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Pepperdine University
Graduate School of Education and Psychology

THE QUEST FOR INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF INDIGENOUS CONFLICT RESOLUTION
MECHANISMS IN THE ETHIOPIAN CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM TO SPUR SOCIAL
CHANGE IN THE COUNTRY

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Global Leadership and Change

by

Daniel Wolde Sugamo

July, 2023

H. Eric Schockman, Ph.D. – Dissertation Chairperson

This dissertation, written by

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under the guidance of a Faculty Committee and approved by its members, has been submitted to and accepted by the Graduate Faculty in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my Ethiopians, who have always been a symbol of freedom for Africa and its people; to my father, who guides my steps from his profound humanist character; to my mother, who has given birth to me several times; to my brothers and sisters, who connect me with what is essential in life, and to my friends who have always believed in me.

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VITA

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PROFESSIONAL WORK EXPERIENCES SUMMARY

Before this doctoral studies, Daniel Sugamo worked at Consolata Christian-based international institutions in different countries, including Ethiopia, Kenya, Colombia, Mexico, the USA, and Canada. He coordinated human capital in this institution at the Mexico, USA, and Canada levels for five years. For five years, he also worked with the indigenous communities in Colombia, specifically in the northern part of the country. He has lived in different cultural diverse countries and worked closely with vulnerable communities outside of his own country Ethiopia, especially in Latin American and African countries since 2004.

Daniel Sugamo worked as a licensed systemic family therapist for three years in his center, *the Naim Center: Center of Human Development and Integration in Guadalajara*. Daniel Sugamo is a certified international facilitator of ESPERE (School of Forgiveness and Reconciliation), founded by Leonel Narvaez Gomez in Colombia. Sugamo has also dedicated himself to empowering women entrepreneurs and leaders in Mexico and Colombia. In addition, Daniel Sugamo worked as a certified life coach and executive consultant in companies like Apsis, Soltec, Motormexa, Letsa, Tessa, and Group Solorzano Tlc in Mexico.

Finally, Daniel Sugamo is the published author of two personal growth books in Spanish, “*Florcer in el desierto*” and “*Me levantare y Volver...*” both books are meant to redirect, repair and reconcile interpersonal and intrapersonal relations of the people.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this qualitative case study with the exploratory design was to explore the barriers, as perceived by Ethiopia's national elders and women ambassadors of peace, that may impede the incorporation of Indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms (ICRMs) within the federal criminal justice system of the country to spur social change and to provide a clear policy orientation for this incorporation to take place. The servant leadership model and an ubuntu-based leadership approach provided the theoretical framework. A sample group of 20 elders who represent a number of ethnic groups at the national level participated in one-on-one interviews, and 15 women ambassadors of peace and another 14 regional and local elders took part in four separate focus discussion groups. All the national elders reported systemic corruption in the federal courts. According to study informants, another obstacle to incorporating ICRMs within the federal criminal justice system comes from the teachings of western-oriented Christianity and education in Ethiopia, which disparage traditional Ethiopian cultural practices. These teachings undermine the legitimacy and authority of the elders who, for centuries, have employed ICRMs to ensure restorative justice and to avert, manage, and resolve problems at the local level. Nowadays, national elders are unofficially invited by government officials to participate in conflict resolution in recognition of the pivotal role that these elders and their institutions play in advancing national peace and stability. Therefore, this study recommends official recognition of these traditional justice practices by means of national policy changes grounded in wise elders and women ambassadors of peace leadership development in Africa (WEWLDA), incorporating servant leadership with ubuntu-based conflict resolution.

Keywords: Ethiopia, leadership, ubuntu-based conflict resolutions, servant leadership, restorative justice, conflict resolution

Chapter 1: Introduction

This qualitative case study with explanatory design sought to understand the barriers, as perceived by Ethiopia's national elders and women ambassadors of peace, that might impede the incorporation of Indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms (ICRMs) within the federal criminal justice system of the country in order to spur social change and to provide a clear policy orientation for this incorporation to take place. It explores the effectiveness and applicability of the ICRMs from the perspective of thought leaders in the nation's legal system. The study explores the fundamental role of these mechanisms that serve many conflicts in multi-ethnic nations such as Ethiopia. These mechanisms are the foundational legacy that encompasses 3,000 years of historical originality, exceptionality, antiquity, and uniquely moral and religious values, beliefs, and principles (Alemie & Mandefro, 2018; Gebeyehu, 1990).

Prior research shows that the person-oriented approach of the ICRMs produces optimal outcomes through the collaborative efforts of all participants in conflict resolution processes empowered by Ethiopia's national elders, who represent their respective multi-ethnic groups (Elechi et al., 2010; Makonnen, 2016). In addition, the study provides a critical analysis of Ethiopia's and other African legal systems, which remain tied predominantly to a western legal system that is counterproductive to the sacred existence of Africans' cultural values, beliefs, and principles. To date, Ethiopia's law and policymakers lack clear direction in applying their culturally endowed and homegrown ICRMs in the federal criminal justice system, and their effectiveness has not been considered formally within the said justice system.

This study explored a policy option that incorporates and validates these traditional mechanisms with the Ethiopian formal criminal justice system as an alternative approach to justice because they are more accessible, effective, and efficient; less expensive and coercive; and more respectful of the lifestyle and cultural values of Ethiopians (Alemie & Mandefro, 2018; Epple & Assefa, 2020). Furthermore, ICRMs are bidirectional, connecting victims and

perpetrators and delivering restorative justice to them and their communities (Elechi et al., 2010; Murithi, 2009).

Due to its governmental structures, Ethiopia has experienced internal and external conflict from its inception as a modern nation-state in the 19th century (Adamu, 2013; Belcher, 2012; Gebeyehu, 1990). This is a historical problem that the country's formal laws and courts have been unable to resolve (Selassiet, 2003). Therefore, I contend that it is imperative to implement alternative, traditional mechanisms within the federal criminal justice system to bring peace and stability to Ethiopia.

Background of the Problem

Ethiopia is in Eastern Africa and borders Somalia, Djibouti, Sudan, South Sudan, Kenya, Eritrea, and Uganda. Based on the latest United Nations 2022 data, the country has the second-largest populace in Africa, with 119,695,420 people. Ethiopia's uniqueness is evidenced by its being the oldest independent nation on the African continent, with a 3,000-year history of originality, antiquity, exceptionality, values, beliefs, and principles (Belcher, 2012; Gebeyehu, 1990). Figure 1 shows a map of Eastern African countries.

Figure 1*Map of Eastern African Countries*

Note. From *Horn of Africa Map*, by Wikimedia Commons, 2022, (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Horn_of_Africa_map.png). CC BY-SA 4.0.

Despite its ancient cultural endowments, which are fundamental to the coexistence and connectedness of its people, Ethiopia has a modern history of conflict due to the nature of its governance structures, which have been beset by a legacy of imperial subjugation, administrative inadequacy, politics of the “Belly” (Bayart, 2009), systemic corruption (Inman & Andrews, 2009), and the lack of inclusive participation in government (Clark, 1995). All these examples of poor leadership have perpetuated socioeconomic and political devastation that has led to prolonged internal strife. Further, problems of weak institutional governance include weak ethics in political, judicial, and governmental leadership, compounded with a centralist concentration of state power (Hope & Chikulo, 2000). Moreover, there are contextual factors

under which Ethiopia functions, including externally imposed socioeconomic conditions (Black, 1996), imperialistic and neoimperialistic power influences (Martin, 1985; Strang, 1996), and rapidly deteriorating environmental conditions (Adedeji et al., 1991). In general, the pernicious legacy of colonialism combined with these contextual factors has led to intercommunal, intrastate, and interstate conflicts both nationally and regionally.

Today's imperialistic and neoimperialistic power influences in Africa, in general, and in Ethiopia are related to a new practice of "humanitarian intervention," which represents a "new hegemonic definition of humanitarianism by using international force, or the pursuit of violence to challenge violence" (Slim, 2001, p. 332) and a response to emergencies that features military intervention (Curtis, 2017; Pugh, 2001), all of which seem to deviate from both the rights-based legitimacy of humanitarianism and philanthropy. To this end, Curtis distinguished two types of humanitarian action: rights-based action, which is political and empowering, and philanthropic action, which is paternalistic and sentimental. Thus, in one way or another, humanitarian policy operates in neocolonial ways, with most humanitarian aid in the hands of former or current imperial supremacies of the western countries, including France, Britain, and the United States (Slim, 2002). More details on humanitarian aid as a political tool are discussed in Chapter 2.

Regarding environmental and demographic factors in Africa as a whole and in Ethiopia, it is estimated that of the 30–40 million pastoralists worldwide who live in arid or semi-arid environments and depend entirely on animals for survival, 50%–60% are found in Africa (Mkutu, 2001). Eastern Africa comprises the most significant number of pastoralists in the world. Sudan, for example, contains the highest percentage of pastoralists per capita in the world, while Somalia and Ethiopia cover a third and fifth place in terms of the percentage of pastoralists (Carr-Hill & Peart, 2005; Mkutu, 2001). *Pastoralists* are nomadic groups of people who do not have a determined place to stay and live and thus are constantly moving from place to place. As a result, their main economic activities and lifestyles are centered on livestock-keeping,

pastoralism, and grazing, which, in turn, necessitate walking long distances searching water and pasture (Carr-Hill and Peart, 2005).

In Eastern African countries, these groups are among the most socially, politically, and economically disadvantaged communities and are widely excluded from mainstream national policymaking processes (Dyer, 2006). Moreover, due to their mobile lifestyle (Carr-Hill & Peart, 2005), they face distinct types of problems, such as drought and lack of infrastructure, that frequently involve them in intercommunal, intrastate, and interstate conflicts as they frequently migrate with their animals to other regional states within their own country or across national borders in search of pasture.

According to Østebø et al. (2021) and Yared (2021), intercommunal conflict is the result of a monoethnic ruling system in which the dominant ethnic, religious, and extremist nationalists' elites impose their will on the minority ethnic group(s) within the country by offering benefits and support to some communities but not to others. On the other hand, intrastate conflict results from a dysfunctional governance system in which a powerful ethnonational group dominates other ethnonational groups. In Ethiopia, for clarity purposes, intrastate conflicts frequently arise when one regional state experiences an internal struggle that then impacts a neighboring regional state and then affects the entire country. An interstate conflict refers to a conflict that occurs between the Ethiopian national state and bordering nations in Eastern Africa. These three conflicts are the direct explanatory factors for sociopolitical and economic instability in Eastern African nations in general and Ethiopia in particular. However, unfortunately, Ethiopia's existing criminal legal system has been unable to resolve these conflicts, a situation discussed in more detail in later chapters.

Historically, three important legacies distinguish Ethiopia: the monarchy, the Monophysite Church, and the dominant Abyssinian culture, whose founding fathers hailed from the Tigray and Amhara regions of the country (Gebeyehu, 1990). The Tigre and Amhara Abyssinian elite were Indigenous people who possessed superior political, military, and

organizational capabilities in the nation until the 1974 revolution. They subjugated or “Abyssinianized” inhabitants of other parts of Ethiopia. Under Abyssinian rule, Ethiopia was an imperial state in which kings from the northern highlands conquered other Ethiopians and forcibly incorporated them as their subjects. In this way, the Abyssinian elite and their culture came to dominate the empire.

To better understand the current contextual background of Ethiopia, it might be worthy of elucidating a historical recapitulation of the country’s sociopolitical and cultural dynamics and how this diversity has shaped the life of the Ethiopian people during five distinct eras in the recent past: early modern Ethiopia (1855–1930), the Imperial regime (1930–1974), the Military Derg regime (1974–1991), the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (EFDR; 1991–2018), and the reformist government (2018–present; Adamu, 2013; Balsvik, 2009; Markakis, 1979; Sime & Latchanna, 2016).

Sociopolitical Dynamics in the Early Modern Ethiopia (1855–1930)

Mengisteab (1997) and Zewde (2002) believed that early modern Ethiopia began in the 19th century with the reign of Emperor Tewodros (1855–1868), who initiated the primary actions to unify and modernize the country. Tewodros was from the Amhara ethnic group and came to power as Emperor of Ethiopia by ending a decentralized period (17th and 18th centuries) called the Zemene Mesafint (The Era of the Princes), which was marked by incessant and violent struggles for power, influence, and control (Gebeyehu, 1990). To succeed in unification, Emperor Tewodros pursued two critical strategies. First, he fragmented traditional administrative divisions by depriving local potentates of their power bases. Second, for the first time, he created a disciplined, professional army by employing European and Turkish military expertise (Laremont, 2005). In so doing, Tewodros strengthened his empire both militarily and administratively.

During Tewodros’ imperial reign, Ethiopian Orthodox Church followers continued to be the dominant population and continues to be today. One of the earliest Indigenous Christian

religions, Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity was adopted by Ethiopians before many western nations were exposed to Christianity. Ethiopia declared Christianity its official state religion in the 4th century and is unique in that it is the only African nation that was not “Christianized” by Europeans (Belcher, 2012). Amharic was the official written and spoken language throughout the country (Haile, 1986; Zewde, 2002), which is still the case today.

Emperor Tewodros’ reign ended in 1868 when he defiantly took his own life rather than face the humiliation of surrender and custody by the British army at the Battle of Magdala. After Tewodros’ death, Emperor Tekegiorgis II (1868–1872), who was also from the Amhara ethnic group ascended to the throne, followed by Emperor Yohannes VI (1872–1889) who belonged to the Tigre ethnic group. Yohannes, a devout Ethiopian Orthodox Christian (Haile, 1986), continued Tewodros’ and Tekegiorgis II’s centralization policies to unify the country (Laremont, 2005). Unfortunately, his ambitions were thwarted due to profound endogenous and exogenous conflicts. Islam, which had taken root in Ethiopia, had no place in Yohannes’s political ambitions. He enacted a strict policy forcing Muslims to convert and be baptized into Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity. In addition, they had to forfeit their land and property to his administration (Zewde, 2002). His policy of Christianization included building several churches in Wallo, withdrawing Muslims from the city of Aksum, and seizing Islamic books (Seri-Hersch, 2009). His additional policies were focused on territorial expansion and regionalism.

Despite setbacks in further unifying Ethiopia, Emperor Yohannes was more successful in foreign diplomacy. Tewodros had failed to establish diplomatic relationships and win recognition from western powers, which were already showing their interest in Eastern Africa (Laremont, 2005). Through patient diplomatic overtures, however, Yohannes concluded an important peace negotiation with Egypt and secured trade agreements with Britain, both of which strengthened his authority and legitimacy at home and helped to deter the incursions of potential enemies. Modernizing his army by purchasing arms from western dealers also provided him with a significant measure of security. Nevertheless, Yohannes still faced threats and was killed at the

Battle of Metemma near the border of Sudan by Sudanese Mahdists (Laremont, 2005), militant followers of a Muslim movement in Sudan (Seri-Hersch, 2009).

After Yohannes's death in 1889, Menelik II (1889–1913), who was a member of Amhara ethnic group, took a throne in Ethiopia. Experts on modern Ethiopian history (e.g., Adamu, 2013; Zewde, 2002) argued that Menelik expanded his empire to the south to integrate the country and create inclusive and modern Ethiopia. Menelik's visionary plan contributed to both diversity and inclusion in Ethiopia, incorporating most ethnic and linguistic regions and groups. However, this powerful territorial expansion also led to acculturation of the Amharic language and the Orthodox Christian Church over the multi-ethnic groups of southern Ethiopia (Mengisteab, 1997). After the death of Menelik II, a succession of his family members ascended to the imperial throne: Menelik's grandson, Lij Iyasu (1913–1916); Menelik's eldest daughter, Empress Zewditu (1916–1930); and Menelik's cousin, Haile Selassie (1930–1974). According to Adamu (2013), these rulers claimed the origin of the Solomonic dynasty, the classic ruling group of Ethiopia that claims descent from King Solomon of Jerusalem and the Queen of Sheba, mother of Menelik I of Ethiopia.

Each of these rulers preserved the sacred, culturally endowed wisdom, values, and principles extant for a millennium, convincing powerful outsiders (notably western countries) to recognize and respect Ethiopia's way of life. This is another feature of Ethiopian history that distinguishes the country from other African nations, one that enabled Ethiopia to successfully resist European colonization. Maintaining a culture rooted in 3,000 years of history, Ethiopia anticipated colonial dominion and fought to avoid the direct imposition of colonial power. Thus, the country served as a symbol of African independence throughout the colonial period and continues to do so today (Toggia, 2008). Ethiopian culture, which has not been touched by colonialism, continues to be testified and handed down in its originality by its people, which is an impactful source of pride for Ethiopians.

Sociopolitical Dynamics During Haile Selassie's Imperial Regime (1930–1974)

The imperial regime of Haile Selassie I was preserved in the Ethiopian Constitution of 1955, and the emperor was formally recognized as a descendant of the Solomonic dynasty (Adamu, 2013; Bayeh, 2015). To this end, Zewde (2002) stated that succession to the throne of the empire was not determined by popular election but by other criteria that were constitutionally reserved for the Haile Selassie's family members, which required a lineage that could be traced back to the Solomonic dynasty and to the Axumite kings of antiquity. Interestingly, this constitutional statute implied that, in principle, Ethiopian citizens from any ethnic group had an opportunity to be in throne as a country's head of state if that individual could claim a descendency from a royal family connected to the Solomonic dynasty (Haile, 1986, as cited in Zewde, 2002). Thus, creating a homogenized society by implementing a policy that could continue recognizing Orthodox Christianity as the official state religion and Amharic language as the only spoken language by all Ethiopians was a nation-building, integration strategy for the imperial regime of Haile Selassie (Alemu & Tekleselassie, 2006; Bayeh, 2015; van der Beken, 2007). Subsequently, Amharic was designated as the exclusive language to be used in the media, courts of law, education, and all publications.

Regrettably, mandating Amharic as Ethiopia's official language to achieve cultural hegemony, particularly regarding government administration and public education, harmed other Indigenous languages and cultures within the country (van der Beken, 2007). Proficiency in Amharic was essential for obtaining a political position and/or economic resources (Smith, 2007), so people of non-Amhara ethnicity quickly began to acculturate by dressing like Amharas, speaking Amharic, and even eating the traditional foods of the Amharas (Marcus, 1995). Despite Ethiopia having more than 85 different ethnic groups and languages, the Constitution of 1955 never mentioned their status, cultures, languages, or religions (Bayeh, 2015). Only Amharic and Orthodox Christianity were officially recognized, thereby excluding Muslims and undermining the country's cultural and linguistic diversity (Markakis, 1979).

