



Nature of Livestock Theft among the Turkana and Pokot Pastoral Groups in Northwest Kenya

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ABSTRACT

Livestock keeping is a fundamental economic and cultural practice among the Turkana and Pokot pastoralist groups in Northwest Kenya. However, livestock theft, a previously culturally embedded tradition, has evolved into a commercialized and violent venture with catastrophic socio-economic and security ramifications. The study examined the prevalence, root causes, and effects of livestock theft while exploring feasible conflict resolution mechanisms. The research was guided by the Frustration-Aggression Theory, which forecasts that socio-economic frustrations and resource competition trigger violent behavior like fighting and theft. This study adopted a descriptive research design to provide information at a specific time to allow for in-depth understanding of patterns of livestock theft. The target population was pastoral households, community leaders, security officers, and government officials in Pokot and Turkana counties. A sample of 400 households was estimated using stratified random sampling to provide fair representation of the affected communities. Furthermore, 10 key informants (KIIs) and 6 focus group discussions (FGDs) were selected purposively to obtain qualitative data. Data were collected using structured questionnaires, focus group discussion guides, and key informant interview schedules. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (percentages, frequencies, means) and to explore associations between theft incidence and socio-economic variables. Qualitative data were analyzed thematically to reveal underlying social, economic, and cultural stories. Findings revealed that 78% of the households had suffered livestock theft, 60% of them having incurred frequent nightly incursions. Significant impacts were economic loss, food insecurity (85%), displacement (30%), and interrupted education (40%). Major causes of theft were economic reasons (70%), scarcity of resources (55%), poor law enforcement (50%), and cultural practices (60%). The study also quoted limited formal education (70%) and high dependence on cattle (85%) as exacerbating factors. Traditional conflict resolution mechanisms and government interventions were identified as very important in mitigating theft, yet their effectiveness was compromised by poor institutional structures. This study concluded that cattle rustling is now an organized and economically motivated crime that poses gigantic challenges to the socio-economic stability of the Turkana and Pokot communities. To address the issue, a comprehensive intervention strategy is required, such as enhanced security, education, revitalization of traditional peacebuilding mechanisms, and livelihood diversification. Decision-makers ought to invest in context-specific interventions that promote peace and resilience in the region, ultimately decreasing cattle theft and encouraging sustainable pastoralism.

Keywords: Livestock Theft, Kenya, Pokot, Pastoralists, Turkana

I. INTRODUCTION

In the arid and semi-arid regions of Northwest Kenya, the raising of livestock constitutes a central element of pastoralist societies' economy and culture, especially in the Turkana and Pokot ethnic groups (Schilling & Werland, 2023). These societies, which are rooted in the history of nomadism and heavily reliant upon their animals as a source of food and socio-economic equilibrium, are constantly under threat from animal theft, or 'cattle rustling' (Nyariki & Amwata, 2019).

The evolution of cattle rustling from a cultural tradition to a brutal and commercialized practice among the Turkana and Pokot pastoralists is a profound shift with significant socio-economic and security ramifications (Eaton, 2010). In the past, cattle rustling was highly ingrained in the culture of the pastoralist societies, usually constituting a rite of passage for young males (Schilling et al., 2012; Wild et al., 2018). It represented adulthood, bravery, and



preparedness for full adulthood, like marriage, because ownership of livestock was a condition of bride price negotiations (Greiner, 2013). Raids were often conducted with community approval and led by cultural practices that, despite their competitive nature, sought to ensure some sense of respect and equilibrium among neighboring groups.

Turkana and Pokot, dislocated by spatial boundaries and particular cultural identity, have been perpetrators of livestock thievery in the context of their inter-group competition for such limited resources as water and pastures (Hendrickson et al., 1996). The competition has also been driven by environmental pressures, such as extended droughts and global warming, that have reduced the levels of these essential resources, thus elevating the frequency and intensity of raids (Jones et al., 2022). The cultural practice of cattle rustling growing into an exercise of violence incorporating extensive use of weapons includes not only the exploitation of the ancient spears but also the appropriation of guns to enhance the severity and intensity of these raids (Wild et al., 2018). Livestock theft has diverse implications for the economic security, the social fabric, and the wellbeing of the Pokot and the Turkana individuals.

