poverty, reduce tensions, and create an environment conducive to development (Paffenholz & Spurk, 2006). Furthermore, community-based peace building recognizes the value of local knowledge and context-specific solutions. By actively engaging community members in the peace building process, a deeper understanding of the community's dynamics, cultural norms, and unique challenges is gained. This localized approach enhances the effectiveness and relevance of peace building interventions as solutions are tailored to meet the specific needs and aspirations of the community (Barnes, 2017; Richmond, 2012). Moreover, community-based peace building emphasizes conflict prevention mechanisms and early warning systems. By fostering dialogue, addressing grievances, and strengthening relationships within the community, potential conflicts can be identified and addressed at an early stage, thereby preventing escalation and promoting peaceful coexistence (Paffenholz & Spurk, 2006).

This review delves into the importance of enhancing peace building within the Gidda Ayana and Kiramu Districts, specifically focusing on the Oromo and

Amhara communities. Peace building is a vital process in conflict-affected societies, aiming to address the underlying causes of tension and establish sustainable peace. The Oromo and Amhara communities residing in these districts have faced various obstacles, including historical grievances, competition over resources, tensions rooted in identity, and political marginalization, all of which have contributed to conflicts. By examining the challenges and opportunities in peace building efforts, this review seeks to uncover effective strategies that can effectively address these issues, foster reconciliation, and empower the communities towards achieving enduring peace and social cohesion.

Objective of the study

The objective is to promote enduring peace, social cohesion, and productive dialogue in the Oromo and Amhara communities on the western outskirts of KIRAMU District through community-based peace building efforts. The aim is to address the unique needs of these communities, emphasizing the establishment of lasting peace, fostering positive relationships between them, and facilitating inclusive and open conversations. This objective highlights the significance of community-driven approaches to achieve sustainable peace building outcomes that are relevant to the local context.

Methodology of the study

The study used comprehensive review of existing literature related to peace building, conflict resolution, and community engagement in similar contexts. The comprehensive review of existing literature, research, and studies on peace building,

conflict resolution, and community engagement in similar contexts allows researcher to develop a thorough understanding of the theoretical foundations and practical experiences in this field. This review helps establish a theoretical framework that serves as a conceptual structure for the study, guiding the research design and interpretation of results. By identifying gaps in the current understanding of peace building within the specific context, the theoretical framework enables researcher to position the work within the existing knowledge and theories.

Result and discussions

The results and discussions section presents a comprehensive analysis of the study's findings, offering insights into the effectiveness of peace building interventions and their potential to enhance peace, social cohesion, and constructive dialogue within the Oromo and Amhara communities in Gidda Ayana and KIRAMU Districts. Throughout the literature reviews, three prominent theories guiding community-based peace building processes emerged: liberal peace building, transformative peace building, and critical peace building. Each theory offers distinct perspectives on conflict and peace, emphasizing concepts such as power dynamics, structural violence, and the significance of addressing root causes.

Liberal peace building theory underscores the significance of democratic governance, market-based economic development, and the respect for human rights in post-conflict societies. It centres on establishing robust institutions, promoting good governance, and fostering economic growth as primary drivers of peace. This approach often

involves external actors, such as international organizations and donor countries, providing assistance in rebuilding institutions and advancing democratic processes (Paris, 2004).

Transformative peace building theory extends beyond addressing immediate conflicts, aiming to transform underlying structural inequalities, social norms, and power dynamics that contribute to violence. It emphasizes the necessity of inclusive and participatory processes that empower marginalized groups and promote social justice. Transformative peace building seeks to address the root causes of conflicts and engender long-term social change through collaborations among local communities, civil society organizations, and external actors (Galtung, 1996).

Critical peace building theory critically examines the assumptions and power imbalances within conventional peace building approaches. It emphasizes the importance of addressing socio-political structures, historical injustices, and inequalities that perpetuate violence. Critical peace building calls for engaging with marginalized voices, challenging dominant narratives, and transforming oppressive systems to achieve sustainable peace (Paffenholz, 2010). These theories provide frameworks for understanding and approaching community-based peace building, offering insights into different dimensions of peace and conflict dynamics. While they may have overlapping elements and influences, they diverge in their approaches and priorities.

In this study the researcher finds that transformative peace building approach is most appropriate. The application of transformative peace building theory in building peace among the Oromo and Amhara

communities in Gidda Ayana and Kiramu districts holds great potential. Transformative peace building theory aligns well with the context described, as it aims to address underlying structural inequalities, social norms, and power dynamics that contribute to conflict and violence. In this specific context, the Oromo and Amhara communities have experienced historical injustices and conflicts rooted in issues such as land disputes, resource allocation, political representation, and cultural differences. With this regard, transformative peace building theory emphasizes inclusive and participatory processes that empower marginalized groups and promote social justice. By engaging with the Oromo and Amhara communities, their perspectives, and their experiences, transformative peace building can facilitate dialogue, understanding, and collaboration, while addressing the root causes of conflict.