According to Adamu (2013), discontent with the policy of cultural and political hegemony of the monarchy resulted in several rebellion groups including “the Woyane rebellion of Tigray in 1943, the Eritrean liberation movement in the 1960s, and the peasant rebellion in Bale in 1964 were emerged” (p. 20). In addition, the imperial regime faced movements led by students and intellectuals (1960–1974) advocating for sociopolitical and economical equality (Tegegn, 2008). As a result, in 1974, after 45 years on the throne, Emperor Haile Selassie was defeated by the Derg regime (Adamu, 2013).

Sociopolitical Dynamics During the Derg Regime (1974–1991)

In 1974, Haile Selassie was defeated by the Derg regime led by Mengistu Hailemariam (Harbeson, 1977); thus, Ethiopia became a socialist state as the Derg demolished the centralized imperial regime’s sociopolitical and economic policies. However, most of the population had opposed this idea of a socialist state for many years, thinking that it could be a roadblock to the nation’s unity that the imperial state had established for decades (Adamu, 2013). In 1976, intent on establishing socialism in Ethiopia, the Derg embarked on a policy of ethnic nationalism with the declaration of the National Democratic Revolution (NDR).

The central focus of this declaration was the right to self-determination for all Ethiopians by reducing class distinctions among the ethnic groups under the spirit of collective ownership of the socioeconomic and political agenda (Kebede, 2011). This declaration was enacted in the 1987 Constitution, guaranteeing all Ethiopians sociopolitical, cultural, and economic equality (Bayeh, 2015). The idea of the enactment of this Constitution was also to separate church (religion) from state (Tolera, 2017).

Despite these efforts, the deeply rooted centralized imperial regime’s policies continued to plague the new regime because matters of faith and ethnicity were too deeply rooted and not susceptible to elimination by ideology alone (Adamu, 2013). Rather, what was required for popular support was the practical implementation of constitutional rights and a more culturally acceptable sociopolitical ideology, which the Derg failed to provide.

In theory, the regime declared freedom of religion, portrayed religion as anti-national, and took extreme measures to suppress religious expression, in general, and the practices of Orthodox Christianity and other individual religious groups, in particular (Friedman, 1989). In addition, the Derg quickly became unpopular because of its mass executions. As a result, this regime became autocratic by killing extrajudicially and limiting political freedoms to maintain its position (Balsvik, 2009). Consequently, internal conflicts erupted led by multiple ethnic-based rebel groups who fought against the regime, including the Eritrean People's Liberation Front, Tigrayan People's Liberation Front, Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), and Western Somali Liberation Front (Adamu, 2013).

Finally, in 1991, a Tigrayan People's Liberation Front succeeded in toppling the Derg. As a result, Eritrea gained independence from Ethiopia in the same year after almost 30 years of fighting for secession. However, political tensions between Ethiopia and Eritrea were not resolved, and in 1998, war erupted as the two countries contested the demarcations of the border (Adamu, 2013). However, the fighting had devastating humanitarian costs. Ethiopia declared a military victory and occupied most of the disputed territory. After that, hostilities continued, and the two governments operated under a state of no war and no peace, without any sociopolitical, economic, or diplomatic relations between these two nations.

Sociopolitical Situations During Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (1991–2018)

According to Bezabih, (2016), the Derg was substituted by four groups of ethnic political movements making up the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF). These movements include the Tigray People's Liberation Front, the Amhara National Democratic Movement, the Oromo People's Democratic Organization, and the Southern Nations Nationalities of People's Movement (Habtu, 2005). However, these movements represented only 40% of the country's ethnonationalists.

With Ethiopia's socioeconomic and political leadership history, the new government shifted the nation from the Derg military regime into the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia

by acknowledging the multilateralism and pluricultural diversity of the country, which seemed different from the past ethnolinguistic and theocratic political history (Bayeh, 2015). As a result, the ethnic aspect became the ideological foundation of the EPRDF governance system (Abbink, 2006), and Ethiopia became a federal polity consisting of nine states and two chartered cities. Henceforth, the country was formally recognized as an ethnocentric federation with a new constitution that was amended in 1995.

Still in effect today, the Ethiopian Constitution of 1995 has grounded the idea that all ethnic groups should have an equal right to express themselves with their languages; promote their cultural practices, values, and beliefs; and preserve their history. To this end, Bayeh (2015) underlined that all languages were given equal rights, with Amharic retaining the working national language status.

However, all regional states were granted the right to any working language functional within their territory, and ethnic communities were permitted to select the language for primary education, but Amharic was to be taught as the language of nationwide communication. Today, more than 20 languages are being used as mediums of instruction in the primary education systems in different regions (Habtu, 2003). Furthermore, the Constitution gives every ethnic group an unreserved right to self-determination, including the right to secession from the nation and create its own (Kreptul, 2003). This right was assumed to promote multilateralism and sociopolitical diversity based on respect for each ethnic group (van der Beken, 2007).

Theoretically, the Ethiopian Constitution of 1995 pledges basic democratic rights and self-determination of the people and affords the right to decide their political interests and party. However, practically speaking, these promises have never been fulfilled in totality. According to Ayele and Fesha (2012), the Constitution also created a legislative body composed of two houses: the House of Federation and the House of Peoples' Representatives. Both legislative bodies include representatives based on the majority and minority ethnic groups to promote equality and resolve misunderstandings between and among the regional states.

Seemingly, the transition began in 1991, facilitated by the idea of the right to share power between four ethnonationalists comprising the new government, with inclusive representation at all levels of the government (Watts, 2008), and to bring them together. Instead however, de facto control of the country was quickly appropriated by only one of the four ethnonationalists fronts, the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), which dominated executive decision-making and exercised most of the power (Young, 1996), while the three other ethnonationalist fronts and all other ethnic groups were relegated essentially to symbolic leadership roles with minimal power.

From 1991 to 2018, this leadership model prevailed in Ethiopia, denying the country's multilateralism and political/cultural diversity as the leaders pursued their monoethnocratic ruling system. In leadership style theory, this type of governance is categorized as authoritarian or undemocratic, resulting in adverse outcomes within and outside the organization.

An undemocratic or authoritarian leadership style can bring about a variety of undesirable consequences, which include dependent and apathetic followers who engage in acting against their will, intimidated by threats, punishments, and negative rewards (Northouse, 2015). A leadership style that stresses obedience to authority, especially that of the government, at the expense of personal freedom also deviates from and undermines the ethical ideals of its followers and the development of their readiness and maturity to take on democratic decision making (Blanchard, 2000, 2002; Robins & Judge, 2003).

As a result, during the period of EDPRF rule, Ethiopia became a country with a monoethnocratic ruling system, resulting in inferior quality policies combined with incompetent implementation and a lack of constituent support for the betterment of society. Governing Ethiopia authoritatively, its leaders eschewed the participation of others and independently presided over policies and processes. In this type of authoritarian leadership style, the followers were motivated to work in the government offices, but their job responsibilities were not clear.

They waited for instructions from the dominating group, and they learned how to do their jobs the way they were told. Most significantly, this governance system created distrust between the federal government and its people. Yet, the leadership style exercised by Ethiopian leaders diverged from the common ideologies of the ethnofederalist domain (Watts, 2008) in various respects, including concepts of legitimacy, shared power, unity, sociopolitical diversity, and democracy.

For Ethiopia, the legacy of this authoritarian rule has been division and hatred between ethnic groups, ethnic- and religious-based conflict, refugee camps within the country, and thousands of educated people abandoning their educational institutions and fleeing the country. In short, Ethiopia's ethnocentric/monoethnocratic governance system lacked the qualities necessary for an inclusive, united, democratic, and economically strong nation. Moreover, according to Abraham (2005), this ethnocentric/monoethnocratic governance system deviated from federalism's common ideological and historical meaning. It also undermined the multilateralism and multicultural diversity with which the country is endowed. Consequently, this ethnocentric governance system and its rigid political strategy, reinforced ethnonational feelings and segregation along ethnic lines.

Furthermore, under the mentioned authoritarian and monoethnocratic governance system, legions of political opponents were imprisoned and tortured; some were even castrated. Hundreds of thousands were persecuted as members of terrorist organizations, and tens of thousands fled to other countries as refugees. The OLF, an illegal armed group composed mainly of Ethiopia's major ethnic group (Oromo), expanded in the country's forests and at the borders of neighboring countries, creating problems of peace and security both internally and regionally (Takuori, 2019). Finally, in 2018, Dr. Abiy Ahmed, a member of the Ethiopian parliament from the Oromo Democratic Party, one of the four coalition partners ruling the country, came to power following nationwide protests by the rest of the country's ethnic groups that complained about inequality, stagnation, division, and conflict that had beset Ethiopia for

more than 27 years. The people of Ethiopia were fed up with their leaders' lack of accountability, their administrative inadequacy, their inhumanity, and their inability to solve problems compounded by an unbalanced, anti-democratic system of power.

Sociopolitical/Cultural Dynamic of Reformist Government of Dr. Abiy Ahmed (2018–present)

Ethiopia's sociopolitical and economic transition began in May 2018, days after Dr. Abiy was nominated by the four ethnonationalist parties in the ruling coalition (rather than by presidential election) as prime minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, followed by the voluntary resignation of then-Prime Minister Haile Mariam Desalegn. Nostalgia for the popularly perceived glory of Ethiopia's endowed cultural symbiosis lived on, and Dr. Abiy rekindled those flames with an all-inclusive mystical, cultural, and religious vision of Ethiopia, the philosophy of *medemer* (a homegrown philosophy coined by Dr. Abiy Ahmed, an Amharic word meaning synergy, coexistence, and interdependence). Since his nomination, Abiy's vision and initiatives have seemed to be consistent: building the nation through democracy and national reconciliation (Takuori, 2019) and inspiring hope and a promising future for the country in the aftermath of monoethnocratic rule that left an ethnically divided nation in its wake. His first action was to change the ruling governmental structure. The EPRDF, a coalition controlled by four ethnonational fronts (40% of all ethnonational fronts in Ethiopia), was dissolved and replaced by a new national party, the Ethiopian Prosperity Party.

The new party incorporated all Ethiopians equitably and created a political arena in which all ethnonational parties that had been neglected by the EPRDF could participate. The new coalition includes almost 95% of the ethnonational fronts, a factor that has led to significant measures to deal with Ethiopia's socioeconomic and political challenges and has produced clear policies to address problems accordingly. Second, the new ruling party has reformed the country's economic policy. With the country's vast array of minerals, precious metals, natural gas, well-watered fertile lands, a vast landmass surrounded by bodies of water that provide

natural harbors, a warm climate all year round, an abundant highly-educated labor force, and an overwhelmingly young population with an innovative mindset that is being encouraged and given a chance to lead the country and to contribute to the economic development of the country, Abiy's government capitalized on Ethiopia's endowment of resources by shifting the country from a net importer to a net exporter of goods and services (Giustin et al., 2020).

The Homegrown Economic Reforms Agenda aims to enhance job creation, reduce poverty, and foster inclusive economic growth (Giustin et al., 2020; Mosley, 2020). In addition, the new government established the Foreign Investment Restriction Act opened the economy to foreign investment to boost economic growth and foreign exchange. Furthermore, the new government has started decentralizing monopolistic government properties that include telecommunications, airports, and energy, shifting those to the private sector.

Third, with his passion to rekindle the historic contributions of women to the socioeconomical and political development of the country—for instance, Empress Zewditu (1916–1930), Emperor Menelik II's eldest daughter; Empress Eleni (1434–1468), Empress of Ethiopia by marriage to Emperor Zara Yaqob; and Wallata Petros (1672), who contributed to the preservation of African Christian beliefs in the face of western postcolonialism (Belcher, 2012; Gebeyehu, 1990)—Abiy has dramatically increased the participation of women in top federal and regional state offices, a pivotal advance toward gender equality. In Ethiopia today, nearly half of all top federal leaders are women, including the President of the Ethiopian Federal Democratic Republic, the Minister of Culture and Tourism, the Minister of Health, the Minister of Planning and Development, the Minister of Irrigation and Lowland Area Development, the Minister of Urbanization and Infrastructure, the Minister of Labor and Skills Development, and the Minister of Women and Social Affairs.

The current reformist government believes that women can also contribute greatly to the sociopolitical, economic, and cultural diversity of the country. For instance, in their pivotal role as wives and mothers, the women of Ethiopia connect with people at the grassroots level; in so

doing, they are making a significant difference in peacebuilding by nurturing trust within and between communities. This current participation of women in the governmental top offices is an opportunity to be the best option open to women to engage in and influence in the decision making for peace and stability and good governance .For this purpose, the Abiy government has nominated women who represent different ethnic groups to be Ethiopian *shimglna*, an Amharic word that means act of peace mediation (Hadis et al., 2021).

Fourth, Abiy's reformist government has adopted core-priority policies for collaborative regional integration. Relations with neighboring Eritrea, long strained by a border conflict that had been the epicenter of conflict in the Horn of Africa (Bereketeab, 2013), have improved significantly because of the government's foreign policy initiative to strengthen sustainable peace and collective development within the Eastern Africa based on the principle that Africa's problems are best solved by Africans. The Ethiopian-Eritrean reconciliation, initiated by Dr. Abiy and Isaias Afewerki (President of Eritrea), has created a conducive and peaceful wind of stability blowing across the Eastern African countries. In addition, in 2018, soon after he was nominated, Dr. Abiy ended a 34-year armed conflict in the country by signing a peace deal with the Ogaden National Liberation Front, which created stability and a closer relationship with Somalia. Furthermore, as part of his regional integration agenda, Dr. Abiy has led peace efforts in South Sudan and supported political transition in Sudan. He also negotiated maritime trade agreements between Somalia and Kenya. All these efforts have increased Ethiopia's soft power by promoting peace and security in Africa and the world at large.

Fifth, the Abiy government enacted the free media expression policy, which provides opportunities for all to debate the effectiveness of the government's social and economic development programs, proposed or currently under way in the country. Furthermore, an amendment to this policy is a law that grants amnesty to political prisoners who were released days after Dr. Abiy came to power, reversing decades of security-obsessed rule, to expand political diversity. Sixth, the government has reformed an antiterrorism law that now protects

free speech and removes the possibility that Ethiopians can be charged for expressing dissident views. Furthermore, the reformist governments welcomed politicians designated as terrorists and who fled to another country; they are now able to participate in the country's elections. Additionally, Abiy's administration freed imprisoned politicians and journalists (Mosley, 2020).

Last, the Abiy government has reformed the Ethiopian Military Defense Force and the security apparatus of the state by implementing strategies that isolate the Defense Force from politics and create a sense of belongingness and equality within the army. For 27 years before the current government, Ethiopia's Military Defense Force was manipulated and politicized by the country's ruling party and the military elite, compounded with an unbalanced military power ranking. This unbalanced military apparatus created tension and a threat to the country's peace and security. However, under the Abiy reformist government, the military has reshaped its mission into protecting the country's sovereignty in a disciplined, well equipped, and professional manner.

Nevertheless, despite all these much-needed reforms and initiatives, the stagnation, division, and conflict that have beset the nation for so long continue, signifying an uncertain future and challenges to the political legitimacy of the Abiy government. The tasks that lie ahead for government leaders are prodigious indeed. Deeply rooted problems originating with and orchestrated by the former ethnocentric/monoethnocratic government have created a serious roadblock to the country's sociopolitical and economic transition. To this end, Bridges and Bridges (2016) delineated three phases of transition. The first phase refers to "letting go of the old ways and the old identity people have adopted; the second phase involves an in-between time" (Bridges & Bridges, 2016, p. 5) when change takes root but is not yet fully functioning. The third phase includes transitioning from the old to a new beginning (Bridges & Bridges, 2016). Now in the life of the Ethiopian nation, its people are enduring the in-between phase.

In Ethiopia today, this in-between phase takes the form of a transitional conflict in which Abiy's progressive domestic reforms seem stymied while deeply rooted problems appear

unresolved. For instance, the recent conflict between the Ethiopian national military forces and the TPLF elite that began in 2020 is one such deeply rooted problem. Moreover, this war has devastated Ethiopia sociopolitically and economically in the form of a humanitarian crisis and human rights and sexual abuses perpetrated by combatants on both sides. On October 4, 2021, as this conflict raged, Ethiopian national elections took place with nearly 50 million Ethiopians casting ballots. The newly emerged Prosperity Party headed by Dr. Abiy was victorious, receiving 410 seats out of 425 seats in the national legislature. Abiy is now the legitimately elected prime minister of the country, chosen by the people of Ethiopia to preside over the nation until 2026. The newly elected government faces the daunting task of ending the insurgency that is currently destabilizing the country and the region and uniting Ethiopians in the quest for social, political, and economic reform, along with a fragile legal system that he and his ruling party have promised to accomplish.

Historically, there have been four constitutions in modern Ethiopia that included: 1931 Constitution of the Empire of Ethiopia, the 1955 Revised Constitution of the Empire of Ethiopia, the 1987 Constitution of the People's Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, and the still-effective 1995 Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (Bayeh, 2015). The first two constitutions of 1931 and 1955 based the country's legal system on religious principles. Laws were determined by the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (Bayeh, 2015), with the emperor placed at the highest level of the judiciary system. In essence, the constitutions of 1931 and 1955 created a theocratic state in which, from a legal standpoint, the state and its national religion were indistinguishable (Bayeh, 2015).

Theoretically, the Constitution of 1987 and that of 1995 accepted the pluralism and political diversity and inclusivity of every Ethiopian, giving citizens the right of self-determination and the maintenance of their ethnic group identity while keeping the purpose of unity. However, practically speaking, these promises have never been fulfilled in totality (Ayele & Fessha, 2012). These two constitutions laid the foundation for a monoethnocratic system of national

governance in which only one governing ethnonational front appropriated de facto control of the country (Bezabih, 2016). For this reason, Ethiopia's criminal justice system has never involved the genuine participation of the public and appropriate legal professionals.

The current conflicts beleaguer the people of Ethiopia and stymie the much-needed reforms of the new government. It is now time for critical changes in the Ethiopian legal system, particularly its approach to criminal justice. Therefore, to achieve the new government's objectives and bring lasting peace and stability to the Ethiopian nation, I contend that it is imperative to implement alternative ICRMs within the federal criminal justice system.

In sum, the historical overview of the modern Ethiopian nation-state underlines the conflict that Ethiopia has experienced internally and externally from its inception in the 19th century to the present day. It is a country that has been beset with successive governments that have divided and wounded the nation, creating problems that the country's formal laws and courts have been unable to resolve. In the following paragraphs, the statement of the problem is detailed, the critical issue that this research seeks to address is identified, and the existing gap in the research that this investigation aimed to fill using reliable outcomes is described.