Livestock are a primary source of household income, a prominent indicator of wealth, and an essential element of social rituals and negotiations (Behnke, 2008). Livestock theft can be very costly for households, enhancing food insecurity and leading to retaliatory cycles of violence that destabilize the region.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Livestock raids between the Turkana and Pokot pastoral communities in Northwest Kenya have escalated as a violent, commercialized crime from a traditional practice, which has resulted in economic insecurity, food insecurity, displacement, and disruption of education. The situation persists despite interventions by the government and the community due to economic incentives, constraints in resources, ineffective law enforcement, and embedded cultural practices. The increasing frequency and severity of cattle raids generate regional security and intercommunal relations threats. However, there is a lack of empirical studies on the subject. The present study aimed to investigate the prevalence, causes, and socio-economic impacts of livestock theft and analyze sustainable conflict-resolution strategies towards achieving long-term peace and stability.

1.2 Research Objectives

- (i) To investigate the extent, motivations, and socio-economic impacts of livestock raiding among the Pokot and Turkana communities in Northwest Kenya.
- (ii) To evaluate effective measures to contain the phenomenon and support regional stability among the Pokot and Turkana communities in Northwest Kenya.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Livestock rustling has traditionally been a traditional practice for pastoralist groups, frequently a rite of passage, a way of accumulating wealth, and a method of maintaining herd balance during times of resource degradation (Schilling et al., 2012). This practice, however, has evolved over the last few decades into a violent, commercialized enterprise fueled by economic motives, organized crime, and the availability of small arms. Among Kenyans, the Turkana and Pokot communities have been at the forefront of increasing cattle raids, leading to a breakdown in traditional resource-sharing frameworks and aggravating confrontations (Devine, 2016).

Several studies identify economic poverty, environmental pressure, and ineffective law enforcement as the causes of livestock theft (Aiyzhy et al., 2021). Economic poverty, exacerbated by recurring droughts and limited livelihood opportunities, has forced many young men to engage in cattle raids as a source of livelihood. Furthermore, diminished pastureland and water resources due to climate change have resulted in increased competition, which has led to inter-ethnic cattle raids. The absence of effective legal systems and weak security infrastructure also perpetuates the thievery cycle because criminals often escape prosecution (McLendon et al., 2024).

Livestock cattle raiding has severe socio-economic consequences like economic destabilization, food insecurity, displacement, and disrupted education (Atieno, 2024). Studies indicate that pastoralist families suffer heavy loss in the form of income from cattle raids, pushing the majority into poverty. Food insecurity rises as stolen livestock have a direct impact on milk and meat supply, essential food staples among these communities (Lin et al., 2022). Further, frequent cattle raids displace families, placing them in relief camps and disrupting children's education.

Efforts to control livestock theft have ranged from state-led security efforts to community-based peacebuilding initiatives. Traditional mechanisms such as elder-mediated negotiations, compensation, and inter-tribal agreements have been engaged in conflict resolution for centuries (Muluken, 2020). Modern challenges, however, demand hybrid efforts that integrate traditional mechanisms with formal governance structures, such as enhanced law enforcement, economic empowerment initiatives, and education programs. While the earlier literature is enlightening



about the causes and effects of cattle theft, very few empirical research studies explore how economic incentives interact with environmental pressures and traditional conflict resolution mechanisms in the Turkana-Pokot context. This study sought to bridge this research gap by putting forward evidence-informed recommendations to prevent cattle theft and establish lasting peace.

2.1 Theoretical Review

The Frustration-Aggression Theory that was initially advanced by Dollard et al. (1939) and later revised by Berkowitz (1989) maintains that when individuals become frustrated in the sense of the blocking of goal-directed behavior they react aggressively (Berkowitz, 1989). With regard to cattle raiding between the Turkana and Pokot communities, the theory is effective in describing the manner in which economic hardship, resource scarcity, and poor law enforcement contribute to an increase in cattle raids and inter-communitarian violence.

To many of the inhabitants of these pastoralist communities, economic adversity is a primary source of frustration. The absence of formal education access and employment opportunities results in little choice for economic security for young men, so they rely more on cattle for wealth accumulation (Marty, 2024). Where the availability of economic opportunities is constrained, cattle rustling is a plausible, if illicit, avenue for accessing livelihoods. Furthermore, land degradation and climate change have led to limited water and pasture resources (AbdelRahman, 2023). As competition for these fundamental resources intensifies, pastoralist communities experience increased frustration, which manifests in the form of revenge raids and livestock rustling.

Poor policing also contributes to this issue. The absence of effective legal sanctions, coupled with poor policing, enables a culture of impunity to emerge under which individuals feel courageous enough to steal and assault without fear of serious consequences (Singh, 2022). Most communities feel angry at the inability of the government to ensure their safety, so they take it upon themselves, leading to cycles of retaliatory attacks (Taylor et al., 2024). Weakening of traditional institutions has also helped cause this intensification. Historically, traditional institutions led by elders mediated disputes and implemented compensatory agreements to maintain peace (Eneyew & Ayalew, 2023). Political interference and modern socio-economic challenges, however, have undermined the authority of these traditional institutions, making communities lack efficient ways to resolve disputes amicably.