Numerous case studies demonstrate the positive impact of structured dialogues and mediation as means of transformative peace building approach and resolving conflicts and promoting peace. For example, in post-apartheid South Africa, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission employed structured dialogues and mediation to address past human rights abuses and promote healing and reconciliation (Tutu, 1999). Similarly, in Northern Ireland, the Good Friday Agreement included a structured dialogue process that brought together various stakeholders to address long-standing sectarian conflicts (McEvoy, 2001).

Studies also show that the positive outcomes of structured dialogues and mediation in peace building processes. For instance, Lederach and Appleton (2012) emphasize the importance of facilitated dialogues in transforming deep-rooted conflicts,

fostering empathy, and building relationships among conflicting parties. International organizations and peace building practitioners widely employ structured dialogues and mediation processes in their initiatives. Organizations such as the United Nations, the Center for Justice and Peace building, and local peace building organizations have utilized these approaches in various conflict-affected regions worldwide (UN, 2015).

Consequently, based on the available evidence, structured dialogues and mediation processes offer a platform for community members to voice their concerns, consider diverse viewpoints, and collaboratively devise solutions. By engaging in facilitated dialogues, participants can cultivate trust, discover commonalities, and strive towards shared objectives. These processes also foster inclusivity by enabling marginalized groups to have a say and actively participate in decision-making. While the evidence cited does not pertain directly to the Oromo and Amhara communities residing in Gidda Ayana and KIRAMU districts, it underscores the overall effectiveness and advantages of employing structured dialogues and mediation in contexts aimed at promoting peace. Therefore, it is essential to customize these approaches to suit the specific cultural, social, and historical backdrop of the communities involved in the peace building endeavours within the districts.

The transformative peace building theory also emphasizes the recognition and acknowledgment of historical injustices as a crucial aspect of promoting sustainable peace. This involves addressing past grievances, promoting healing, and working towards reconciliation between communities. Several evidence-based approaches support the significance

of truth and reconciliation processes, memorialization efforts, and reparations in achieving these goals. One example of the effectiveness of truth and reconciliation processes is the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). Established in the aftermath of apartheid, the TRC provided a platform for victims and perpetrators to share their experiences and seek forgiveness. Boraine and Levy (2017) highlights the positive impact of the TRC, showing that it contributed to reducing violence and facilitating social healing in South Africa. Memorialization efforts also play a crucial role in recognizing historical injustices and promoting reconciliation. For instance, the construction of memorials, museums, and commemorative sites can help communities acknowledge past atrocities and preserve collective memory. The Rwandan Genocide Memorial in Kigali is an example of such an initiative. It serves as a space for remembrance, education, and reflection, contributing to the healing and reconciliation process in Rwanda (Hodgkin, 2018). Reparations, both symbolic and material, can also contribute to addressing historical injustices. Providing reparations to victims can help restore dignity, acknowledge harm, and promote reconciliation. The reparations program implemented in Colombia as part of the peace process with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) demonstrates the potential of such initiatives. Pizarro and Mercado (2021) indicate that reparations programs have positively impacted victims' well-being and contributed to the promotion of peace and reconciliation in Colombia. These evidences support the importance of truth and reconciliation processes, memorialization efforts, and reparations in transformative peace building. The South African TRC, Rwandan Genocide Memorial, and reparations

programs in Colombia are examples that demonstrate the positive impact of these approaches in acknowledging historical injustices, promoting healing, and fostering reconciliation between communities.

Moreover, the transformative peace building theory recognizes the importance of cultural understanding and respect in promoting peace between communities. By fostering cultural exchanges, joint celebrations, and activities that highlight shared values and heritage, the theory aims to bridge divides and promote mutual understanding. Several evidence-based approaches support the significance of these initiatives in promoting peace and reconciliation.

Cultural exchanges provide opportunities for individuals from different communities to interact, learn from one another, and develop empathy. These exchanges can help break down stereotypes, build relationships, and promote a sense of shared humanity. For example, Tausch et al. (2019) highlights the positive impact of intercultural exchanges in reducing prejudice and promoting understanding among diverse groups. Joint celebrations and activities that highlight shared values and heritage can also contribute to cultural understanding and respect. By coming together to celebrate common traditions or engage in activities that are meaningful to both communities, individuals can recognize their shared humanity and develop a deeper appreciation for one another's cultures. Chryssochoou et al. (2014) demonstrates that joint celebrations and activities have the potential to enhance intergroup relations and foster positive attitudes towards other cultures. Furthermore, promoting cultural understanding and respect can be

facilitated through educational initiatives. Introducing multicultural education in schools and promoting inclusive curricula that highlight the histories, cultures, and contributions of different communities can help combat prejudices and foster intercultural understanding. Banks (2015) emphasizes the positive impact of multicultural education in promoting tolerance, respect, and positive intergroup attitudes among students.