Statement of the Problem

For too long, governments led by ruling elites in Ethiopia have created a sociopolitical conflict that the nation's western-oriented federal system of justice has been unable to resolve. An effective way to advance peace and stability in the nation and successfully address the divisive policies and practices of past monoethnocratic governments is to integrate African ICRMs within the Ethiopian federal system of criminal justice. The effectiveness and applicability of African ICRMs have gained recognition in academic and popular literature over the last few decades by anthropologists, politicians, legal scholars, and spiritual leaders (Lundy et al., 2022; Malunga, 2005; Mbigi & Maree, 1995; Tutu, 1999). Experts in these fields point to the fact that these mechanisms are more accessible, effective, efficient, less expensive, less coercive, and more respectful of a society's lifestyle and culture (Alemie & Mandefro, 2018; Epple & Assefa,

2020; Yntiso, 2020).

An important reason for this is that ICRMs typically involve consensus-building based on democratic and open dialogue to argue on the information and clarify problems involved in a dispute (Alemie & Mandefro, 2018). Although ICRMs differ from society to society, region to region, and culture to culture, there are certain features that these practices have in common (Makonnen, 2016). These include connections to the land, respect for nature, and respect for ancestors, elders, and social institutions that work on behalf of the whole community (Lundy et al., 2022). Based on the existing literature, when compared with the formal legal system in Ethiopia, the Indigenous justice system and conflict resolution mechanisms appear to be more people-oriented and more compatible with the lifestyles of these societies (Yntiso, 2020).

Long practiced by various ethnic groups in Ethiopia (Alemie & Mandefro, 2018) and deeply rooted in the cultural and traditional values of these peoples, these mechanisms, if mandated for use within Ethiopia's formal legal system, could play a pivotal role in resolving conflicts nationwide (Makonnen, 2016). Given that conflict resolution mechanisms originate with people at the local grassroots level and are not executed by the state, elders who lead their respective ethnic groups at the national level would play a key role in implementing conflict resolution mechanisms amicably through *shimglina*, an Amharic word meaning traditional way of mediation (Yntiso, 2020).

Since the time of Fetha Nagast ("the law of the kings") in the 14th century, ICRMs have been popularly accepted throughout Ethiopia. However, these mechanisms began to be undermined in the late 1950s and early 1960s when the civil code of the Empire of Ethiopia was enacted (David, 1962; Yntiso, 2020). At this time, the imperial regime focused on an extensive overhaul and codification of existing laws to unify and modernize the legal system within the country (Alemie & Mandefro, 2018; Bahta, 2014).

With the enactment of Ethiopia's first modern code of civil law, inspired mainly by western civil law models, ICRMs lost recognition throughout the country. Furthermore, the

Ethiopian Constitution under Article 34, sub-Art. 5 excluded the application of these practices in all criminal justice cases. Currently, conflicts in the areas of family and civil law can legally be resolved using ICRMs if the Constitution is not contradicted, as long as all the conflicting parties have agreed to the use of these mechanisms (Bahta, 2014; Yntiso, 2020).

According to Tenaw (2016), Ethiopian elders, through their traditional institutions, play two crucial roles within their local communities: (a) a responsible role by working on conflict prevention through social cohesion and harmony in the communities and (b) a responsive role in resolving conflicts that arise in the community. For instance, according to Ambaye (2008), among the Sidama ethnic group of southern Ethiopia, ICRMs are utilized at all four elder councils, or *songo* levels: Mini Songo, Nafaru Songo, Ayadu Songo, and Woma Songo. If a conflict resolution case does not get decided in the Mini Songo, it then passes to the next council and, eventually, to the Woma Songo, the final decision-making council members (elders).

Similarly, ICRMs of the Enner Guarage ethnic group of southern Ethiopia are administered in five institutional structures: Ye sera dana, Yemuragengne dana, Yetib dana, shengo, and Yejoka (Wubeyed, 2010). Among these structures, Yejoka is the highest authority, providing binding and nonappealable decisions (Zewde, 2002). Similar multipurpose institutions exist among the Kambata and Hadiya (my group of origin) ethnic groups in southern Ethiopia. There are five ICRMs structures: Mollu dana, Gichi dana, Idirdana, Seer dana, and Habalii dana. In each community, seera, the code of conduct practiced and internalized by these two ethnic groups represents the basis of all political administration, social interactions, and means of conflict resolution within the territory (Arsano & Tamrat, 2005).

Seera also prescribes all socioeconomic, political, cultural, and environmental activities in Kambata and Hadiya society. According to Mengesha (2016), all family relations, cultural activities, rituals, and burial ceremonies are handled as seera orders (Mengesha, 2016). Moreover, Seer dana (regulator leader) regulates relations between individuals, tribes, and

territorial units. A citizen who does not abide by seer dana or seera is considered a foreigner who no one will bury when they die, and those who do not obey the decisions of the seer dana are expelled from society and are not permitted to have any communitarian relationships. If they want to reintegrate into the community, they are symbolically sanctioned depending on the severity of their infraction or misconduct. Although the existing literature emphasizes the potentiality, applicability, and functionality of the traditional institutions and its ICRMs at the local (Kebele) level and community level in Ethiopia (Alemie & Mandefro, 2018; Yntiso, 2020), not one legal scholar has demonstrated a clear legal framework or policy for the institutionalization of traditional institutions and its ICRMs within the country's formal federal criminal justice system.

Furthermore, while ICRMs are oral by nature and have not been systematized in educational and policy settings in the country, there have been no scholarly writings that mention their systematization or any documentation regarding their sustainability and durability. Moreover, most of the research concentrated only on Ethiopia's national and local elders (all men), who administer these Indigenous mechanisms in conflict resolution disputes. Despite the new government's progress in incorporating women in top federal and regional state offices (Mosley, 2020), their engagement as peacebuilding and conflict resolution actors has been invisible and largely ignored (Hadis et al., 2021). Instead, researchers on this issue have mainly focused on women's victimization in conflict—in sexual and gender violence—rather than assessing their role in conflict resolution and peace-building projects (Jibat & Nigussie, 2015; Kefale et al., 2021; Misganaw & Worku, 2013). Therefore, the study aimed to correct these shortcomings and gaps by answering the following research questions.

Research Questions

- RQ1: What are or are not the elders' perspectives on how effectively Indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms work locally in Ethiopia?

- RQ2: How do or do not Ethiopia's national elders perceive the institutionalizing of multiethnic Indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms within Ethiopia's federal criminal justice system?
- RQ3: In what ways do or do not Ethiopia's national elders perceive Ethiopia's ethnocentric/monoethnocratic governance system as lacking the qualities necessary for an inclusive, united, democratic, and economically strong nation?
- RQ4: How do or do not Ethiopia's national elders perceive the role of women in promoting peace and unity in Ethiopia?
- RQ5: In what ways do or do not Ethiopian elders believe that future generations in Ethiopia can ensure the sustainability of Indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms?

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this qualitative case study with explanatory design was to identify barriers, as perceived by Ethiopia's national elders and women ambassadors of peace, that may impede the incorporation of ICRMs within the federal criminal justice system of the country in order to spur social change and to provide a clear policy orientation for this incorporation to take place. The literature review in Chapter 2 details the effectiveness and applicability of African ICRMs as recognized by anthropologists in academic and popular literature over the last few decades. This study explored how these conflict resolution mechanisms have been practiced in Ethiopia's local communities for centuries and their pivotal role in resolving several types of disputes empowered by ethnic elders at the local level.

Methodological Approach

I applied a qualitative case study with an explanatory research design. An explanatory research design helps to expand understanding of a given topic by exploring how and why a particular phenomenon is occurring and by predicting the likelihood of its future occurrence (Yin, 2014). Thus, an explanatory research design was used to advance a deeper insight of the

perceptions of elders regarding the barriers to incorporating ICRMs within the Ethiopian federal criminal justice system. Using an explanatory research design, I described the main actors' perceptions of the problem, the solutions they considered and chose, the process of implementing them, the results, and the status of the problem and the solution.

I applied a qualitative research methodology with an explanatory inductive design approach. In addition, for the key informant in-depth interviews, I purposefully selected 20 elders from different ethnic groups in Ethiopia who represent their ethnic group at the national level, and for the focus group discussions (FGDs). Fourteen elders who represent their ethnic groups at the regional and local levels and 15 women who serve as national peace mediators (Ethiopian ambassadors of peace) were selected. Each of these individuals possessed rich information about the topic.

Therefore, the inclusion criteria for key informant interviewees included the 20 elders who represent their ethnic groups at the national level. Ethiopian citizens who were not elders and who do not represent their ethnic group either at the national or local levels were excluded from both key informant interviews and FGDs, as were national elders and women ambassadors of peace who chose not to participate in the study. In addition, the study included three sources of data collection: interviews, FGDs, and policy-related documents. The philosophical framework for this study was ubuntu's theoretical concept.

Researcher's Assumptions

My personal and professional background informs my assumptions regarding this study. I belong to an ethnically and culturally mixed Ethiopian family. My father is an elder of the Hadiya ethnic community, and my mother belongs to the Kembatta ethnic group. My eight brothers and sisters have intermarried with different ethnic groups. Thus, the family represents a microcosm of Ethiopian society today. Moreover, I have lived in several mixed ethnic-based communities in Ethiopia and different countries in the world, including the Oromia region, in the

towns of Modijo, Shashemane, and the capital city, Addis Ababa. I also lived in Kenya, Colombia, and Mexico.

My professional experience may also influence my perceptions of African ICRMs presented in this study. I have worked as a family therapist, theologian, cultural anthropologist, and philanthropist involved in peacebuilding, forgiveness, and societal reconciliation through a church-based nonprofit organization—three years with the Kikuyu and Kiamba ethnic communities in central Kenya, seven years with Indigenous communities in northern Colombia (Cauca, Hambalo, Toribio, and Cali), and nine years with similar communities in Mexico.

I assume that for the past century, Ethiopia has adopted an externally imposed system of justice that is ill-suited to the lifestyle and context of the culture. Rather, I am an advocate for Ethiopia adopting its own ubuntu-based ICRMs that optimize African values, beliefs, and practices as integral parts of the federal criminal justice system. Furthermore, I believe that in Ethiopia the concept of justice should be driven by that which society considers fair politically, economically, and environmentally and not determined arbitrarily by existing law and lawmakers who operate within a weak and incompetent federal legal system. Therefore, I believe Ethiopia's national elders helped pave the way for the institutionalization of ICRMs within the country's criminal justice system.

Because ICRMs are community-oriented, they are a better fit for the culture and lifestyle of Ethiopia. In addition, I strongly believe that ubuntu-based conflict resolution mechanisms should be promoted and systematized within the Ethiopian higher education system to ensure their sustainability and durability. Finally, integrating these mechanisms into the formal criminal justice system ensures qualities necessary for justice delivered by culturally endowed, competent, independent, and accountable institutions.

Delimitations of the Study

A qualitative study with an explanatory design was employed to understand the barriers, as perceived by a selected sample of Ethiopian national elders and women ambassadors of

peace, to incorporating ICRMs within the federal criminal justice system in Ethiopia. For clarity, ubuntu is a Bantu term first used by Desmond Tutu (1999) that emphasizes the traditional African cultural values of interconnectedness, peaceful coexistence, social solidarity, and interdependence. Ubuntu is a cross-fertilized concept that is translated into different languages throughout Africa. For example, ubuntu is not a word that is used by Ethiopians; instead, the concept of ubuntu is translated as a *sabiawinet*, an Amharic word meaning humaneness.

The objective of this research was to explore and optimize the effectiveness and applicability of ubuntu-based ICRMs within Ethiopia's fragile federal criminal justice legal system. The integration of these mechanisms within this system was empowered by Ethiopia's nationally, regionally, and locally elected/nominated elders and women who act as ambassadors of peace within the country. The scope of this study was delimited in population sampling. I adopted an inductive strategic research approach to generate findings from a small and narrow group of 20 national elders, 14 regional and local elders, and 15 women peace mediators who possess very rich information about the topic.

Theoretical Framework

This study employed the theory of an ubuntu-based African justice system and servant leadership development. According to African theorists Mbiti (1975), Tutu (1999), Malunga (2005), Murithi (2009), Mbigi (2005), Mbigi and Maree (1995), Ncube (2010), and Kuada (2010), the African philosophical concept of ubuntu reveals the importance of collective action through the principles of interdependence, inclusivity, and family spirit of shared destiny among the African community. Ubuntu emphasizes the traditional African cultural values of interconnectedness, peaceful coexistence, and social solidarity, and promotes a culture of empathy, cooperation, and resource sharing. Drawing on this African-centered approach as a model for a restorative justice system in Ethiopia has clear advantages. An ubuntu-based system of justice is premised on the belief that solidarity is commonly beneficial for both victims

and offenders; it can shift the orientation of jurisprudence from a focus on personal interest to one of cooperation by considering the wellbeing of others.

Along with ubuntu theory, the study also employed servant leadership theory, originated by Greenleaf (1996), which views a leader as a servant to their people (Greenleaf, 1991). Greenleaf (1991) defined servant leadership as a philosophy and a set of practices that enhance individuals' lives, build effective organizational performance, and create a more inclusive and caring society. Servant leadership is conceived as a person-oriented approach to leadership that puts followers at the center (Greenleaf, 1991). It is holistic, considering the cognitive, emotional, moral, and spiritual state of both leaders and followers (Brubaker, 2013) to produce optimal outcomes through the collaboration of all involved in the change process.

Together with the ubuntu-based African justice system, the servant leadership model was applied in this theoretical framework as a change model because of its person-oriented and humanistic framework, which includes "service to others, a holistic approach to work, promoting a sense of community and sharing of power in decision making" (Greenleaf, 1996, p. 33). Moreover, the servant leadership model is intrinsically related to the ontological, philosophical, epistemological, and cosmological concept of ubuntu in terms of people-oriented action that meets others' needs by prioritizing service to the community, recognizing and rewarding individuals, expressing humility, and respecting others (Wong & Davey, 2007). In sum, as drivers of change, an ubuntu-based African justice system approach, together with the servant leadership model, inspired Ethiopia's leaders and legal scholars to shift the federal legal system from a predominantly Eurocentric system of justice to one informed by a pan-African mindset.

Significance of Proposed Research

Ubuntu-based justice, together with servant leadership theory incorporated into the Ethiopian federal criminal justice system, has the capacity to bring about transformative social change. It helps to develop a deeper interdependency and belonging originating from shared practices. The ubuntu-based Indigenous conflict mechanisms and servant leadership enable

Ethiopia's national and local elders to engage in a collective process, community relations, and social sensitivity by adopting culturally grounded approaches to their restorative justice system. African conflict resolution mechanisms based on ubuntu and servant leadership are premised on the belief that solidarity promotes the common good, a perspective that can shift the orientation of lawyers and policymakers from focusing on a unilateral to a bidirectional interest, reconciling victims and perpetrators through restorative justice (Elechi et al., 2010).

Moreover, an ubuntu-based justice system and servant leadership promote accountability and integrity as the bases of democratic and ethical values. These change models help Ethiopia's federal justice system to find a practical, humanistic approach and social responsibility through stewardship, persuasion, and the empowerment of others in their relationships (Malunga, 2005; Tutu, 1999).

Definition of the Key Concepts and Terms

- *Afe Negus*: Afe Negus is the Imperial Supreme Court justice, equivalent to a Lord Justice in England and Wales (Geraghty, 1970).
- *Awraja*: Awraja is an imperial subprovincial district made up of several woreda (Geraghty, 1970).
- *Derg*: The Derg is the Provisional Military Administrative Council (PMAC) that seized power following the social revolution against the reactionary Imperial Monarchy and ruled Ethiopia from 1974–1991 (Balsvik, 2009).
- *Federalism*: Federalism is a political ideology of government based on the dual concept of self-administration and shared power (Habtu, 2003).
- *Fetha Nagast*: Fetha Nagast, or the Law of the Kings, is the foundation of Ethiopian law, perhaps the first written law in sub-Saharan Africa (Yntiso, 2020).
- *Kebele*: Kebele is the lowest administrative communities structure in the Ethiopian local government structure (Yntiso, 2020).

- *Kifle Hāger*: Kifle Hāger is the name for a province during the military Dergue regime in Ethiopia (Yntiso, 2020).
- *Medemer*: Medemer is the Ethiopian Indigenous philosophy meaning interdependence, synergy, and interconnectedness (Takuori, 2019).
- *Ubuntu*: Ubuntu is a Bantu term that denotes the importance of collective action through the community-oriented principles between family groups. It emphasizes the traditional African cultural values of interconnectedness, peaceful coexistence, and social solidarity and promotes a culture of empathy, cooperation, and resource sharing (Tutu, 1999).
- *Woreda*: In the Ethiopian local government structure, the Woreda is an administrative unit below zonal administrations with functional power and is comprised of several *kebeles* (Geraghty, 1970).
- *Zemene Mesafint*: Zemene Mesafint is the period in Ethiopian history between the mid-18th and mid-19th centuries when the country was divided, de facto, into several regions with no effective central authority (Gebeyehu, 1990).
- *Zone*: Is the highest level in the Ethiopian local government structure (Watts, 2008).

Chapter Summary

This chapter captured a historical overview of the country's sociopolitical and cultural dynamics and how these dynamics have shaped the lives of the Ethiopian people during five distinct eras, from early modern Ethiopia to the current reformist government. Throughout its modern history, due to a succession of monoethnocratic governments, Ethiopia has experienced both internal and external conflicts that the country's formal laws and courts have not been able to resolve. Therefore, it is imperative to implement alternative ICRMs within the federal criminal justice system to bring peace and stability to Ethiopia. The following chapter

presents a review of the literature concerning ICRMs to situate the research concerning existing knowledge.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

In this study the purpose of the literature review was twofold: (a) to inform what is currently written about African ICRMs and the pivotal role these mechanisms can play in strengthening criminal justice systems throughout Africa and in Ethiopia, in particular; and (b) to point out limitations, shortcomings, and gaps in knowledge of this subject and to fill those gaps based on the research questions.

Toward a Conceptual Theory of Ubuntu

Several African scholars have examined and raised awareness of African values and practices associated with ICRMs. In general, culturally endowed values and practices in Africa are based on ubuntu, a Bantu term denoting a philosophical worldview that emphasizes the importance of collective action through the principles of interdependency between family groups (Elechi et al., 2010; Malunga, 2005; Murithi, 2009; Tutu, 1999). The term *familism* is defined by Kuada (2010) as a type of social group in which all values are determined by and based on the preservation, endurance, and operation of the family group.