2.1.1 The Frustration-Aggression Theory

Applying the Frustration-Aggression Theory to cattle theft means that the removal of the root causes of frustration is key to the reduction of aggression and violence. Economic empowerment programs providing alternative means of livelihood, e.g., vocational training and entrepreneurial support, can reduce economic frustrations (Kaimba et al., 2011). Expanded access to education can also reduce over-reliance on cattle wealth, making theft less of an economic necessity. Moreover, conservation measures can alleviate scarcities of natural resources, diluting competition over grazing land and water resources. Enhancing policing and judicial capacities can act as a deterrent on criminality to ensure that actors are brought to book. Ultimately, re-vitalizing pre-existing conflict-resolution mechanisms may restore trust as well as confidence between communities towards sustainable peace (Singh, 2022). In addressing these complaints, the violence that accompanies livestock theft can be ended, and stability in the Turkana and Pokot regions can be promoted.

2.2 Empirical Review

A number of studies have also investigated the dynamics of livestock theft in pastoralist societies, emphasizing its socio-economic, environmental, and security consequences. Research has shed important light on the determinants of livestock theft, its impacts on targeted communities, and the efficacy of different conflict-resolution measures. A study by Kaimba et al (2011) on cattle rustling in Kenya's semi-arid and arid regions found that cattle rustling had shifted from a traditional activity of wealth redistribution to a commercialized and violent one (Kaimba et al., 2011). The study attributed the shift to be due to the increased demand for livestock in urban centers, increased proliferation of small arms, and weakened customary systems of governance. These results are the same as provided by Kimani et al. (2021), who believed that cattle rustling due to its business character has seen organized crime groups rise, and thus it is more difficult to respond to through conventional means of community peace efforts (Kimani et al., 2021).

Economic poverty has also been regarded as the primary reason for cattle theft. Economic disparities within pastoralist societies have been studied by Atieno (2024), and he found that economic subsistence was provoked by poverty and a lack of substitute livelihoods, which stimulated young men into cattle raiding (Atieno, 2024). Concurrently, Huho and Mugalavai (2010) established that declining pastoral economies, compounded by recurring droughts and resource degradation, were behind the growing trend of livestock theft (Huho & Mugalavai, 2010). The facts suggest that economic incentives play a key role in perpetuating the cycle of violence, which necessitates specific economic interventions to arrest theft.



Resource scarcity has also been linked to enhanced livestock theft and intergroup violence. Schilling et al. (2012) examined the impact of climate change on pastoral communities in Kenya and found that reduced levels of pasture and water raised competition for limited resources (Schilling et al., 2012). As a result, livestock conflicts were more frequent and violent. Godber and Wall (2014) also pointed out further that environmental stresses have intensified border clashes between the Pokot and Turkana as the two groups compete to get grazing land for their livestock. The impact of cattle raids extends beyond the loss of resources, impacting food security, displacement, and education. Behnke (2008) found that cattle raids significantly reduce food availability in households since the animals taken in the raids directly influence milk and meat production (Behnke, 2008). Pike (2004) further documented that long-term livestock theft erodes the education of children in these communities, as families must relocate or prioritize security over learning (Pike, 2004). Families that have been displaced by cattle raids have also been well-documented, with many pastoralists fleeing to urban centres or relief camps, placing further strain on local resources.

In response to cattle stealing, numerous studies have evaluated the effectiveness of conflict-resolution mechanisms. Kimani et al. (2021) found that customary peace restoration mechanisms, such as community negotiation and reparation settlements, played an important role in solving conflicts in the past (Kimani et al., 2021). However, Kaimba et al. (2011) noted that the mechanisms have weakened over time due to politicization and modernization (Kaimba et al., 2011). The study suggested the integration of traditional conflict-solving processes with governmental governance mechanisms to enhance efficacy. Eaton (2010) also emphasized the need for enhanced law enforcement practices such as more policing and enhanced punishment for perpetrators in an effort to prevent cattle rustling (Eaton, 2010).

Despite these insights, existing literature has not properly explored the interactions between economic incentives, environmental stressors, and conflict-resolution approaches in the context of Turkana-Pokot. Furthermore, although previous research has listed various contributory factors, they do not tend to suggest inclusive, evidence-based interventions that are targeted at the specific needs of these communities. This study tries to fill this gap by providing an empirical analysis of the occurrence of livestock theft, its socio-economic impact, and the effectiveness of traditional and modern conflict-resolution measures towards the development of sustainable peace and security solutions for the region.