The transformative peace building theory recognizes the importance of advocacy and policy reform in addressing systemic issues that contribute to conflicts. By engaging with local authorities, policymakers, and stakeholders, peace builders can advocate for policy changes that tackle underlying causes of the conflict, such as land rights, resource allocation, and political representation. Several evidence-based examples demonstrate the significance of this approach. Land rights are often a contentious issue in conflicts, particularly when marginalized communities are deprived of their land or face land dispossession. Advocacy for land rights reforms can help address these grievances and contribute to peace building efforts. For instance, in the case of indigenous communities in Canada, the advocacy and policy changes related to land rights have played a crucial role in addressing historical injustices and promoting reconciliation (Coulthard, 2014).

Resource allocation, including issues related to access, distribution, and management of natural resources, can also be a source of conflict. Engaging in advocacy and policy reform to ensure equitable resource allocation can help mitigate tensions and promote peace. A study by Nilsson and Öjendal (2017) highlights the importance of inclusive

resource governance policies in managing conflicts related to natural resources, such as water and minerals. Political representation is another critical aspect that can contribute to conflicts. Advocating for policy reforms that ensure the inclusion and meaningful participation of all communities in decision-making processes can help address grievances and promote peace. For example, the implementation of power-sharing mechanisms and inclusive governance structures in post-conflict societies has been shown to contribute to peace and stability (Belloni, 2015). These evidences also suggest that engaging with local authorities, policymakers, and stakeholders is essential for sustainable peace building outcomes. Collaborative efforts that involve multiple actors and promote inclusive dialogue have a higher likelihood of achieving durable peace (Mac Ginty, 2013). Implementing transformative peace building approaches successfully necessitates a lasting dedication, on-going participation, and sustained engagement with the communities affected by the conflict.

The results demonstrate that community-based peace building has a beneficial effect on attaining sustainable peace, fostering social cohesion, and promoting development within communities. By actively engaging local communities, recognizing their autonomy, and responding to their unique requirements, this approach enhances inclusivity and long-term peace building results. Community-based peace building emphasizes the active participation and engagement of community members in peace building processes. Research has shown that when local communities take ownership of peace building initiatives, they are more likely to have lasting and positive impacts (Bliesemann de Guevara et al.,

2016; Braun & Schumann, 2018). Inclusivity is another crucial aspect identified by researchers. Inclusive peace building processes that involve diverse community members, such as women, youth, and marginalized groups, have proven to be more successful in addressing the root causes of conflict and promoting social cohesion (Belloni, 2008; Richmond, 2012).

The finding has also highlights the achievement of sustainable solutions through community-based peace building efforts. This approach focuses on finding long-term and sustainable resolutions to conflicts by addressing underlying causes. Studies have emphasized the significance of tackling socio-economic inequalities, promoting access to justice, and supporting socio-economic development as integral components of sustainable peace building (Williams, 2017; Belloni & Serrano, 2020).

Conclusion and recommendations

In conclusion, enhancing peace building in the Oromo and Amhara communities in Gidda Ayana and Kiramu districts requires a comprehensive and context-specific approach. The transformative peace building theory provides valuable insights into promoting cultural understanding, advocating for policy reforms, and fostering community engagement. By implementing strategies that prioritize inclusivity, sustained engagement, and addressing root causes of conflict, lasting peace and social cohesion can be achieved in the region.

Recommendations:

1. Cultivate cultural understanding and respect: Promote cultural exchanges, joint celebrations, and activities that highlight shared values and heritage between the Oromo and Amhara communities. This

can be done through community-led initiatives, educational programs, and events that foster mutual understanding and appreciation.

2. Advocate for policy reforms: Engage with local authorities, policymakers, and relevant stakeholders to advocate for policy changes that address systemic issues contributing to the conflict. Focus on areas such as land rights, resource allocation, and political representation to ensure equitable and inclusive governance.

3. Foster community participation: Empower and involve community members, including women, youth, and marginalized groups, in peace building processes. Ensure their active participation in decision-making, planning, and implementation of initiatives to ensure inclusivity and ownership.

4. Address socioeconomic inequalities: Prioritize efforts to address socioeconomic disparities, provide access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities. This can contribute to reducing grievances, promoting social cohesion, and fostering sustainable development.

5. Build local capacity: Invest in training and capacity-building programs for local peace builders and community leaders. This will strengthen their ability to lead and sustain peace building efforts within the Oromo and Amhara communities.

6. Facilitate dialogue and reconciliation: Create safe spaces for dialogue, mediation, and reconciliation between individuals and communities affected by the conflict. Support reconciliation processes that promote healing, forgiveness, and the restoration of trust.

7. Monitor and evaluate progress: Regularly assess the impact and effectiveness of peace building initiatives. Monitor the implementation of policy reforms, evaluate community engagement activities, and measure progress towards sustainable peace and social cohesion.

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