Ubuntu fosters the values of interconnectedness, peaceful coexistence, and social solidarity, creating interdependence between individuals in a society and promoting a culture of empathy in which an individual's emotions, thoughts, behaviors, attitudes, and values are understood and respected, and cooperation and resource sharing are encouraged (Malunga, 2005). Malunga enumerated six interrelated principles at the heart of ubuntu: (a) sharing and the collective right of opportunity, (b) responsibility, (c) humane action, (d) patriotism, (e) participatory decision making in the exercise of leadership, and (f) reconciliation as a goal of conflict resolution. Similarly, Mkabela (2005) stressed the "conformity, generosity, openness, and consideration of groups member's interests over selfish interest" (p. 187).

Alemie and Mandefro (2018) connected the concept of ubuntu with social solidarity by highlighting four essential points: (a) ubuntu reinforces the African cultural value of interconnectedness between the individual and their community, (b) ubuntu promotes

community enhancement, (c) ubuntu plays a pivotal role in conflict mediation through restorative justice process and reconciliation, and (d) ubuntu boosts collective action and participatory decision making. In this process, all action is undertaken in a collective and collaborative means to maintain the harmony and interdependence within the system. This applies to African society, including Ethiopia. Considering the principles and values mentioned earlier, it should be evident that the collectivist concept of ubuntu has a metaphysical resonance that connects almost all Africans based on its cosmological, philosophical, epistemological, and ontological meaning (Elechi et al., 2010; Glocke, 2011).

From a cosmological perspective, African people perceive the world interconnectedly, and it is comprised of their ancestors, the dead, the yet unborn, all of nature, and the entire community (Elechi et al., 2010). This view transcends narrow personal interests and leads to cooperation based on coexistence and social solidarity. From a philosophical standpoint, whatever occurs at the individual level is believed to happen to the entire community, and whatever happens to the entire community happens to the individual. In collectivist and communitarian societies such as those of Africa, when one individual suffers, the community suffers too. This perception is particularly relevant for the implementation of African ICRMs, as stated in this study.

Epistemologically, ubuntu is constructivist. Maluleka (2019) contended that individuals construct knowledge for themselves as they engage in conflict resolution, which they have learned from their ancestors and their social environment. That is, knowledge of conflict resolution is created from the individual's own experience. In the African context, knowledge is gained through intuition, dreams, prayers, music, art, imagination, and meditation. In every social activity, knowledge is gained using all human faculties and experiences, including those of one's ancestors (Elechi et al., 2010; Glocke, 2011). This epistemology is highly rooted in an ontological concept.

Ontologically, Africans are deeply spiritual. For the African, everything has a spirit—a guiding force that is behind everything in life, including the way an individual exercises their decision making. An individual does not see themselves as alone but as existing within an entire extended family and community. People are interconnected through their ancestor legacy, coexistence, and identity (Glocke, 2011; Malunga, 2005) and are focused on maintaining harmony in the community. In short, ubuntu, as a conceptual theory, provides “a capacity in African culture to express compassion, reciprocity, dignity, harmony, and humanity in the interests of building and maintaining community with justice and mutual caring” (Nussbaum, 2003, as cited in Elechi et al., 2010, p. 2).

Toward the Afrocentric Theory

The philosophical concept of ubuntu offers an ideal approach to understanding the theory of Afrocentricity. According to Mkabela (2005), the term “Afrocentricity” was first coined by Asante (1998) to address the critical “need for African people to be re-located historically, economically, socially, and politically” (p. 179). The author's central focus here is on reorienting African identity from the perspective of African people. Afrocentricity views African people as capable of solving their problems with wisdom-oriented knowledge. As conceived by Asante (1998), Afrocentricity removes imposed western interference from the center of the African reality. Quintessentially Afrocentric, Indigenous conflict resolution and its values, beliefs, and practices have long been ignored by the western world because of its demeaning misconception that African society is primitive, uncivilized, and in need of modernization (Mengesha, 2016). As a result, African leadership development, including that in Ethiopia, is still predominantly western-oriented and thus counterproductive to the sacred existence of the Ethiopian people.

Since the end of Haile Selassie’s reign, the history and unique moral and religious values of Ethiopia have been ignored, relegating this proud nation to a mere footnote in the pages of world history. Portrayed on international television as impoverished, suffering from catastrophic and continual famine and war, and replete with scenes of malnourished, dying

children, programs on Ethiopia are quickly bypassed by viewers on their way to more entertaining fare. In this way, the world is never educated on the rich 3,000-year history and cultural endowment of the country.

Toward a Theory of African Indigenous Knowledge

Indigenous, or traditional, knowledge is elaborated upon by various scholars, both from Africa and from other parts of the world. Hoppers (2002) expounded on Indigenous knowledge and the integration of knowledge during the democratization process in South Africa. He argued that Indigenous knowledge contains rich and varied aspects that should be identified and transformed into scientifically integrated knowledge framework. Ogunniyi and Hewson (2008) and Jegede (1995) integrated Indigenous cultures, worldviews, and knowledge with science in the conventional classroom, and their argument is that indigenous knowledge reflects wisdom and values that people in the South African context have practiced for centuries. African philosophers and theologians, such as Mbiti (1975) and Tutu (1999), have made critical contributions to African Indigenous knowledge theory, and their focus has been on how this knowledge sheds light on the importance of interconnectedness and interdependence values. Similarly, Owusu-Ansah and Mji (2013) defined African Indigenous knowledge as “wholeness, community, and harmony which are deeply embedded in cultural values” (p. 2). They emphasized that individuals become human only among others and should live interdependently and collectively.

Purcell (1998) related Indigenous knowledge with legitimacy and replicability. Indigenous knowledge contains a variety of knowledge that needs further explanation. It is not only something to be known but something that has yet to be discovered. Dei and Asgharzadeh (2002) connected Indigenous knowledge with accumulating ancestral legacies of diverse histories, experiences, and cultures. Their central idea is that indigenous knowledge results from shared cultural expressions, including rituals, rites, and ceremonies.

Interestingly, in African, Latin American, and Asian societies, Indigenous knowledge is strongly associated with ways of knowing in which residents of a particular locality understand themselves concerning their natural environment (Semali & Kincheloe, 1999). According to Breidlid (2009), Indigenous knowledge involves a metaphysical concept that takes work to define.

Similarly, Kaya and Seleti (2013) posited that Indigenous knowledge has relevance because of its holistic, community-based nature that includes “food security, environment conservation, health, natural resource management, conflict transformation, education, governance, and leadership” (p. 31). Mkabela (2005) opined that African Indigenous knowledge involves the African reality in which Africans should be inside of that reality, not outside. Therefore, African knowledge can only be fully perceived and understood with the involvement of African reality and the perspective of African people.

Gyekye (1997) argued that the African worldview has its tradition-modernity dichotomy, and because of that, African people and their society face several challenges. On the one hand, they stem from the values and practices of their traditions, and on the other hand, they rise from the legacy of western colonialism. Gyekye concluded that modernity must be forged creatively within the enclosed structure of Africa’s multifaceted cultural experiences.

In line with the dichotomizing, Mamdani (1996) analyzed why Africa faces obstacles to democratization postindependence. Mamdani’s theory focuses on the idea that the major barriers to democracy and democratization in African nations are centered on the colonial supremacy and legacy of indirect rule and the operations of the native authority system. This legacy, according to Mamdani, created a decentralized dictatorship in the rural areas causing the separation of the rural subjects and urban citizens. Consequently, independence deracialized the state but did not democratize it.

Kaya and Seleti (2013) identified two sources of this problem for the Indigenous knowledge dilemma. On the one hand, there need to be more African scholars inside and

outside of the continent who would have the most accurate perspective in African indigenous knowledge to avoid the misinterpretation of the concept of African Indigenous knowledge by the western world. Nevertheless, on the other hand, the African educational system is still centered on the educational policies of western countries. Therefore, the educational framework still influences western powers.

In this regard, Akena (2012) argued that to understand the relegation of African Indigenous knowledge, one needs to critically examine the knowledge producers and their social, economic, and political positions within a colonial context. Only through this examination can it be understood how the western countries have subjugated and dominated the Indigenous knowledge of Africa.

In this regard, Owusu-Ansah and Mji (2013) pointed out that while African Indigenous knowledge has its limitations about the scientific world—chiefly, that it is oral rather than written—its people-centered nature has played “a remarkable role in ceremonies, rituals, storytelling, proverbs, folktales, recitation, demonstrations, sports, epics, poetry, reasoning, riddles, praise, songs, word games, puzzles, tongue-twisters, dance, music, and other education-centered activities” (Ngara, 2007, as cited in Owusu-Ansah & Mji, 2013, p. 2). Despite the horrific history of slavery and colonization on the continent, African Indigenous knowledge has not been eradicated. It can still be evidenced in African games, agricultural systems, folklore, dances, songs, storytelling, and proverbs, all signs of the omnipresent African Indigenous way of knowing.

A further sign of its resilience is the pivotal role that elders play in the community when it comes to conflict resolution. These expressions of African Indigenous knowledge are not mere vestiges but vitally essential elements those African scholars can employ to reinforce and reform the educational system of Africa into one that is Afrocentric (McNeely, 1999, as cited in Kaya & Seleti, 2013). “Afrocentric theory,” a term coined by Asante (1998), puts more emphasis

on the value of African knowledge by arguing that African knowledge is created and applied by Africans for Africans (Mkabela, 2005).

Indigenous Justice System in Ethiopia Prior to the Constitution of 1995

Ethiopia has 85 different ethnic groups, and each ethnic group has its own ICRMs, which have enabled the community members to live harmoniously. Throughout the years, Ethiopia has adopted Christian laws, establishing a precept based on a combination of the Old Testament and traditional justice systems. To this end, Yntiso (2020) categorized the historical overview of these different indigenous justice systems in Ethiopia into three distinct eras: how the Indigenous justice system was used and applied in Ethiopia in the 14th century, the dynamic of the Indigenous justice system in Ethiopia in the early 20th century, and how this process took different forms during and after the ratification of the Ethiopian Constitution in 1995.

According to Yntiso (2020), during the 14th century, the style of applying the justice system was called the Fetha Nagast (Law of the Kings), which was based on biblical concepts of the Old Testament. As the name indicates, this justice system was exercised in Ethiopia by Christian communities (the majority being Orthodox), Jewish communities, and most other non-Christians, including those who professed Islam. Moreover, this justice system was accepted as culturally normative for the internal governance system. However, the application of the Fetha Nagast was limited to the Ethiopian Orthodox clergy. Interestingly, it still functions within the Orthodox clergies' structural code of conduct (Yntiso, 2020).

The second era started during the reign of Emperor Menelik II (1889–1913). According to Yntiso (2020), ministerial governmental structures were established for the first time in 1907. At this time, the minister of justice, who served as the head of all the judges in the country, was declared to ensure all judgments should be based on the Fetha Nagas. In addition, after the establishment of the ministires, the new minister of justice called Afe Negus (mouth of the Kind Amharic; Yntiso, 2020) was created. This justice system continued until the Italian invasion of Ethiopia in 1935, and in 1942 a different court structure was formally created that included *mikitl*

woreda, *woreda*, *awraja*, and high courts under the Afe Negus (Geraghty, 1970, as cited in Yntiso, 2020).

Subsequently, emperor Haile Selassie enacted the 1942 judicial administration, which left no room for Sharia and customary law. This administrative law was replaced by another law enacted in 1944 that allowed khadis and naibas councils to adjudicate cases based on Islamic law (Singer, 1970, as cited in Yntiso, 2020). Finally, between the late 1950s and early 1960s, Emperor Haile Selassie's customary law, together with codified formal law, modernized Ethiopia's legal system based on western principles of jurisprudence that were ill-fitted to the lifestyle, culture, beliefs, and customs of Ethiopia's citizens (Yntiso, 2020).

The Indigenous Justice System and the Ethiopian Constitution of 1995

The Constitution of 1995 signaled a new recognition and official validation of the popularity and relevance of customary or Indigenous law at the Kebele (local village—the lowest level of government administration). Since the late 1950s and early 1960s, when existing laws were codified to unify and modernize Ethiopia, traditional law that had been ubiquitous since the 14th century was largely ignored by the federal legal system. Those who enacted the new Constitution embraced a system that allowed for the application of customary laws through the ICRMs process for conflict resolution and matters related to families.

Those who enacted the new Constitution embraced a system that opened space for the application of certain customary laws and courts based on the subject matter of the legal dispute (Yntiso, 2020). These mechanisms are effective if the conflicting parties agree to be adjudicated under these laws (Alemie & Mandefro, 2018; Yntiso, 2020).

The Effectiveness and Applicability of ICRMs Within the Ethiopian Formal Criminal Justice System

Drawing on the ubuntu concept of a cooperative approach to disputes resolution as a change model for restorative justice within the Ethiopian criminal justice system seems to have clear advantages. An Ethiopian criminal justice system based on ubuntu is premised on the

belief that solidarity promotes the common good. An ubuntu-inspired criminal justice system can also prompt justice makers to transcend their narrow, centralized interests, leading to collective action based on the best of African values and practices (Malunga, 2005; Murithi, 2009). Omale (2006) affirmed the importance of this restorative justice system and called for the revival of African restorative justice traditions considering an emerging restorative justice paradigm.

These values and practices are designed to transcend the divisiveness and instability endemic to undemocratic nations and to offer perspectives that lead Ethiopia and the Horn of African nations along the path of a wide-ranging reform process to promote and galvanize a strong, sustainably shared vision and action for peace and security development (Asfaw, 2017; Ayferam & Muchie, 2016) and to engage the African Union Peace and Security Council (APSC) to provide a framework to implement comprehensive conflict prevention (Asfaw, 2017; Dersso, 2014; Michael, 2016).

According to Schoeman (2013), this African concept of ubuntu is inherent in restorative justice practices and heartily supports “the interconnectedness of restorative justice values and the ubuntu worldview as a medium to bridge the divide between traditional culture and modern-day life in Africa” (Schoeman, 2013, p. 291). Moreover, I believe it is critically important to reinforce culturally endowed practices and values related to ICRMs to strengthen societal peace and stability. This can be achieved through practical conflict resolution guidelines from the perspective of thought leaders and their wisdom and a framework that accentuates the importance of expanding national coexistence, social solidarity, and interconnectedness in Ethiopia and Africa.

Murithi (2009) argued that future generations in Africa must be educated to promote a peace. Murithi believed that the cultural concept of ubuntu informs African ICRMs and makes them more accountable and humane, thereby generating in Africans a sense of democratization and the conviction that power and legitimacy emanate not from control but from sharing. African

ICRMs provide an opportunity for Africans at the local level to relearn the importance of African values (Elechi et al., 2010).

ICRMs have existed on the African continent for centuries (Alemie & Mandefro, 2018). Ethiopia, a nation endowed with multiethnic diversity, has a long-standing tradition of administrative institutions and conflict resolution mechanisms at the basic level. Although the literature and number of case studies regarding these institutions and practices are limited, their history, strength, and importance should not be underestimated.

Structurally, African ICRMs are locally administrated in the traditional institutions based on the customs and traditions of a given society and function based on customs and traditions of a particular community (Murithi, 2009). To this end, Makonnen (2016) underlined that the actors participating in most Indigenous conflict resolution processes fall into three categories: the disputing parties (victims and offenders), the conflict resolvers (elders), and the observers (members of the community who are interested or involved in one way or another).

Ethnic groups throughout Ethiopia exercise these conflict resolution mechanisms in their local community settings, empowered and structured by elders who represent their ethnic groups nationally and locally. As stated in Chapter 1, for example, multipurpose institutions exist among the Kambata and Hadiya, ethnic groups in the southern part of Ethiopia. In each community (i.e., seera), the code of conduct practiced and internalized by these two ethnic groups (Aresano, 2002, as cited in Mengesha, 2016) represents the basis of all political administration, social interactions, and institutions of conflict resolution within the territory.

Seera also prescribes all socioeconomic, political, cultural, and environmental activities in Kambata and Hadiya societies including marriage, burials, family relations, and ceremonies of birth (Mengesha, 2016). Moreover, Seer dana regulates relations between individuals, tribes, and territorial units. For example, a citizen who does not abide by seer dana or seera is considered a foreigner whom no one will bury when they die, and those who do not obey the decisions of the seer dana are expelled from society and not permitted to have any

communitarian relationships. If they later choose to reintegrate into the community, they are symbolically sanctioned depending on the severity of their infraction or misconduct.

The Oromia ethnic group has its democratic and traditional system known as the Gadaa system. According to Gutema (2017), this system prescribes all sociopolitical, economic, and cultural aspects of the Oromia people led by the abba Gadaas (Fathers of the Gada system).

The Oromo, a predominant ethnic group in Ethiopia, have this well-structured, traditional system of political, social, cultural, and environmental administration, guided by the time-honored wisdom of the ancient Oromo people (Gutema, 2017; Mengesha, 2016). Several scholars have analyzed, written about, and debated this system. One such scholar is Asmarom (1973) who considered Gadaa as both a covenant for and the central sociopolitical, economic, legal, environmental, and administrative institution of the Oromo people. Gadaa is a closed system that admits no change; once formed, it cannot be broken (Asmarom, 1973; Gutema, 2017). This Indigenous system regulates “political stability, economic development, social activities, cultural obligations, moral responsibility, and the philosophy of religious order of the society” (Duressa, 2018, p. 40). An effective institution for any type of conflict resolution, it maintains harmony, coexistence, and social relationships within Oromo society (Hamdesa, 2000).

This Oromo ethnic group has a robust conflict resolution mechanism. For example, in criminal offenses that include the war between two clans, the Abba Gadaas of each clan and the elders (JaarsaBiyaa) meet together, evaluate and examine all the evidence related to the case, bring it before them, and reconcile the conflicting parties. However, if, for example, an individual is killed unintentionally by another, the offenders or their families will compensate the deceased's parents with 22 to 25 head of cattle (Ahmad & Sedeto, 2018).

In the Amhara region, there are ICRMs called Amare. In this community, the Amare traditional elders are well known and formally recognized for dealing with various conflicts, from

simple disputes to grievous acts of violence. The most prominent conflict resolution mechanisms practiced by Amare conciliators in mediation and blood feud reconciliation include (a) Bele, a sworn affirmation by the perpetrator(s) to act in a desired way or to refrain from unwanted action; (b) Arami, a payment from a murderer's family to the victim's to calm heated tempers down until the punishment is decided on; and (c) Guma, compensation, agreed on during reconciliation (Kefelegn, 2021).