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

The research employed a mixed-methods approach, integrating descriptive survey and phenomenological methods to obtain in-depth insight into livestock theft among the Turkana and Pokot communities. Descriptive survey research provided quantitative data on the prevalence, causes, and socio-economic effects of livestock theft, while the phenomenological approach provided qualitative proof of community experiences, perceptions, and conflict-resolution mechanisms.

3.2 Study Area

The study was conducted in Turkana and West Pokot counties in Northwest Kenya. The two districts are predominantly inhabited by pastoral communities whose livelihood is based on cattle keeping. The area has experienced recurring conflicts caused by cattle theft, grazing land disputes, and weak enforcement of the law. The study targeted sub-counties with high rates of cattle rustling to gather information on the topic.

3.3 Target Population

The study targeted pastoralist households, community leaders, security personnel, and government representatives in Turkana and West Pokot counties.

3.4 Sampling Technique and Sample Size

The determination of house hold sample size was done using a mathematical formula developed by Yamane (Yamane, 1967).

$$n = N / (1 + Ne^2)$$

Where

n = corrected sample size, N = population size, and e = Margin of error (MoE), $e = 0.05$.

$$n = 1548217 / (1 + 1548217 (0.05)^2)$$

$$n = 1548217 / 3871.5$$

$$n = 399.9 \sim 400$$

The sample for each of the two ethnic groups was allotted proportionately based on their population as shown below. West Pokot $621,241 / 1,548,217 = 0.4 \times 400 = 160$ (40%) and; Turkana $926,976 / 1,548,217 = 0.6 \times 400 = 240$ (60%)



3.5 Data Collection Instruments

Data collection was both interactive (key informant interview and focus group discussion) and non-interactive (document analysis and use of questionnaires) whose primary mode of the data collection was knowledge, attitude and practice (KAP) survey. KAP granted the researcher the capacity to analyze patterns of respondent behavior in the militant culture promotion environment. The triangulation enabled the researcher to have a varied of in formations of aggressive culture propagation leading to conflicts in the area of study. Face to face interview and focused group discussion were used to collect qualitative data. Participants and settings were defined by location and people who would be able to best assist with the understanding of the central phenomenon of perpetuation of cultural practices and how it is related to the conflicts under study. In the field, the field researcher made reflective and descriptive notes from the FGDs and interviews conducted during the empirical study.

3.6 Pilot Study

The pilot study was conducted in Endeless sub-county beyond the Turkana-Pokot border region to pilot test the research instruments. The sample of 40 respondents (10% of the total sample) was utilized to try out the questionnaire and interview guides' clarity, appropriateness, and feasibility. Refining was conducted to improve question construction and minimize ambiguity.

3.7 Validity of the Instruments

The face validity of the questionnaire was established by examining the degree of ease with which the respondents could respond to the questions they were asked. In this regard, the researcher observed the respondents during the pilot study and also asked whether they found it difficult to respond to any question. Any confusing questions were corrected at once. To determine the content validity, the questionnaire was presented to supervisors in the university and other university research experts. Expert opinion was sought from them and the feedback utilized in redefining the questionnaire. For determining construct validity, questions were also checked against what would be required for the outcome and how effective questions would be used for the research. The questions were also constructed from the research questions and the gaps in literature.

3.8 Reliability of the Instruments

Reliability was determined using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of internal consistency. A satisfactory reliability level of 0.7 and above was used. Test-retest reliability was also carried out by sending the questionnaire to a limited number of respondents twice within two weeks to test response consistency.

Table 1

Reliability Testing

Instrument	Number of Items	Pilot Sample (n=40)	Cronbach's Alpha
Structured Questionnaire	25	40	0.82
Interview guide (KIIs)	12	10	0.79
FGD Guide	10	6	0.76
Observation Checklist	8	10	0.81

3.9 Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, percentages, and frequencies) were computed on SPSS software to give trend summary. Thematic analysis was used to identify dominant themes emanating from FGDs and KIIs. Responses were placed into patterns regarding economic incentives, cultural contexts, law enforcement, and conflict resolution. Both qualitative and quantitative findings were combined to get an integrated, whole picture view of the research objectives.

3.10 Ethical Considerations

Participants were recruited in accordance with a Human Use Protocol. Approval for this protocol was obtained from the Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology Institutional Ethical Review Committee, designated as protocol number MMUST/IERC/021/2021. Approval for the study was obtained from the National Council on Science and Technology (NACOSTI) under license number NACOSTI/P/36/31836. All participants provided written consent.



IV. FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

4.1 Demographic and Socio-Economic Attributes

The researcher issued the questionnaires and interviewed various respondents. Out of the 400 targeted by the study, 400 (100%) responded. The distribution of gender is shown in figure 1. The demographic composition of the study population is predominantly male, representing 260 (65%) of the participants, whereas females constitute 140 (35%). This implies that men might play a more prominent role or engagement in issues concerning livestock theft.

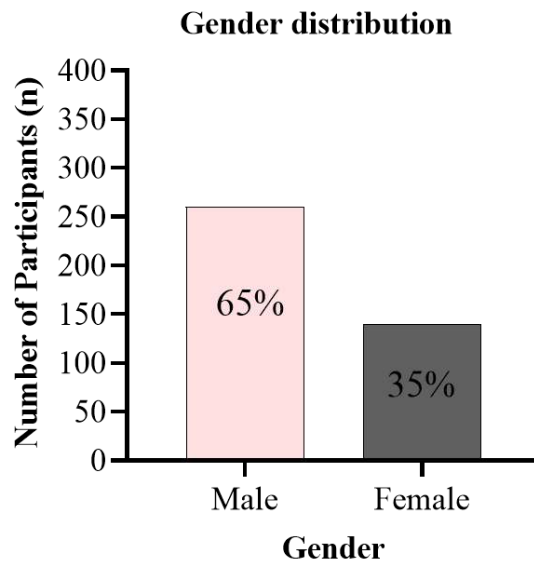


Figure 1
Gender of Respondents

The distribution of age is summarized in figure 2. The participants are divided into three distinct age categories: 18–30 years 120 (30%), 31–50 years 200 (50%), and those above 50 years 80 (20%). A significant portion of participants, comprising 50%, resides within the 31–50 age range, suggesting that individuals in middle age are predominantly involved in or influenced by the matter at hand.

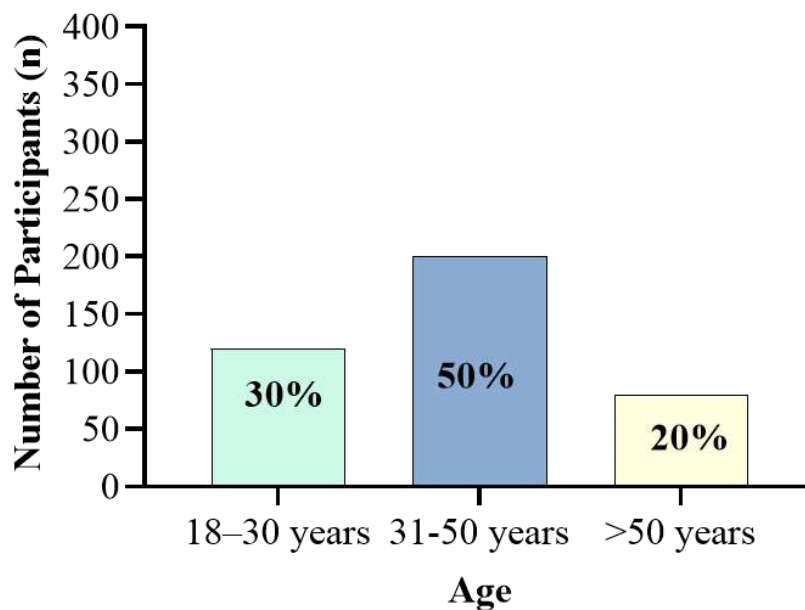


Figure 2
Age Distribution

The level of education is shown in figure 3. The levels of education are largely insufficient, as 280 (70%) of participants indicate a lack of formal schooling. A limited fraction 80 (20%) has achieved primary education, and



merely 40 (10%) have reached secondary education or beyond. This underscores the restricted availability of formal education within pastoral communities.