Likewise, most ethnic groups in Ethiopia employ such sanctions during the conflict resolution process to make the offender learn from their mistakes. What is most important during the conflict resolution process, however, is the reintegration of the offender(s) into the community to contribute in the daily communal activities within the community (Elechi et al., 2010). Moreover, these examples from the Sidama, Kambata, Hadiya, and Oromo ethnic groups emphasize the fact that in Ethiopia conflict resolution mechanisms are interrelated with the culturally grounded norms, values, beliefs, and principles of diverse ethnic societies. Though these mechanisms differ from one ethnic group to another, all are rooted in Ethiopian antiquity and cross-pollinated or cross-fertilized from one to another.

It is also important to underscore the fact that all ICRMs are based on the search for truth. Indeed, truth is one of the fundamental principles and core values in the conflict resolution process. Thus, each ethnic group possesses its linguistic expression for truth: Oromos refer to the truth-finding process asdhugaa, the Sidama call it hallale, the Amhara use the word ewnet, the Walayita refer totumma, and among the Hadiya, hanqa means the truth (Makonnen, 2016).

In stark contrast to ICRMs stand the workings of the formal justice system in Ethiopia. Ethnic-based legislation and corruption executives have always fragmented the Ethiopian federal system of justice. Consequently, lawyers and judges —are motivated by personal interest and demand large sums of money from offenders, or they take on cases based on personal friendship or family relationships, or they harbor resentments and seek retaliation.

Gebeye (2015) explained the numerous ways that corruption is exercised in the Ethiopian legal system. Political decision makers manipulate policies, institutions, and rules of procedure in allocating resources, abusing their positions to remain in power and garnering greater status and wealth. For decades, systematic corruption has permeated the entire government. The major institutions and processes of the state are regularly dominated and exploited by corrupt governmental officials. To this end, Inman and Andrews (2009) stressed that political clientelism allows the political elite in Ethiopia to create their supporter or clients to perpetuate their power with the unethical administrative competence on the part of government officials also contributing to the corruption in the country (Rahman, 2018). Meanwhile, the ineffectiveness of government legal institutions to uncover and investigate corruption is jeopardizing the country's sociopolitical and economic structure (Rahman, 2018). Worse yet, the judiciary of the country lacks the independence to use its constitutional authority to hold corrupt officials in different level of the government accountable, allowing political elites to manipulate the legal system for their interests (Plummer, 2012).

For these reasons, the Ethiopian justice system is ripe for reform, and one crucial way to do this is by integrating ICRMs based on truth and transparency within this system. Teferi (2012) underlined the following points to explain why integrating these mechanisms is needed within the Ethiopian criminal justice system. First, ICRMs are more flexible than formal court processes. Secondly, ICRMs involve free and open dialogue between offenders, victims, community members, and elders. Thirdly, participants in the ICRMs process are reminded of the dangers of bearing grudges, the importance of reconciling with one's adversaries, and the virtues of repentance, empathy, forgiveness, and apology. These align with the primary goal of justice, which is restoring relationships and social harmony (Elechi et al., 2010).

Similarly, Makonnen (2016) asserted that African ICRMs employ different forms of negotiation, mediation, and reconciliation orchestrated by the elected or nominated elders of a community, the predominant justice system in almost all African nations because it binds the

society together (Glocke, 2011). Typically, the individuals involved in the conflicts sit together informally to resolve conflicts and restore broken relations, which, in turn, brings about social bonds. African ICRMs aim to restore social order by ensuring the parties in conflict participate in and reach a regular settlement within their communities.

According to Elechi et al. (2010), the primary objective of these mechanisms is not to penalize the offenders but to restore societal stability, an outcome of paramount importance in Ethiopia, as in many African countries, where diverse ethnicities, tribes, and nationalities live side-by-side, requiring the maintenance of social harmony. Punishments, when meted out to offenders, must be applied with utmost care. After all, the offender remains a member of the communal family and is expected to contribute to the wellbeing of the community in the future (Elechi et al., 2010). In this way, ICRMs orchestrated by the elders provide alternative solutions to the civil and criminal courts that are wholesome and responsive to the living conditions at the local level and to the restoration of past relationships between disputants (Makonnen, 2016).

From the standpoint of the Ethiopian centralized formal legal system, however, these mechanisms are not amenable to government intervention precisely because locally nominated or selected elders are bestowed with the authority to mediate conflicts, make decisions, and impose sanctions. Last, reintegrating alienated individuals into the community is of utmost importance in African ICRMs (Elechi et al., 2010) because it is also believed that individuals and the community can modify their conduct through education and moral teaching.

ICRMs' Roles in South Africa and Rwanda Toward the Restorative Justice Process

Aftermath of Conflicts

As mentioned earlier, for centuries ICRMs have existed and executed in African countries. As a result, many African countries have used their Indigenous approaches and mechanisms of conflict to avert, manage, and resolve disputes in their respective communities. Although the colonialism impacts eroded these cultural practices through the newly introduced westernized legal system, these mechanisms are still deeply embedded in the lives and cultures

of the social communities in Africa (Ghebretkle & Rammala, 2018). Consequently, the ICRMs and their traditional institutions became undermined and lost their necessary power within the countries' legal system as before in colonial and western-oriented legal systems. However, this legal system has been unable to cope with the enormous strains unleashed by continuous conflicts in a different country, especially the post-apartheid turmoil in South Africa and the postgenocide upheavals in Rwanda.

Therefore, the government officials of these two countries, who themselves were the survivors, decided to rekindle and revitalize the ICRMs and customary legal system. Accordingly, South Africa implemented the transitional justice system process—the Truth and Reconciliation Commission—an ubuntu-based restorative justice process. Rwanda applied the Gacaca transitional customary justice system (Ghebretkle & Rammala, 2018) to regulate, heal, and restore the wounded and divided societies because of the devastating acts of racial segregation, ethnic cleansing, and interethnic violence. The following paragraphs detail these two customary justice systems and their impacts and contributions to the legal system in their respective countries.

The Restorative Justice Process in the Postapartheid Era in South Africa

According to Ghebretkle and Rammala (2018), the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was established in South Africa by the new government in 1995 to discover human rights violations including killings and abductions that had occurred during the apartheid era. One of the fundamental principles of restorative justice implemented by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was to facilitate dialogue among survivors, offenders, and their communities who had experienced apartheid-era human rights abuses.

Accordingly, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission provided open dialogue for individuals and the public. This process was focused on healing the nation while simultaneously healing the individuals who experienced those historical atrocities. According to the experts, truth-telling constructs enhance community members' relations, and to this end Harroff (2018)

underlined three important objectives and why the restorative justice-oriented Truth and Reconciliation Commission was established:

- Truth-telling publicly facilitates the incorporation of differences in the community in the society, which is divided due to the turmoil created by apartheid.
- Truth-telling constructs a national narrative through subjective witnesses from the victims' side instead of objective narration from the elite authorities.
- It expanded the scope of free expression by including a more comprehensive range of participation and more effective and less orderly modes.

Similarly, according to Lederach (1997), the Truth and Reconciliation Commission acknowledged the need to redress the wrongs committed while promoting the idea of reorienting and reconnecting the future with restored harmony. It had several fundamental tasks: address the past to reveal the truth as an avenue to restorative justice, as one of the components of restorative justice is uncovering the truth. It is based on the reparation, healing, and restoration of all concerned; to accomplish this, it encourages victims, offenders, and the community to be directly involved in resolving past trauma to bring about restorative justice (Lederach, 1997).

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission was a restorative program that could ultimately break the cycle of pain and trauma and help offenders desist from committing criminal acts. Truth, according to Lederach (1997), is the desire for the acknowledgment of offenses and the validation of painful loss and experiences, but it is combined with mercy, which is the need for acceptance, letting go, and a new beginning. This program presumed that if offenders know that they might not face the possibility of criminal prosecution or, ultimately, a prison sentence if they come forward, then more offenders could be willing to come out in the open, admit to their crimes, and seek treatment, while the victims could come forward and report the offenses (Sullivan & Tifft, 2007). Therefore, restorative justice initiatives through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa are built on local capacity, knowledge, and

experiences for originating suitable solutions to conflicts within their communities through ICRMs.

Restorative and Justice Process in the Postgenocide Era in Rwanda

Historically, Gacaca, which means “justice on the grass,” originated from the Kinyarwanda language and was a form of local conflict resolution that served Rwandans for centuries. Gacaca was traditionally deployed to resolve property disputes and acts of minor violence and to redress conflict among neighbors. The Rwandan government, however, formalized and modernized Gacaca through national legislative execution and mandated the election of lay judges. The system was required to allow women to participate if they wanted to, and a detailed organizational structure was established (Drumbl, 2020).

In Rwanda, adaptation of the *Gacaca* customary justice system for dealing with the genocide of 1994 is commonly considered as firmly located within a restorative framework (Drumbl, 2020, as cited in Sullivan & Tifft, 2007). The 1994 genocide against Tutsi in Rwanda raised sociopolitical, policy, juridical, ethical, and moral questions within the country and worldwide on how the Hutus, Tutsis, and Twas could coexist peacefully and harmoniously after the horrific events (Lederach, 1997). However, the established legal system of the country could not attend to people accused of participating in the genocide.

Therefore, the transitional government decided to return to Gacaca, their ICRM or traditional court system, to explore and rekindle the conflict solution process that their ancestors had used. According to Lederach (1997), the government of Rwanda applied this restorative, justice-driven mechanism because it seemed to be a time saver and did not jeopardize the outcome process that included truth findings, remorse, forgiveness, reparation, and reconciliation along with healing from trauma and the peace process.

Moreover, due to the devastating civil war, the prison infrastructure in Rwanda's aftermath of genocide was inadequate for handling the sheer number of crimes. The existing westernized system was similarly ill-suited to manage the newly imprisoned suspects, lawyers,

and judges. Some had fled the country, and applying the Gacaca court system was seen as the right approach to facilitate social change of the Rwandan people in line with restorative justice (Nyseth Brehm et al., 2014). This Gacaca court system established a framework that addressed and engaged with the relational aspects of the people of Rwanda in times of difficulty.

The Gacaca's goals were to be simultaneously punitive by fighting impunity while contributing to rebuilding the nation through societal reconciliation, while the courts had jurisdiction over genocide and crimes against humanity (Nyseth Brehm et al., 2014). According to Ugorji (2019), the Gacaca became and still is a traditional restorative justice system that facilitates not only national reconciliation and the trauma healing process of the victims but is also a system that provides a space for wrongdoers to be heard by the communities in which they are to be reintegrated by creating Gacaca tribunals.

To this end, Drumbl (2020) summarized why the Rwandan government created Gacaca tribunals. The first reason was to accommodate the massive number of suspects as there were insufficient court facilities and experts (lawyers and judges) in the country. Secondly, it aimed to diversify the legal response to genocide by appealing traditional mechanisms that focused more on reconciliation, reconstitution, and reintegration. Thirdly, it was intended to disclose the truth and provide restorative justice. Fourth, it boosted the Rwandan government's capacity to solve its problems with its endowed tools and mechanisms. Fifth, it enhanced a conscious-building process through the active participation of all concerned and opened up a local democratic space for free discussion and decision making. In sum, the Gacaca traditional system provides an expectational, reliable, and inexpensive model for resolving and transforming postgenocide Rwanda. Having detailed the conceptual and theoretical foundations of this study, the following section focuses on African ICRMs, which have emerged from culturally endowed, wisdom-based African knowledge.

Several African scholars strongly support African ICRMs as an alternative form of justice that upholds the value of societal restoration based on truth, forgiveness, and reconciliation and

places more emphasis on personal change and reintegrating offenders into the community than on compliant behavior.

The Role of Women in ICRMs in Ethiopia

Throughout Ethiopian history, women have played a pivotal role in the sociopolitical and economic development of the country. Yet, their role as peacemakers has been largely overlooked. In their roles as wives, sisters, daughters, and mothers, Ethiopian women interact with people at the grassroots level, fostering trust (Ombati, 2015) and building peace within and between communities. Because of their traditional customary roles, women have unique insights into the needs of a community and a special role to play in promoting the interests and aspirations of the citizenry. Ombati (2015) identified four key roles that women can play in the process of peacebuilding: (a) their engagement in being advocates for peace; (b) their commitment to being peacekeepers and reducing violence within their community; (c) their pivotal role as mediators and counselors and their commitment to building relationships among neighboring communities by addressing the root causes of the violence; and (d) their contribution as educators. As active participants in the development process, they contribute to building the capacity of their communities and nation to prevent violent conflicts.

Now, with the newly elected national government appointing more women to top ministerial posts, it is time for women throughout the country to take a more active role in decision making and peacebuilding. One of the best routes for women to achieve this goal is through involvement with ICRMs. So far, however, the engagement of Ethiopian women in peacebuilding and conflict resolution has been largely invisible (Hadis et al., 2021). Research conducted on this issue has mainly focused on women's victimization in conflict and on sexual and gender-based violence rather than assessing their role in conflict resolution and peacebuilding projects (Jibat & Nigussie, 2015; Kefale et al., 2021; Misganaw & Worku, 2013). At the same time, the establishment of the policy for officially expanding women's role in conflict resolution has been ignored (Hadis et al., 2021).

Differences Between the Western Courts Process and the African Indigenous Justice System

There are significant differences between the western adjudication process and the African-Indigenous justice system. These differences are illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1

Demonstrating Differences Between Western Courts Processes and African Indigenous Justice System

| Western Judgement Process | African traditional court system |
|--|--|
| Based on the fact finding (Elechi et al., 2010). | Based on the feelings and instinctive effects (Elechi et al., 2010). |
| Focus on the rational legal procedure | Focus on the victim-offender-mediation process |
| Its goal is to promote punishment for those who break the law (Hoecke, 2002). | Its aimed to restore the broken relation and create social cohesion between the victim, offender and the whole community (Hoecke, 2002). |
| A central focus of justice is on punishment as a correction of the wrong actions of the individuals(Christie, 1977). | A central focus of justice on healing, listening, caring, and reconciliation (Christie, 1977). |
| Accountability by obeying the law and rational (Hoecke, 2002). | Accountability for reparation, apology, and compensation to both the victim and the community (Elechi et al., 2010). |
| System is individualistic and hierarchical (Hoecke, 2002; Kauda, 2010). | It focuses on collectivism, communitarian and conscious based (Hoecke, 2002; Kauda, 2010). |
| Offenders are coerced to reveal their mistakes (Elechi et al., 2010). | Offenders are convinced through peaceful dialogue (Gabagambi, 2018). |
| Mediators are hired and work based on their duty (Carroll et al., 2021). | Mediators volunteers and serve the community for their wellbeing (Carroll et al., 2021). |
| The process focuses on alienating the offenders (Elechi et al., 2010). | The process deals with the integration of conflicting parties and the communities (Elechi et al., 2010). |

As observed in Table 1, different scholars put forth a comparative case study of the African Indigenous justice system and that of the contemporary Anglo-American justice system. In their exploration of the differences between the two, Elechi et al. (2010) stated that justice

and peacemaking/conflict resolution in the African Indigenous justice system is an opportunity for the resocialization of community members and the relearning of important African values, including restraint, respect, and responsibility. Participants in the African Indigenous justice process are reminded of the dangers of bearing grudges, the importance of reconciling with one's adversaries, and the virtues of repentance, empathy, forgiveness, and apology. This system and its conflict resolution mechanisms emphasize peaceful alternatives, such as consensus building, based on discussion. These aspects are all in line with the goal of the restoration of relationships and social harmony (Elechi et al., 2010; Gabagambi, 2018).

In contrast, the American justice system focuses on the logic of lawbreaking, and its goal is social control via punishment. In this regard, Hand et al. (2012) and Hoecke (2002) argued that the western view of justice is grounded in competition and commercialization and is obsessed with consumption. According to Carroll et al. (2021), American courts perceive criminals as wicked people who are responsible for their actions and deserve to be punished. In their view, because the victim has suffered, the criminal should suffer as well. Punishment is thus applied to appease the victim and gratify society's desire for retaliation.

Justice in the western world is aimed at controlling actions that violate legal rules, and those who commit crimes are considered harmful to society. However, from the westerners perspectives, some scholars like Waller (2007) and Jimenez (2020) asserted that perpetrators are inherently evil (born that way) and that they cannot be reformed, only locked up and contained. As a result, justice system often "hardens" them so that they not only repeat crimes after release but escalate to more serious crimes.

Conversely, the African Indigenous justice system seeks restorative justice and the reestablishment of balance and harmony for the perpetrator, the victim, and the community affected by an act of aggression (Elechi et al., 2010). All parties involved in the offense meet to discuss how the infraction has influenced them and how it has disrupted the harmony of their lives. Community-nominated or elected elders who serve as conflict resolvers facilitate

communication between the involved members to restore relationships that have been damaged by separating the action from the individual and bringing them back to the community.

This approach is used because within the African Indigenous community each person is first a part of the community and a contributor to the sustainability of the community. One can contribute as a traditional healer, another may contribute as an uncle or aunt, while others may contribute by harvesting crops or producing goods or services (Caroll, 2012). Therefore, in the Ethiopian community and across Africa, it is imperative to bring offenders back to the community.

From a management development standpoint, Kuada (2010) agreed with the view of Elechi et al. (2010) by stating that the western view of leadership focuses on people's instrumental role in an organization—that is, human beings are treated as a resource. Kuada argued that African society has a collectivist orientation based on a concept of familism in which all values, practices, beliefs, and customs are determined by reference to the maintenance, continuity, and functioning of the family group.

For Kuada, individual members of the family are connected by the family's collective moral rules and obligations. Elechi et al. contended that to grasp the African view of justice, one must understand the social setting within which an African is placed and interacts with others. "Justice-making further creates an opportunity for the learning and the reexamination of important values and the socioeconomic conditions of the community" (Elechi et al., 2010, p. 74). In their view, African justice emphasizes the spiritual as the primary source of knowledge, whereby morals and justice supersede the law. The law does not aim to create offenses or make criminals but rather directs how individuals and communities should behave toward each other.

According to Elechi et al. (2010), punishment is to deter the offender and those who share his or her mindset. However, punishments meted out to offenders must be applied with

utmost care. The offender remains a member of the family, who is expected to contribute to the community's well-being in the future. (p. 80)

Thus, reintegrating alienated individuals into the community remains the primary goal of justice in the African context. Omale (2006) stated "that the criminal justice system in most African countries operates with a minimal infrastructure (with its attendant delays in the administration of justice), hence does not have the resources to deal with minor disputes in settlements or villages" (p. 34).

Despite their salient benefits, the African Indigenous system of justice and its conflict resolution mechanisms have been undermined by western influence on the educational system in Africa. Consequently, the Ethiopian legal system has become western-oriented, creating an ontological and epistemological ethos that is diametrically opposite to the culturally endowed and grounded collectivist orientation of the traditional justice practices of Ethiopia. Therefore, it is imperative to relocate African historical, social, political, and philosophical identity and its attendant values and principles. However, first, it is important to examine the three fundamental types of conflicts that have created turmoil and set back progress in Ethiopia for decades.