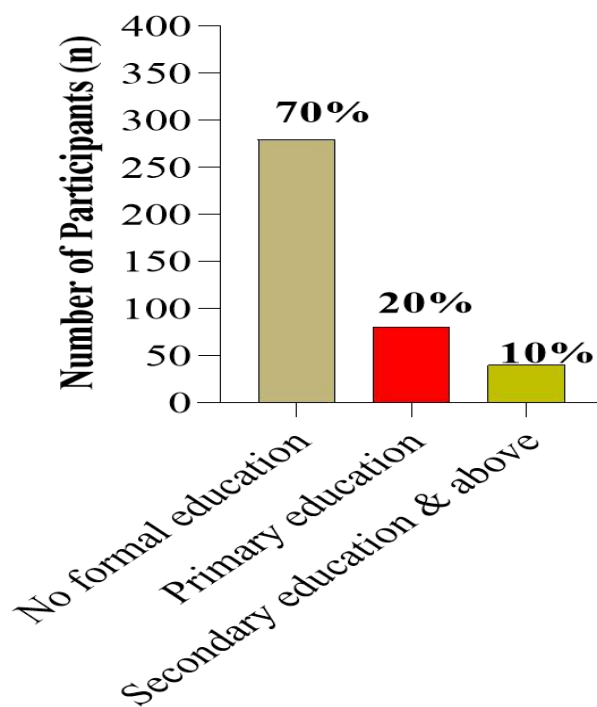


Figure 3
Education Level

The sources of livelihood are summarized in figure 4. The practice of livestock rearing serves as the principal means of livelihood for 340 (85%) of the participants, highlighting its significance to both their economic stability and cultural identity. A negligible portion participates in small-scale trade 40 (10%) or other endeavors 20 (5%).

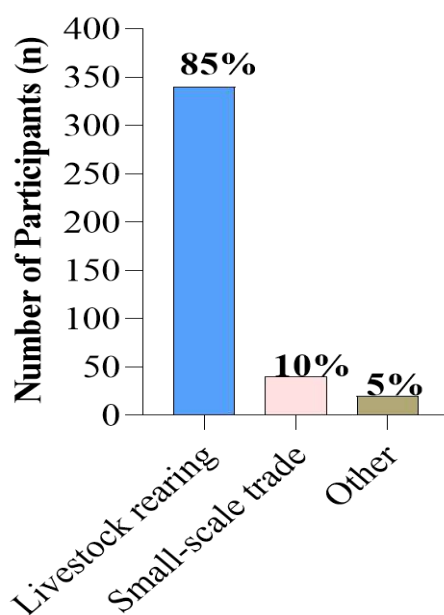


Figure 4
Livelihood Sources

Figure 5 illustrates the prevalence and socio-economic effects of livestock theft within the Turkana and Pokot pastoral communities in Northwest Kenya.

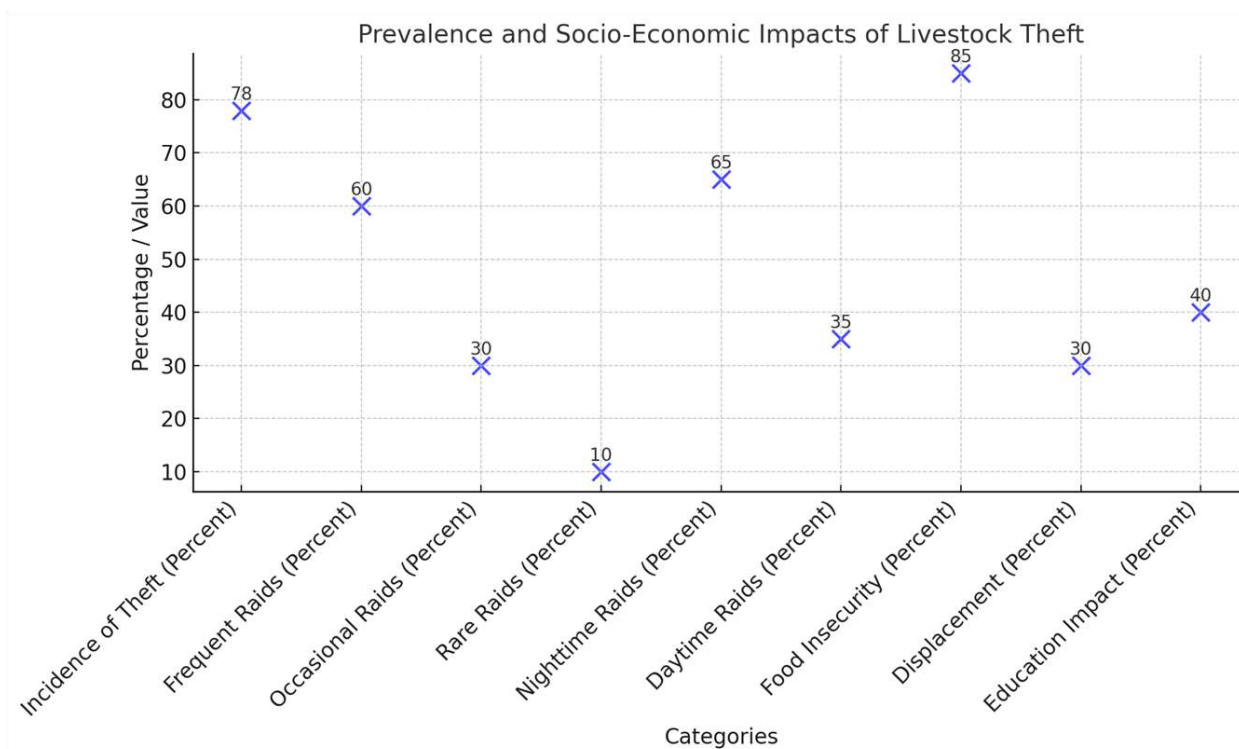


Figure 5

An illustration of the prevalence and socio-economic effects of livestock theft within the Turkana and Pokot pastoral communities in Northwest Kenya