Intercommunal, Intrastate, and Interstate Conflicts in Ethiopia

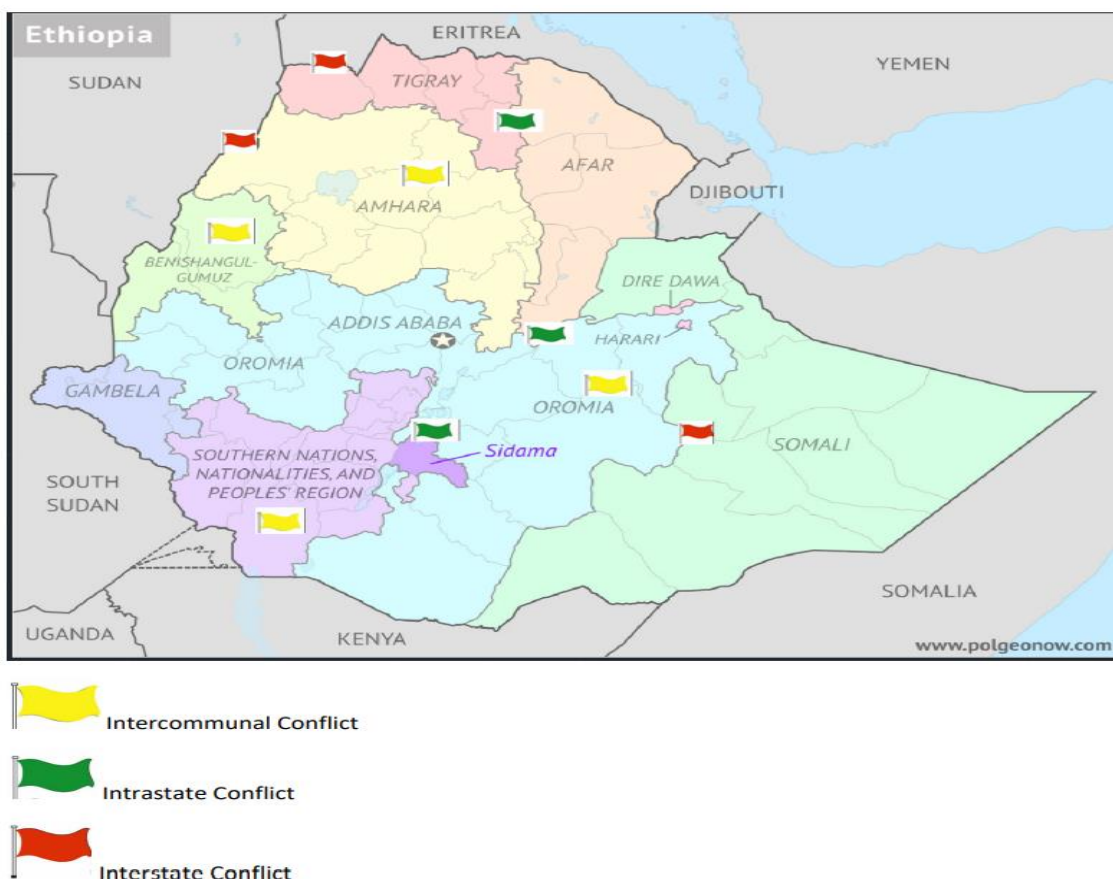
Having provided theoretical and conceptual insights on ubuntu-based ICRMs that promote interdependence, collective action, and person-oriented practices in the peacemaking process, and that have gained recognition in academic and popular literature over the last few decades, this study turned to a deep situational analysis of the factors that have impeded national stability and development by creating conflict and divisiveness in Ethiopia for too long.

Though endowed with cultural and natural resources and an abundance of human capital, Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa regions have been afflicted by exogenous and endogenous factors that have led to sociopolitical and economic devastation for centuries. These factors can be categorized as intercommunal conflicts, intrastate conflicts, and interstate conflicts. Pertaining to Ethiopia specifically, an intercommunal conflict pits a majority and a

minority ethnic group within a regional state against one another. An intrastate conflict denotes a dispute between or among regional states, and an interstate conflict refers to a conflict that occurs between the Ethiopian nation and one or more nation states in the Horn of Africa. Figure 2 illustrates more about these three types of conflicts.

Figure 2

Intercommunal, Intrastate, and Interstate Conflicts



Note. Adapted from *Ethiopia's Sidama Zone Voting on Autonomy (Map)*, by Political Geography Now, 2019 (<https://www.polgeonow.com/search/label/ethiopia>). CC BY-SA.

Intercommunal Conflict in Ethiopia

Endemic to Ethiopia and the entire Horn of Africa region, intercommunal conflicts have emerged due to the nature of the postcolonial state and its governance structures, which include a legacy of colonial subjugation, poor leadership, politics of the Belly (Bayart, 2009),

omnipotence, greed, selfishness, clientelism, patronage, nepotism (Inman & Andrews, 2009), absence of popular participation in government (Clark, 1995), weak institutions of governance, lack of accountability and transparency, lack of political will, weak ethical values, centralist nature of the state and concentration of state power, and a fragile judicial system (Hope & Chikulo, 2000). In addition to these factors, there are contextual factors that impact the functioning of these states, notably externally imposed socioeconomic conditions (Black, 1996), imperialistic power influences (Martin, 1985; Strang, 1996), and rapidly deteriorating environmental conditions (Adedeji et al., 1991). In general, the pernicious legacy of colonialism combined with these contextual factors has led to intercommunal, intrastate, and interstate conflicts both nationally and regionally.

More specifically, according to these scholars, intercommunal conflict is the result of a monoethnocratic ruling system in which the dominant ethnic elites impose their will on the minority ethnic group(s) within a regional state by offering benefits and support to some communities but not to others. On the other hand, an intrastate conflict results from an ethnocentric governance system in which a powerful ethno-nationalist group dominates other ethnonationalism groups.

In Ethiopia, intrastate conflicts frequently arise when one regional state experiences an internal struggle that then impacts a neighboring regional state and then affects the entire country. Examples of past and current intrastate conflicts include the conflict between the Tigray regional state and the Amhara regional state, Tigray and Afar regional states, Oromo regional state and Somali regional states, and Oromo regional state and the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' Region. Though the reasons vary, most intrastate conflicts are generally related to border demarcations. Politicians often play a role in fomenting these conflicts, too, simply for their aggrandizement.

It is important to note that these conflicts deviate greatly from the common and historical ideologies of federalism (Bezabih, 2016; Selassiet, 2003) and that the imposition of ethno-

federalism in Ethiopia has brought about national disintegration and crises of political legitimacy at the national level that, in turn, create intercommunal and intrastate conflicts. In Ethiopia, conflicts arise between majority and minority ethnic groups within the same regional state. Since its emergence in the early 20th century, the modern Ethiopian state has been typified by autocratic leaders who ruled for the benefit of powerful elites. The overwhelming majority of people have had no role in governance and have been unfamiliar with their rights and obligations as citizens.

This top-down, authoritarian style of governance, with an urban-based power structure and authority emanating from the center, has been a significant factor in increasing ethnic disintegration and exacerbating civil conflict. Since 1995, Ethiopia has been organized according to a system of ethno-federalism. Federalism, like other ideological systems such as socialism, communism, and liberalism, bases its legitimacy on the sharing of power and values, political diversity, and unity (Watts, 2008). Ethno-federalism, on the other hand, deviates from the ideology of federalism in that its political structure authorizes a few dominant groups to make executive decisions and exercise most of the power over others.

Until 2018, there were nine regional states, and after Dr. Abiy came to power, two more regional states were admitted into the federation, including the Sidama regional state created in 2020 and the Southwest Region created in 2021, following a successful referendum of the people in those two regions. Now, the country is divided into 11 ethnically-based regional states, with most people living in the region or zone where their ethnicity is in the majority. For example, most Oromos live in the Oromia region, Amharas live in the Amhara region, Tigrayans live in the Tigray region, and so forth. The idea behind this regional state system was to allow ethnic groups more political autonomy. However, it is widely believed that this government structure has overly politicized ethnic identity and created more sectarian tension. Moreover, many people have ethnically mixed heritage and may not feel a close affiliation with one homogeneous ethnic identity.

Each state comprises a dominant ethnic group except for the southwest regional state, which consists of five to six ethnic groups that live in that area. Given that each state is dominated by one majority group, conflicts have traditionally existed between this group and the minority ethnic groups residing within the state. To exemplify, conflicts have arisen in the Oromia regional state between the majority Oromo people and minority ethnic groups such as the Amhara, in Amhara regional state between Amhara ethnics and the minority Oromo, and Tigray regional state between the Tigray people and the Amhara minority. Figure 3 demonstrates a map of regional states making up Ethiopia.

Figure 3

Map of Regional States Making Up Ethiopia



Note. Adapted from *Regions of Ethiopia*, by Wikimedia Commons, 2023 (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Regions_of_Ethiopia_EN.svg). CC BY-SA 4.0.

However, although Ethiopians are ethnically divided, most people have an ethnically mixed heritage and believe that they belong to an interconnected ethnic identity. The interconnectedness and coexistence between ethnic groups are remarkable. Majority and minority ethnic groups in each state intermarry and have coexisted for a long time. As an illustration, an Oromo man with whom I am familiar married a woman from Tigray, and their

daughter married a member of the Amhara, while their son married a woman from the Afar ethnic group; they all live a mostly harmonious if not colorful life as a culturally and ethnically mixed family. This example attests to the fact that ethnic coexistence and shared values and beliefs are more the norm than the exception in Ethiopia today (Evason, 2018).

The central problem in Ethiopia is always its political leaders, who politicize ethnic differences for their advantage. For the political elites in the last 27 years, the more disunited the regional states were, the better—a legacy from the divide-and-rule colonial era that should have no place in the modern Ethiopian political system. Nevertheless, even today, some of Ethiopia's western allies continue to operate, albeit surreptitiously, based on this colonial-era principle. If people in the regional states are disunited, there is a lack of confidence in the system of governance, and local and regional institutions are fragmented, resulting in local and regional leaders pursuing narrow personal interests and seeking power over all other ethnic groups. Ruling in this way perpetuates the politics of greed, selfishness, and corruption—prominent features of the former TPLF-led national government.

Seeing themselves as omnipotent, these politicians use their power and influence to amass wealth to the detriment of the public (Bayart, 2009). As an example, during the previous EPRDF government, the de facto ruling TPLF elite exploited tensions between majority and minority ethnic groups, rejecting popular participation in decision making and exercising weak and biased institutional leadership, which engendered a lack of confidence and trust in the political system. Whenever a conflict arose within a particular regional state, its local leaders would be manipulated and patronized with the crumbs that remained from the mouths of the corrupt TPLF elite for whom change was anathema (Bayart, 2009). Unfortunately, this mindset persists to this day among the same corrupt group who rule the Tigray regional state and who seek to overthrow the Abiy government and rule the Prosperity Party in Addis Ababa.

Intrastate Conflict in Ethiopia

In Ethiopia, intrastate conflicts have resulted from three factors. The first is a long-standing, centralized ethnocentric/monoethnocratic leadership system that lacks a global approach and mindset and deviates from the common ideology of federalism that most African countries have endorsed in the process of establishing regional autonomy or self-governance.

The second is the legacy of 19th- and 20th-century western colonialism in the Horn of Africa, which created artificial national borders that do not coincide with the actual separation of nationalities desired by the people on the ground (Alesina et al., 2011). The third is the legacy of mid-19th and 20th-century imperial regimes in which northern highlanders from Tigray and Amhara ruled Ethiopia. Intrastate conflicts have brought about national disintegration and crises of political legitimacy in Ethiopia nationally, regionally in the Horn of Africa, and across the African continent, leading to social, political, and economic devastation.

In Rwanda, for example, ethnic differences and an imbalance in the political power structure resulted in genocide (Selassiet, 2003). In Somalia, disintegration and national destruction resulted from the civil war (Leeson, 2007; Selassiet, 2003) as did Liberia's collapse (Abbink, 2006). In South Africa, the policy of apartheid led to international ostracism. Sudan's civil war displaced tens of thousands of members of its population (Selassiet, 2003). For centuries, Ethiopia has experienced ethnic- and religious-based genocide. The historical problems these African countries have experienced and are still confronting have not only affected each nation internally but have also created tension, geopolitical issues, and regional disintegration within and among neighboring countries.

Like other African nations, Ethiopia has succumbed to regional fragmentation without experiencing strong economic industrialization or foreign investment at the federal level, weakening its resource base and leading to poor economic progress. This fragmentation worsened after the toppling of the military government, the Derg, that ruled Ethiopia from 1974 until 1991 when a coalition of four ethnonationalist parties took control of the country. The

organizational challenge Ethiopia's government now faces is not unique to Ethiopia, however. It is an African problem and one that Africans have not been able to solve.

In the 20th century, this process involved a patriotic, multiethnic struggle to liberate all of Africa from colonial domination. Now, in the Horn of Africa, it requires a strong local, regional, national, and global organization to establish resilient institutions and a global leadership approach to surmount the present crisis (Belcher, 2012; Heldring & Robinson, 2012). In Ethiopia, this requires the adoption of culturally endowed, ICRMs within the formal federal justice system to maintain sustainable peace and conflict resolution based on shared values and a collaborative spirit.

For this to happen, federal government leaders, the presidents of Ethiopia's regional states, think tanks, national elders who represent diverse multiethnic groups, and religious leaders must play a significant role in developing and strengthening systems that accommodate the needs of the country's multiethnic population by integrating these ethnic groups socially, politically, and economically. More importantly, the nation's leaders must strive to ensure a fair, efficient, and accessible system of justice delivered by competent, independent, contextualized (i.e., Ethiopian-oriented), and accountable institutions.

Currently in Ethiopia, an intrastate conflict has expanded into a conflagration of national and international proportions. Fighting between federal government forces and TPLF insurgent forces in the Tigray regional state has wrought devastation in key parts of the country and has led to a humanitarian crisis. The Abiy government and its people believe the TPLF elite is being sponsored and supported by some western countries to perpetuate the TPLF's ethnocentric, undemocratic style of leadership and elevate it once more to national power.

The conflict has evoked a specific response pattern from the international community, including the United States, the European Union, and the United Nations, all of which have condemned the Ethiopian government and not the TPLF, which has been responsible for most of the killing and destruction. In addition, the main narrative of the global media has been

biased, as they blame the Ethiopian government for the armed conflict, neglecting the historical context on the ground (Abbink, 2021). This misguided information has sidelined the policy approaches of the United States and European Union toward Ethiopia as they prefer, de facto, the deeply undemocratic TPLF elite group to the democratically elected government of Prime Minister Abiy and the agenda of democratization he has been implementing since April 2018 (Abbink, 2021).

Interstate Conflict Between Ethiopia and Bordering Countries

Eastern Africa has been considered a conflict-laden, war-ravaged region. This part of Africa has experienced sociopolitical and economic devastation compounded by interstate wars. Bereketeab (2013) enumerated those wars that occurred in the eastern African countries since the 1960s in the following manner: wars between Ethiopia and Somalia (1964, 1977–1978, 2006–2009), the Kenyan-Somali war (1963), the Ugandan-Tanzanian war (1978–1979), and the Ethiopian-Eritrean border war (1998–2000; Bereketeab, 2013). Ethiopia is no newcomer to interstate conflict as it sits in the heart of the eastern African countries bordering Eritrea, Sudan, South Sudan, Djibouti, Somalia, Kenya, and Uganda.

Scholars who wrote about sociopolitical conflict in eastern Africa, such as Thompson (2015), Rotberg (2005), Henze (1990), de Waal (2015), Bariagaber (2016), Alesina et al. (2011), Michalopoulos and Papaioannou (2011), and Englebert et al. (2002), chronicle Ethiopia's interstate conflicts with its neighbors. From 1998 to 2000, Ethiopia battled Eritrea over Badime, a small border town between southwestern Eritrea and northwestern Ethiopia, followed by a two-decade-long no-war/no-peace stalemate that ended in 2018. Hundreds of thousands on both sides died in this war, which led to socioeconomic and political devastation, a humanitarian crisis, and family members being separated for decades. Neighboring Ethiopia and Somalia have fought three consecutive border wars: the first from 1961 to 1967 over Somalia's claim to the Somali-inhabited Ogden region of Ethiopia; the second from 1977 to 1978, again over the

Ogden region problem; and the third between 2006 and 2009. As in the war between Ethiopia and Eritrea, the death toll was in the hundreds of thousands.

Furthermore, Ethiopia and Sudan have been in a border dispute since the 19th century when the British, who then ruled Sudan, signed border treaties with Ethiopia concerning the Al-Fashaga region, concluding a shared land-use agreement between the two countries. Despite an agreed-upon cooperation formula signed by Sudan's then-president Omar Al-Bashir and the Ethiopian president at the time, Meles-Zenawi, with a change of leadership in Sudan and Ethiopia, political problems in both countries sharpened old rivalries between the two neighbors. Surprisingly, the Al-Fashaga dispute restarted when the Sudanese government deployed its military forces to Al-Fashaga just as Ethiopian military forces were becoming engaged in the conflict in Tigray in 2020.

The Colonial Divide-and-Rule Plan in Eastern Africa

The divide-and-rule plan used by European colonial powers in eastern Africa extended to the creation of arbitrary borders that still play a pivotal role in the conflicts outlined earlier. Asiwaju (1985) and Wesseling (1996) posited that western powers not only gained influence in Africa through colonization per se but expanded their reach through inappropriate border design. The strategic plan Europeans would employ to divide Africa into spheres of influence, protectorates, free-trade areas, and colonies was conceived at the Berlin Conference of 1884–1885, a time when Africa had not even been settled by Europeans. The legacy of divide and rule endured into the 1960s and beyond, afflicting the newly independent nation-states of Africa even to the present day. In country after country, arbitrary borders separated ethnic groups into more than one state, thus subjecting identical cultures to different country-level formal institutions (Michalopoulos & Papaioannou, 2011).

According to Michalopoulos and Papaioannou (2011), the divide-and-rule strategy operated in three ways. First, territories were assigned to one ethnic group or tribe without regard for groups that had already appealed for the same territory. Second, boundary lines were

drawn that split ethnic groups into different countries. Third, ethnic groups were assigned to countries where an Indigenous ethnic group(s) was already struggling for independence. Morrock (1973) highlighted four basic divide-and-rule strategies favored by European colonialists: (a) the creation of differences within the colonized population, (b) the augmentation of existing differences, (c) the channeling or exploitation of these differences for the benefit of the colonial power, and (d) the politicization of these differences so that they would carry over into the postcolonial period.