As shown in Figure 5, livestock theft constitutes a significant and detrimental concern for the Turkana and Pokot pastoral communities in Northwest Kenya. The issue is prevalent, with an incidence rate of 78%, suggesting that the majority of households in these communities are impacted. The incidence of theft is variable, with 60% of respondents reporting frequent raids, whereas 30% experience occasional raids. Rare raids occur infrequently, as evidenced by only 10% of respondents reporting such experiences. The timing of these raids indicates a strategic inclination towards nocturnal operations, as reported by 65% of respondents. Conversely, daytime raids occur less frequently, impacting 35%. This pattern indicates that livestock theft frequently takes place at night, presumably to evade detection and opposition. The socio-economic impacts of livestock theft are significant and extensive. Food insecurity represents a significant issue, impacting 85% of households and highlighting the dependence on livestock for sustenance and economic stability. Displacement is a notable outcome, as 30% of respondents indicated being compelled to migrate due to instability associated with theft. The theft of livestock significantly disrupts education for numerous families, with 40% of respondents indicating its effect on their capacity to afford or prioritize schooling.

Table 2

Drivers of Livestock Theft

Characteristic	Number of respondents (%) n=400	Details of the responses of participants
Cultural Drivers	240 (60)	Viewed as a tradition rooted in cultural practices but has transformed into a violent activity.
Economic Motivations	280 (70)	Stolen livestock sold in markets or traded for firearms.
Resource Scarcity	220 (55)	Attributed to competition over grazing land and water resources
Weak Law Enforcement	200 (50)	Poor policing and corruption as key challenges
Revenge and Retaliation	160 (40)	Retaliatory raids perpetuating violence between the Turkana and Pokot

Table 2 shows the complex characteristics of livestock theft within the Turkana and Pokot pastoral communities in Northwest Kenya, highlighting its cultural, economic, and socio-political aspects. The data illustrates the intricate dynamics of livestock theft within the Turkana and Pokot pastoral communities in Northwest Kenya, shaped by cultural, economic, environmental, and social influences. Sixty percent of respondents (240 participants)



recognized cultural drivers, indicating that livestock theft has historical roots in traditional practices, which have evolved into a more violent activity over time. Economic motivations emerged as the predominant factor, with 70% (280 respondents) indicating that stolen livestock are frequently sold in markets or exchanged for firearms, highlighting the monetization of this practice. Resource scarcity, identified by 55% of participants (220 individuals), significantly influences the situation, stemming from intense competition for grazing land and water resources in the arid and semi-arid regions inhabited by these communities. Weak law enforcement has become a significant concern, with 50% (200 respondents) identifying inadequate policing and corruption as primary obstacles enabling the ongoing prevalence of livestock theft. Furthermore, 40% of respondents (160 individuals) identified revenge and retaliation as significant factors, with retaliatory raids exacerbating cycles of violence and intensifying the conflict between the Turkana and Pokot groups.

Table 3

Perspectives on Conflict Resolution

Characteristic	Number of respondents (%) n=400	Details of the responses of participants
Traditional Mechanisms	200 (50)	Supported revival of traditional mechanisms such as negotiations mediated by elders.
Government Intervention	120 (30)	Emphasized improved security through increased police presence and disarmament programs.
Alternative Livelihoods	80 (20)	Advocated for programs providing alternative income sources, such as irrigation-based agriculture

The data presented in table 3 above shows how the Turkana and Pokot pastoral communities in Northwest Kenya have different ideas on how to deal with cattle theft. With 50% of respondents (200 participants) supporting the resuscitation of ancient methods like elder-mediated negotiations, traditional mechanisms emerged as an option that was widely embraced. These systems are said to have cultural roots and have the ability to reduce tensions and promote amicable settlements. Thirty percent of respondents (120 participants) underscored the necessity for increased security measures and government intervention. The implementation of disarmament initiatives to lessen the circulation of firearms, which frequently fuel violence associated to livestock theft, and an increase in police presence in impacted areas were among the recommendations. Furthermore, in order to reduce the financial incentives underlying cattle theft, 20% of respondents (80 participants) suggested promoting alternative livelihoods. It was suggested that initiatives like irrigation-based agriculture be implemented in order to decrease dependency on livestock as the main economic activity and offer stable revenue streams.

The gender distribution, comprising 65% male participants, indicates the significant involvement of men in cattle management and conflict dynamics, encompassing raids and theft protection. The limited representation of female participants (35%) underscores their indirect engagement, frequently in supportive capacities, such as household management during emergencies. Future initiatives must integrate gender-specific methods to tackle the wider socio-economic effects on women and families. Age distribution data indicate that the predominant group of participants (50%) falls into the 31 to 50-year age range, succeeded by younger persons (30%). This indicates that middle-aged individuals predominantly oversee cattle herding and conflict-related decision-making. The participation of younger individuals in raids, as evidenced by cultural traditions, indicates the necessity for focused youth empowerment initiatives to disrupt the cycle of violence (Gray et al., 2003).

Schooling levels are significantly deficient, with 70% of members devoid of formal schooling. The deficiency in education constitutes a substantial obstacle to embracing alternative livelihoods and comprehending contemporary conflict-resolution strategies. Community education programs may facilitate the bridging of this gap by fostering awareness of peaceful cooperation and diversifying income streams (Mallick & Thakurta, 2024). The significant dependence on livestock farming (85%) as the main source of livelihood highlights the susceptibility of these communities to theft. The reliance on livestock exacerbates the effects of theft, sustaining cycles of poverty and heightening the probability of retaliatory attacks.

The elevated prevalence of livestock theft documented throughout both Turkana (80%) and Pokot (75%) groups underscores its widespread occurrence. The incidence of raids, especially among Turkana individuals, indicates their heightened susceptibility owing to their geographical position and closeness to disputed grazing areas. The nocturnal timing of the majority of raids (65%) signifies the calculated nature of the theft, utilizing the concealment of darkness to reduce opposition and detection. The discovery of hotspots like Kapese and Sigor underscores the necessity for focused actions in these high-risk regions. Augmented security protocols, including community policing and surveillance, may reduce the incidence and consequences of raids (Braga et al., 2014; Taylor et al., 2022).



The economic repercussions of livestock theft are significant, with impacted households averaging a loss of 25 animals. For populations that depend significantly on cattle for sustenance, revenue, and social status, such losses can be catastrophic. The ramifications, encompassing food insecurity and interrupted education, highlight the extensive societal consequences (Godber & Wall, 2014). The displacement of 30% of homes following raids illustrates the human toll of cattle theft, intensifying poverty and heightening susceptibility to disease and other adversities. Sustainable relocation initiatives and psychosocial assistance are crucial for these displaced communities (Dickson et al., 2024). The results demonstrate a transition from conventional, culturally influenced cattle rustling to a more aggressive and economically driven activity (Kaimba et al., 2011). The commodification of livestock theft, propelled by illicit markets and organized crime, has intensified the cycle of violence. Economic desperation stemming from resource shortages (55%) and inadequate law enforcement (50%) exacerbates this activity.

Conventional methods for dispute resolution, such as elder-mediated discussions, have diminished in efficacy due to the decline of cultural authority and the militarization of raids (Strouboulis et al., 2023). Reinstating ancient systems alongside contemporary conflict resolution tactics may offer a route to enduring peace (Saaida, 2023). Although the overarching patterns are comparable, significant distinctions between the Turkana and Pokot populations became apparent. Participants from Turkana indicated increased engagement in sheep husbandry and heightened losses from theft, presumably attributable to their bigger population and closeness to susceptible grazing areas. Conversely, Pokot individuals exhibited marginally elevated educational attainment, which might be utilized for community-based interventions.

V. CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

Livestock theft among the Turkana and Pokot pastoral groups in Northwest Kenya represents a complex issue characterized by cultural, economic, and environmental factors. The practice, previously a cultural rite of passage, has transformed into a violent and commercialized activity influenced by resource scarcity, economic desperation, and inadequate law enforcement. The research emphasizes the significant socio-economic consequences of livestock theft, encompassing economic losses, food insecurity, interrupted education, and displacement, which intensify poverty and destabilize these communities.

Middle-aged men are dominated by livestock practice, with the low education and high dependence on pastoralism in their populations leaving them highly vulnerable. The differences between the Turkana and Pokot population, such as greater dependence on livestock among the Turkana and slightly improved education status of the Pokot, explain the necessity of interventions by each group.

5.2 Recommendations

These challenges require a multifaceted approach for resolution. Enhancing security in areas prone to theft, advancing education and vocational training, reinstating traditional conflict-resolution methods, and tackling resource scarcity via sustainable grazing and water management initiatives are essential. Engaging youth in productive activities may contribute to disrupting the cycle of violence. Effective implementation of these measures can promote long-term stability, peace, and resilience within the Turkana and Pokot pastoral communities.

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