These four strategies manifested in three ways (Morrock, 1973). First, differences occurred when neighboring and sometimes hostile ethnic groups were thrown together in the same colonial territory. Second, these differences prompted mass migration from one colonial or semicolonial territory to another. Third, differences arose due to conversion to Christianity. European missionaries were intent on inculcating prowestern values in the minds of the African people. Indeed, religious proselytizing was part of the augmentation of differences within African colonies and, later, nations. Differences were also augmented by education, with one tribe receiving a better schooling system than the others.

Channeling or exploiting differences among the African people was achieved in a variety of ways by European colonial powers—for example, in recruiting for the armed forces and police, members of the more “backward” groups were favored over more “progressive” groups. Furthermore, according to Morrock (1973), a colonial power often favored members of the more “advanced” ethnic group for positions within the civil service. Last, according to Morrock, the politicization of ethnic differences within the formerly colonized population often occurred when European powers openly supported a tribal political party after independence to maintain the divide-and-rule legacy. De Waal (2015) reinforced this idea by referring to today’s eastern Africa as a political marketplace, where political entrepreneurs, through the direct and indirect patronage of many western countries, operate in the region using money and/or violence.

According to Henze (1990), one of the main objectives of these political entrepreneurs is to profit from the military, whether through financing the military, training militaries, or dealing in weapons, all of which perpetuate a sense of threat between neighboring states.

Western Neoimperialism in the Horn of Africa

From 1881 to the 1960s, European colonialism in Africa had two main objectives: political domination and economic domination (Curtis, 2017; Ocheni & Nwankwo, 2012; Settles, 1996). According to these scholars, colonialism is a direct form of imperialism, and after the African independence movement of the mid-20th century, imperialist trends continue. In each past and ongoing interstate conflict in eastern Africa, external imperialist influences have played a part.

There are three reasons why western imperialists have sought to disunite the nations of East Africa, which has kept the region sociopolitically, economically, and militarily weak. First, the East Africa is geostrategically pivotal due to its proximity to the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean. The Red Sea is the main line of communication that connects the West and Asia. The eastern African countries, with Ethiopia at its center, is also a geostrategic bridge between African nations, the Middle East, and the Gulf oil states. The flow of trade, cultural links, and strategic military interests in eastern Africa are critically important to the world's powerful nations so they exploit the natural and human resources of the region.

As a strategic plan for controlling natural resources of the region, an extensive array of military bases belonging to the United States, France, Italy, Spain, Japan, China, and, more recently, Saudi Arabia, are hosted in Djibouti with the justification that these bases are needed to counter extremist groups that threaten regional security. Disturbingly, instability in the Horn of Africa has opened the door for al-Shabaab, one of the world's most active terrorist groups and an affiliated terrorist organization of Al-Qaeda that is based in Somalia, right on Ethiopia's border. Al-Shabaab has threatened African countries and the entire international community, including the United States (Elliot & Holzer, 2009).

Second, if the region's nations are disunited, conflicts arise, and these conflicts lead to the intrusion of outside political, economic, and military interests in the internal affairs of the nations involved in the conflict (Curtis, 2017). For example, in September 2021, U.S. President Biden issued an executive order announcing visa sanctions against Ethiopian and Eritrean government officials. A month later, the European Union Parliament passed a resolution addressing the suffering and food scarcity experienced by the civilian population in Tigray without considering the comparable, if not worse, deprivations from mass displacement, food scarcity, and gross human rights violations orchestrated by the TPLF that afflicted the people of the Afar and Amhara regions of Ethiopia (Abbink, 2021).

Furthermore, when the Ethiopian government expelled seven United Nations officials because they were discovered to have assisted TPLF insurgent leaders in obtaining advanced radar communications equipment to attack the Ethiopian military (Abbink, 2021), the denunciations of the EU Parliament, the United States government, and the United Nations Secretary General caused the Ethiopian government to reflect upon the lingering neocolonial mindset of the western powers toward Ethiopia, an independent, sovereign African country.

The West's external intervention into African internal affairs is further evidenced by the mid-November 2021 visit of Antony Blinken, United States Secretary of State, to the United Arab Emirates and Kenya to discuss Ethiopian internal issues with Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the Crown Prince of the Emirate of Abu Dhabi, and Uhuru Muigai Kenyatta, the President of Kenya.

Third, conflict creates socioeconomic and political fragility compounded by humanitarian crises spawned by a lack of basic needs, resulting in dependency on powerful countries for food aid. Despite the pretensions and practices of humanitarian-aid actors, seek to ensure their actions confer no military advantage, as they are driven solely because of need and uphold the principles of neutrality and impartiality.

Western aid, in most of the eastern African countries including Ethiopia, has been used to gain political influence in the recipient countries. The political tools employed “include geopolitical changes; the changing nature of conflict, the redefinition of security that places under-development at the heart of global security concerns, the perceived failings of humanitarian action in recent emergencies, domestic policy considerations in donor governments” (Curtis, 2017, p. 5), and the withholding of aid to achieve political objectives.

While the causes of conflict are usually internal/domestic, the external/international aid response to address internal factors is often part of an overarching strategy (Curtis, 2017) to weaken regional and/or national self-sufficiency and stability by making the recipient countries dependent on the donors. Lacking economic self-sufficiency, these countries open the door to foreign intervention in their internal affairs and can then be monitored by the more powerful donor states concerning matters of, for example, domestic economic policy, human rights, the status of women, poverty, and psychosocial wellbeing (Curtis, 2017). For instance, citing its disapproval of the war in the Tigray region, the Biden Administration, besides imposing sanctions on Ethiopian government ministers, also removed the duty-free trading regime provided under the U.S. African Growth and Opportunity Act, thereby rupturing a historical diplomatic relationship with Ethiopia.

The Ethiopian government and its people perceive continued pressures from the United States, a donor country that supplies millions of dollars in humanitarian aid, as “humanitarian imperialism”—a type of imperialist intervention that uses the language of humanitarianism to justify its use of force (Bush et al., 2011). The strategy behind the million-dollar aid grants is that the more aid that is poured into Ethiopia and Africa, the lower the standard of living, the higher the debt, and the greater the need to borrow more money. Ultimately, Ethiopia, like many African countries, may face the risk of having its national budget and development drawn up by western countries that provide the aid—a sort of impending neocolonization.

To exemplify, since the 1950s, Ethiopia has been the top recipient of bilateral aid from many donor countries, including the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom. It is also the largest recipient of Official Development Assistance in Africa and the third largest recipient in the world, according to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (Hassan, 2013). However, the benefit of this foreign aid to the country's economic growth is questionable. For instance, as of 2010, foreign assistance financed almost 50% of the capital budget (Gebergziabher, 2011) and reached about 20% of the GDP. As a result of this method of aid financing, Ethiopia is one of the most aid-dependent countries in the world. Moreover, foreign economic aid can increase expenditure and decrease capital expenditure by weakening foreign exchange and export performance. Foreign aid has discouraged the government's effort to increase revenue streams to cover its expenses from its homegrown social capital and economic reforms. Finally, high aid inflow to the country over many years has resulted in indebtedness, high unemployment, absolute poverty, and poor economic performance.

A final impact of neoimperialism is that educated people in Ethiopia and throughout the region have long been induced to go to western countries and remain there, depriving the region of needed human capital and producing a "brain-drain" (Dei & Asgharzadeh, 2002). For Ethiopian secondary school and college graduates looking to advance their training and skills, emigrating from their home country to Europe or North America is a logical next step since Ethiopia's education system, in general, is tied to the West, which is counterproductive to the existence of Africans' culturally endowed and grounded values and principles (Kauda, 2010). In summary, throughout the colonial period and beyond, many westerners, having no interest in African Indigenous culture and no concern for the African people, destroyed the region's Indigenous lifestyle and culture. This fact became increasingly evident later when:

On attainment of independence by most African states from their colonial overlords, it was extremely difficult to disentangle from the colonial perfected role of the state because of the systematic disarticulation in the Indigenous economy and the intrinsic

tying of same with the external economy of the colonizers. (Ocheni & Nwankwo, 2012, p. 46)

Before fully embracing colonial education, many Africans were skilled in crafts and livelihoods that involved some basic technologies using the resources available in their local environs. They were sculptors, carvers, cloth weavers, and miners (Ocheni & Nwankwo, 2012) who were able to satisfy the technological needs of various African societies. Colonial education, however, induced Africans to abandon their Indigenous technological and artistic skills and focus mainly on reading and writing, a significant factor today in Africa's poor technological base and economic underdevelopment. Yet, western-oriented (i.e., colonial) education has never established deep roots in the lifestyle, culture, and environment of African people, nor has it brought about any significant educational advancement (Ocheni & Nwankwo, 2012). Although this system of education negatively impacted many African countries, Ethiopia resisted the influences and distorted perceptions of African society promulgated by western supremacy and became a symbol of independence and freedom throughout the African continent. The following section examines the often-insidious ways that western colonial powers, colonialists, and now neocolonialists have perceived and interacted with Africans to underscore just how important it is for Ethiopia today to restore a culturally endowed African Indigenous justice system and conflict resolution mechanisms to resolve a legacy of conflict largely brought about by western domination.

Colonial Encounter in Postcolonial-Era Africa

Belcher (2012) argued that five dominant models of postcolonial encounters tend to preclude such a narrative about African countries: the static model, annihilation model, resistance model, appropriation model, and reverse appropriation model. The static model refers to the fixed and untouched identity of Europeans as colonizers. Belcher pointed to colonizers who powerfully changed those they encountered in their global travels while remaining untouched themselves, always in charge, always agents of their destinies, and

devoid of interest in and respect for the destinies of their colonized subjects. In short, Africans were often judged by European standards rather than their own.

In the annihilation model, one culture is understood as overwhelming and eradicating another while remaining unchanged (Belcher, 2012). An extraordinary example is the slave trade from African countries to Europe and European colonies in the Americas and Asia to eliminate Africans' identity and cultural background. Colonial annihilation had an enormous impact on the lives of Africans. Exploiting Africa's rich natural and human resources, western colonizers also despoiled and poisoned Africans' deep-rooted systems of self-governance (Mengesha, 2016). Colonial exploitation also changed the economic structure of African society. Cash crops such as cocoa, coffee, tea, and cotton were introduced on a large scale to meet the industrial needs of European countries, and minerals were mined extensively. At the same time, the Europeans had little interest in traditional African culture and no concern for the Africans themselves (Dimkpa, 2015).

Other negative effects of colonialism, consistent with the annihilation model, became evident in the aftermath of the African independence movement of the 20th century. As an example, the Italians, who belligerently invaded and occupied Ethiopia from 1936 to 1941, seriously disrupted and left a lasting negative impact on the emerging educational system. Based on their racist, discriminatory policies, the Italians changed the curricula of schools and universities in 1936 and then massacred approximately 74% of all educated Ethiopians, forcing survivors to leave the country for Britain, France, and the United States (Binayew & Tadele, 2016). One can only imagine the suffering that would have occurred had Ethiopia been subjugated and forced to endure colonial rule for more than 30 or 40 years, as many other countries in Africa experienced.

The resistance model refers to colonial encounters in which the colonized are understood as vigorously, and often violently, resisting colonial incursions (Belcher, 2012). According to this model, colonized or invaded peoples are believed to be active participants in

resisting their oppression and invasion. Northrup (2012) noted that many Africans in Europe, both free and slave, successfully incorporated elements of their original cultures into their new lives as a sign of resistance. One area of cultural retention was music. African musicians and dancers were in great demand in 16th-century Europe, and enthusiasm for Black musicians remained commonplace in Europe for centuries.

Regarding the resistance model, Ethiopia, historically Africa's only independent nation, was an exception. The Battle of Adwa in Ethiopia in 1896 became a symbol of resistance to colonialism and the struggle for freedom. Decisively defeating an invading Italian army attempting to expand Italy's colonial empire, Ethiopian forces not only saved Ethiopia from Italian invasion and colonization but also raised the status of an African country to that of an equal partner in the world community (Steward, 2020).

Unlike the annihilation model, the appropriation model is one "in which one culture is understood as appropriating aspects of another culture to construct itself and repress the other" (Belcher, 2012, pp. 3–4). Africans were exploited in the development of English identity but did not themselves contribute to this development. Colonial governments took over much of Africa's best land for their own personal or commercial use, such as for mining or commercial farms (Jayne et al., 2014). Belgium and Britain stand out for appropriating the largest share of African land. The Belgians took land in the Congo and the British in Kenya and South Africa. Central, east, and South Africa had favorable climates and fertile soil, encouraging the British and the Belgians to settle in these areas.

Once European nations began creating farms and mining companies in Africa, they needed people to work on them, so they began to exploit Africans as cheap labor. Africans who lived in these areas either lost their land to Europeans or were unable to live off their land, so they moved to the towns, farms, or mines established by Europeans (Austin, 2010; Heldring & Robinson, 2012). Working conditions were terrible, with corporal punishment, food rationing, and low wages. While European development flourished, Africans were left to suffer.

The final model of colonial encounter, the reverse appropriation model, has Africans adapting to, or trying to adapt to, European ideas and colonial policies. European countries needed money to run their overseas governments and services for settler communities. However, “mother” countries usually provided little to their colonies so colonial governments began taxing local Africans. This became a problem after World War II when European countries were financially devastated. The solution was to take advantage of Africans, forcing them to work and pay taxes with little or no compensation. Forced labor increased, and many African men were separated from their families since only men were employed to work on farms and in mines (Settles, 1996).

As a result, African villages lost their workforce for food production, leading to famine. Traditional African villages started to decline, and Europeans began to employ Asian immigrants, creating tension between the Asians and native Africans. European colonial powers never planned to industrialize or modernize Africa. Instead, Africans were used solely to produce raw materials that satisfied the needs of westerners (Ocheni & Nwankwo, 2012), which were then exported to Europe and re-exported to Africa as final products sold at unreasonable prices Africans could not afford. To illustrate, when the colonialists needed palm oil for their soap-making industry, they compelled Africans to concentrate on the production of this commodity in commercial quantities so that the soap industry would have an adequate and steady supply. Thus, Africa was turned into a consumer market for European manufactured goods, which ensured that European industries would not be shut down because of a lack of raw materials.

Forgetfulness has been a fundamental part of the modern subjugation of Africa (Belcher, 2012). European powers justified colonialism as having a civilizing mission. According to Mengesha (2016), however, colonialism not only denigrated ICRMs in Africa but also virtually destroyed the democratic institutions in many African societies as part of the goal to homogenize the world. Now, though, the western narrative of Africans as uncivilized,

uneducated, and antimodernist has shifted into one that contends that Africans and African thought must have actively changed Europeans and European literature.

The long history of Ethiopia belies that narrative, too. In antiquity, Ethiopia was one of the world's leading civilizations with strong and cohesive systems of administration, notably the Axumite civilization, extant from 150 B.C.E. to 50 C.E. Belcher (2012) noted that Axumites "controlled one of the most vital trade routes in the ancient world, dwelling as they did at the nexus of commerce among Africa, the Middle East, and South Asia" (p. 32). One might be surprised to hear that almost two millennia ago in the Horn of Africa, Africans were writing books in their Indigenous languages. In the fourth century, the scribes of Ethiopia and Eritrea were reading and writing bound manuscripts in Ge'ez (Belcher, 2012), an Indigenous language that to this day remains the official liturgical language of the orthodox Täwaḥədo Church in Ethiopia and Eritrea.

In addition, Ethiopia has produced enlightened philosophers such as Zera-Yacob (1434–1468) of Axum, the author of several works of political theology and an ardent promoter of ecclesiastical reform and royal centralization. Zera-Yacob's thoughts even extended to gender equality. Moreover, between 1537 and 1552, a remarkable Ethiopian scholar called Tasfa Seyon edited and published a New Testament and a missal in Ge'ez (Northrup, 2012).

In international relations, Ethiopia has a long history of diplomacy, opening its first embassies in Europe in the 14th century and sending its first ambassador to Lisbon in 1452 (Northrup, 2012). A peacemaking nation, Ethiopia sent three delegations to Europe to discuss Christian unity between 1481 and 1490, participated in the Lausanne Conference between the Ottoman Empire and the Allied powers in 1922–1923, and was the first country to play a pivotal role in drafting the Charter of the United Nations (Henze, 1990).

While Ethiopia escaped the incursion of 19th- and 20th-century European imperialist powers, colonialism imposed a multitude of hardships on Africans elsewhere on the continent, including resource depletion, labor exploitation, unfair taxation, a lack of industrialization,

dependence on a cash crop economy, prohibition of trade, the breaking up of traditional African society and values, a lack of political development, and internal ethnic rivalries.

Chapter Summary

An array of scholars have weighed in on the significance of ICRMs within the African context and their applicability in resolving disputes internally and externally in Ethiopia. This chapter surveyed the literature on this topic to deduce what is known and what has yet to be discovered about the effectiveness of these conflict resolution practices in strengthening the federal justice system of Ethiopia. This chapter also critically analyzed the western world's perceptions of ICRMs and sociopolitical and economic development in African countries. In Chapter 3, the research approach, design, and methods of this study are explicated along with my assumptions, background, and potential biases that informed the study.

Chapter 3: Methods

Generally, any scientific research is supported on philosophical assumptions about what represents valid research and which research method is appropriate for developing knowledge in a study. Therefore, to conduct any research, it is imperative to know these assumptions: common philosophical assumptions, the research methodologies and design, instruments, procedures of data collection and its analysis, and the stages and processes involved in the research. The research design for this study is an explanatory case study that collects qualitative data. Key informant interviews (KII), FGDs, and policy-related documentation were used as data collection methods. Moreover, sampling, data collection procedures, data processing, and analysis were well defined with indications of accuracy and consistency. My background, beliefs, and biases were stated. Furthermore, the ethical considerations of the research are briefly explained in this chapter.

The Research Approach

Typically, there are three approaches to conducting research: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods. However, qualitative research method was applied in this study, because it emanates from the social sciences and the humanities (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). To this end, Yin (2015) defined qualitative research by highlighting five features:

Studying the meaning of people's lives under real-world conditions, representing the views and perspectives of the people in a study, covering the contextual conditions within which people live, contributing insights into existing or emerging concepts that may help to explain human social behavior, and striving to use multiple sources of evidence rather than relying on a sole source. (pp. 7–8)

Therefore, qualitative approach seeks to explore and understand the meaning that individuals and groups attribute to social events and human problems in their natural settings (Creswell & Creswell, 2018), and the research process involves emerging questions and techniques. As this research study involved collecting and analyzing data to gain insight and understanding into

individuals' perceptions of events and circumstances, the qualitative method approach was best suited to address research questions of this study and the interviews were designed to elicit responses to the following research questions:

- RQ1: What are or are not the elders' perspectives on how effectively Indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms work locally in Ethiopia?
- RQ2: How do or do not Ethiopia's national elders perceive the institutionalizing of multiethnic Indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms within Ethiopia's federal criminal justice system?
- RQ3: In what ways do or do not Ethiopia's national elders perceive Ethiopia's ethnocentric/monoethnocratic governance system as lacking the qualities necessary for an inclusive, united, democratic, and economically strong nation?
- RQ4: How do or do not Ethiopia's national elders perceive the role of women in promoting peace and unity in Ethiopia?
- RQ5: In what ways do or do not Ethiopian elders believe that future generations in Ethiopia can ensure the sustainability of Indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms?

In the qualitative research approach, the researcher acts as a primary research instrument; the research subjects are people and sites selected based on the research questions that best fit the central phenomenon of understanding (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2015). In the present study, I chose the qualitative approach due to the nature of the research questions, its (qualitative approach) unique future contribution to human-centered research, and its rigorous and widely accepted procedures for the study design, sampling, data collection, and data analysis.

Research Design

Commonly, the research design depends on the nature of the research event to be studied (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Thus, this study involved interviews with Ethiopia's national

elders who are directly involved in determining the barriers that may impede the incorporation of ICRMs within the Ethiopian federal criminal justice system. The purpose of this qualitative case study with explanatory design was to identify barriers, as perceived by Ethiopian national elders, that hinder incorporating ICRMs into the federal criminal justice system in Ethiopia, and to provide a clear policy orientation for this incorporation to take place. A research design is a procedure that helps collect, analyze, interpret, and report data inductively, creating from particulars to general themes (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Yin, 2015).

As its mentined earlier, a qualitative case stuy with explanatory design was employed to address the research questions. An explanatory research design asks why and how questions to identify reason a phenomenon occurs. Through this inquiry, evidence is provided to support or refute an explanation or prediction, and relationships are discovered between various aspects of the studied events (Yin, 2014). Because the main objective of this qualitative study is to explore the barriers, as perceived by Ethiopia's national elders, that impede to incorporating ICRMs resolution within the Ethiopian federal criminal justice system, an explanatory research design constituted the proper research method to address the central questions for this study.

Inductive Research Strategy

According to Blaikie (2000), research strategies provide a distinct logic and set of processes to answer research questions. Thus, there are four distinct strategic research approaches to answering research questions: inductive, deductive, reproductive, and abductive. For this study, however, I employed an inductive research strategy to obtain a sample from a small and narrow group to generate a general theory drawn from event observations (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Philosophical Worldview

Philosophical assumptions within the qualitative research helps to arteulate general idea of the research (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) and are based on a collection of personal beliefs that prescribe what must be studied, how the research should be developed, and in which ways

the outcomes must be interpreted (Bryman, 2016). Therefore, my choice of methodology was determined by my philosophical assumptions about constructivist epistemology and ontology (Tuli, 2010). In most research, the philosophical worldview of the researcher remains largely hidden. Nevertheless, it continues to influence the conduct of research as a basic set of beliefs that guide the actions and practices of the study.

In this study, the qualitative research approach was chosen to learn more about particular social situations, events, roles, groups, and interactions (Locke et al., 2013). Marshall and Rossman (2014) proposed that the researcher enters the informants' world through communication in search of the informants' deep perceptions of and meanings regarding the central issue of the study. Herewith, I relied on two specific philosophical worldviews: epistemological and ontological paradigms (Crotty, 2003).

Epistemological Assumptions

Epistemology, derived from the Greek *episteme*, or understanding, is the philosophical study of how one distinguishes reality, or truth, from opinion—in other words, how one knows these things and whether that knowledge is both adequate and legitimate (Majeed, 2019). Epistemological assumptions fall into three fundamentally competing modes of thought: positivist epistemology, phenomenological epistemology, and subjectivist/constructivist epistemology (Bryman, 2016).

Positive epistemology, as a research model, pursues to solve major practical problems, searches for generalizations, and discovers precisely causal relationships through scientific analysis (Kim & Kim, 2003). Phenomenological epistemology, on the other hand, focuses on meanings, understanding events, and constructing theories and models from data (inductive approach) through qualitative methods (Smith, 2004). In contrast, subjectivists epistemology suggests that humans produce knowledge and provide meaning from the interaction between their experiences and their ideas and sheds light on the importance of culture and context in

understanding what occurs in society and in constructing knowledge based on this understanding (Akena, 2012).

Therefore, this study emphasized subjectivists/constructivist and phenomenological epistemology because I believe that African Indigenous knowledge is constructed collectively through the intuition, dreams, prayers, music, art, imagination, and meditation of group elders and ancestors; from all human faculties and experiences, including endowed ancestor histories and cultural diversity (Akena, 2012).

Ontological Assumptions

Ontology as a branch of philosophy, investigates the nature and essence of social phenomena and whether phenomena are meaningful and authentic (Majeed, 2019). Ontological assumptions deal with the nature of truth and inquire into the kinds of social events that exist, the circumstances of their presence, and how they are related (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In the study of social phenomena, ontological inquiry enables a researcher to explore assumptions about whether something is noteworthy and natural, to conceptualize the form and nature of reality, and to discover what can be known and/or believed about that reality. It assumes that universal propositions—i.e., generalizations about the associations between concepts—can represent this order of reality (Majeed, 2019), and only those which can be observed and experienced by the senses can be considered real. Ontologically, the constructivist viewpoint is particularly relevant to Africans who are so deeply spiritual. For Africans, everything has a spirit, a guiding force that underlies all life (Elechi et al., 2010) and manifests in the values of interdependency. Moreover, Africans are intimately connected to nature and their ancestors—living, deceased, and yet unborn (Elechi et al., 2010).

Description of the Study Area

In 1995, the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia was formally recognized as an ethnocentric federation. Today, Ethiopia is divided into 11 regional states: Oromo; Amhara; Somalia; Tigray; Afar; Southern Nations, Nationalities, and People's Region; Sidama;

Benishangul-Gumuz; Gambela; Harari; and Southwest Regional State, and two chartered cities: Dire-Dawa and Addis Ababa. In this system of ethnically based regional states. Each regional state is thus comprised of a dominant ethnic group, with each ethnic group headed by local, regional, and national elders.

Researcher's Background, Beliefs, and Biases

In qualitative research, when there is a need to identify personal beliefs, expectations, and biases at the outset of a study, it is the primary role of the researcher to be the data collection instrument. My perceptions of African ICRMs may be influenced by personal experience as the middle son, whose father is an elder of the Hadiya ethnic community, and whose mother is from the Kembatta ethnic group. I have lived in several mixed ethnic-based communities in the country, including the Oromia region in the towns of Modijo from 2001 to 2005 and the town of Shashemane in 2011. These lived experiences may have affected the study and induced biases that shaped the way I viewed the data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Conversely, I believe that the understanding gained from living in these different regions enhanced my awareness of, knowledge of, and sensitivity to the issue of incorporating ICRMs within the federal criminal justice system.

As a researcher, my position on the issue of Indigenous justice systems is based on the evidence that these systems fit well with the cultural lifestyle of Africans, in general, and the Ethiopian people. Therefore, I firmly believe that culturally endowed Indigenous justice systems are effective and have the potential to resolve the Ethiopian problem. Conversely, I believe that the punitive and unidirectional justice system that currently exists does not serve the people of Ethiopia in any constructive way. Instead, I believe that the Ethiopian federal justice system must be restorative and multidirectional. This is not to say that I am not demonizing the western-oriented justice system, which has played an essential role in the West and has even contributed to the justice system in Africa, albeit in a limited manner. Rather, in this study, I advocate for the potentiality and effectiveness of Indigenous justice systems in countries

throughout Africa. Moreover, I am not neglecting the modernization of the current justice system in Ethiopia, but I argue that modernity must be forged creatively within the structures of Africa's multifaceted cultural experiences and values.

A further bias may result from my past collaboration with some participants in the study area. According to Creswell & Creswell (2018), typically, qualitative researchers need to limit discussions involving their personal experience so as not to dominate the importance of the content in the study. Thus, my collaboration with the participants studied induced recommendations that influence the participants' responses to the issue under study.

Researchers must also divulge any connections between themselves, the participants, and the research site so that these do not influence interpretations, which are based on the trust that is built between the participants and the researcher (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). In addition, I was cognizant of the backgrounds, beliefs, and biases of the participants regarding the study issue before analyzing their experiences and responses. This knowledge also helped me to develop themes for interpretation to pose more incisive research questions. In sum, a clear awareness of my background, beliefs, and biases and a fuller understanding of those of the research participants reinforced my objectivity, credibility, and accuracy of this research.

Techniques and Instruments of Data Collection

As noted, this research employed different instruments of data collection and techniques, including key informant interviews, FGDs, and policy-related documentation. I gathered rich and relevant information from Ethiopia's national elders using an explanatory case study, a nonprobable, purposeful (judgemental) approach, and quota sampling techniques with a list of semistructured and open-ended questions for the issues in the study area.

Key Informant Interviews

The qualitative method involved conversations between the study participants and me, guided by a flexible interview protocol and supplemented by follow-up questions, probes, and comments (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019; Yin, 2014). This study employed key informant

interviews with semi-structured questions posed by the interviewer to the interviewees (see Appendix A). The aim of using key informant interviews for data collection was to obtain information on unique experiences related to the topic of the study (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019). Since I was the primary data collection instrument, I needed to be reflexive and aware of how my role impacted conversations with the participants to delve into more personal, sensitive issues (Yin, 2015).

The key informant interview is a conversation between a skilled interviewer and an interviewee (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019), in which the researcher conducts face-to-face interviews with participants (Charmaz, 2006) to stimulate and collect rich, exhaustive material on the study issue for use in the analysis. These interviews help the researcher to guide participants with a list of questions or issues to be explored, using probes for following up on key topics (see in Appendix A). The estimated time for each interview was approximately 45 to 60 minutes.

To obtain qualitative research data from key informant interviews, Creswell and Creswell (2018) outlined the following protocol techniques (see in Appendix B).

- Primary basic information includes the date, time, place of interview, the length of the interview, the file name required for digital copy recording transcription, and the names of the researcher and the interviewee.
- The introduction supplies useful instructions and information about the interviewer, interviewee(s), and the objectives of the study, which is signed by the interviewee as informed consent. The interviewer can provide further clarification about the interview and define important terms before proceeding to ask the questions.
- Opening questions are engaging, such as how the interviewee spent their day or asking them to describe their job, but sensitive, personal questions should be avoided, such as asking about the interviewee's income.

- Content questions are followed by subquestions to open the discourse. These are friendly and framed from the research—for example, asking about facts related to the main question of the research. Responses provide general clues as to how the interviewee proceeds to answer the primary research question.
- Using probes includes questions that help the researcher elicit more information and explanation about important content. Such questions might be framed as, can you tell me more on this issue? Is there any further information that you would like to share? Who should I contact next to get more information about the issue?
- Closing instructions include the interviewer expressing appreciation to the interviewee for participating in the interview, the relevance of their responses, the confidentiality of the interview, and their willingness to volunteer for another interview if needed. A revisit with the interviewee to check the draft results is advisable to ensure the credibility of their responses.

Focus Group Discussions

In qualitative research, FGDs are used to obtain an in-depth understanding of social issues (Nyumba et al., 2018). Generally, African ICRMs are collective, empowered by a group of ethnic elders at the local community level, so these FGDs were essential for obtaining more information and collecting opinions about the events. The issue of the incorporation of ICRMs within the Ethiopian federal criminal justice system was discussed concerning both federal and regional state constitutions, as well as the federalist concepts of the country.

The national elders in the FGDs were purposefully selected to fit the objectives of the study using quota sampling techniques (Bhattacharjee, 2012), and discussions were conducted using semistructured, open-ended questions that are limited in number, intentionally meant to stimulate and provoke participants' views, and to open and discuss freely the opinions and feelings of the participants (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Nyumba et al., 2018). I acted as a facilitator or moderator (Nyumba et al., 2018; Yin, 2014). Given that participants in both

interviews and FGDs were advanced in age, the estimated time for group discussions was two hours to avoid fatigue. However, the same elders did not participate in the interviews and FGDs of the key informants. Those elders who participated in key informant interviews were elders who represent their ethnic group at the national level. Those who participated in the FGDs were elders who represent their ethnic group at the regional or local level and women who are nominated ambassadors of peace at the national level. Table 2 shows the model of key informant in-depth interviews and FGD questions.

Table 2

Model for Key Informant Interviews and Focus Group Discussions

| | |
|---|---|
| Elders' Interviews Related RQ1, RQ2, RQ3- Traditional Perspectives | Regional/Local Elders' and Womens' FGDs Related RQ4, RQ5- Future Perspectives (See Interview Guide in Appendix A) |
| (see Appendix A) | |

I prepared both key informants' interviews and FGD questions in English. They were then translated into the Amharic language (the national language of Ethiopia) by certified professionals. Both key informant interviews and FGDs were conducted in the Amharic language. All interviews were held in comfortable settings and translated into English by certified professionals at one of the translation centers in Addis Ababa, the capital city of Ethiopia. With the interviewees' consent, they were recorded electronically to provide a transcript for analysis and future reference.

Policy-Related Documentation

I collected policy-related documents as a secondary source of data. Documents were obtained through publicly available laws and regulations or provided by the elders. These documents were reviewed and supplemented to fill the information gap that might occurred from the primary data sources on the research issue. Both published and unpublished secondary documents were collected in this policy-related data collection. Moreover, the scholarly relevant

literature on ICRMs in Africa in general and Ethiopia in particular, the constitutional documents, and regional states' proclamation on the ICRMs were reviewed.

Inclusion Criteria

Inclusion criteria for key informant interviewees included the 20 elders who represent their ethnic group at the national level. FGDs consisted of 14 elders who represent their ethnic groups at the regional and local levels and 15 women who were nominated as ambassadors of peace at the national level. There was a total of 29 focus group participants.

Exclusion Criteria

Regarding exclusion criteria, Ethiopian citizens who were not elders and who did not represent their ethnic group either at the national or local levels were excluded from both key informant interviews and FGDs, as were national elders and women ambassadors of peace who chose not to participate in the study.

Sampling Techniques

I employed an inductive research approach to sample a small group of elders and create general theories about observed and recorded events. For data collection, I purposefully determined the group of 20 national elders for in-depth interviews and 29 women and elders for the FGDs. That means FGDs consisted of 15 women who are ambassadors of peace at the national level and 14 elders who represent their ethnic groups at the regional and local levels.

A nonprobability sampling design was used, in which participants do not have an equal chance of being selected. I assumed the participants selected have very rich knowledge about the study and the population in the study area. Using quota sampling techniques, a purposive sampling strategy—a nonrandom, nonprobable sampling design that is based on previously decided members and numbers of respondents—was employed to identify those who have sufficient knowledge of the issues involved in the research.

The selection of a nonrandom, nonprobable design, along with purposive sampling and a quota sampling technique, was based on the following criteria.

- An inductive research approach was applied to sample a small group of elders and created general theories about observed and recorded events.
- Selected elders with rich knowledge and a competent understanding of the study topic were represented at the national and local levels of their ethnic group.
- Women participants in this study were those nominated as Ethiopian ambassadors of peace at the national level.

Nevertheless, this sampling design could have two potential flaws: (a) it was limited by personal prejudices, which entails the risk of bias, possibly occurring in the sample selection; and (b) it was not possible to estimate the sample error and degree of accuracy to be achieved. Table 3 summarizes the research design.

Table 3

Summary of the Research Design

| Method | Source of Data | Data Collection Approach | Sample Size |
|-------------|-------------------------------|--|---|
| Qualitative | Key Informant Interviews | One-on-one interviews of 45–60 minutes carried out with Ethiopia’s national elders, who possess rich information about the issue. See interview guide in Appendix A. | 20 Participants |
| | Focus Group Discussions | In these FGDs, Elders representing their ethnic group at the regional and local levels will participate. In addition, in these FGDs, women nominated as ambassadors of peace at the national level will participate. | 4 FGDs consisting of 7 & 8 participants each. This means, 14 elders who represent their ethnic group at the local and regional level with 2 FGDs consisting of 7 & 7 participants each and 15 women nominated as ambassadors of peace at the national with 2 FGDs consisting of 7&8 participants each. Total number of participants was 29. |
| | Documentation- Policy Related | Current existing laws and regulations around criminal | Publicly available and as provided by elders. |

| Method | Source of Data | Data Collection Approach | Sample Size |
|--------|----------------|---|-------------|
| | | justice and Indigenous conflict resolution in Ethiopia. | |

Participant Recruitment for Interviews and FGDs

Methods for recruiting participants well versed in the subject matter included consulting officials from the Ministry of Peace and the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, and from professors from the Addis Ababa University Institute of Peace and Security Studies who have close relationships with the national elders. Telephone and personal outreach canvassing (Nyumba et al., 2018) was used. For informant interviews, I recruited key figures (national elders not included in the FGDs) who play a pivotal role in their ethnic groups and who reside close to their communities in their regional states. Key informant interviewees and FGD national elder participants were recruited with attractive incentives such as certain foods, money for transportation, and clothing that are considered signs of respect, as well as a recognition certificate signed by me as a token of appreciation for participating in the study.

Data Collection Procedures

Qualitative data collection in this study included key informant interviews, FGDs, and policy-related documentation. I carried out the qualitative data collection and acted as a facilitator by managing existing relationships and creating a secure and conformable environment for the respondents (Kothari, 2004).

Data Collection Process

This study used a step-by-step, sequential data collection process that included open-ended interviews with semistructured questionnaires translated from English into Amharic and carefully articulated to guarantee clarity for all participants. The setting of limits for data collection was achieved through sampling and recruitment, through collecting information from interviews, documents, and visual materials, and through protocols for recording information

(Yin, 2014). Therefore, key informant in-depth interviews and FGDs were conducted following these steps:

1. Recruit the key informant interview and FGD participants as discussed in the participants' recruitment section.
2. Present the informed consent form to each participant, allow the participant to ask questions about the form, and then request the participant sign the form.
3. Collect participants' demographic information while posing several icebreaking questions.
4. Pose the main questions and follow-up questions.
5. Following the interview, I requested each participant's availability for further interview questions, if needed.
6. Complete data collection and transcription.

Data Analysis Techniques

Qualitative data analysis began with the collected data as raw data from words and texts that are essentially ongoing and involve synthesis from the key informant interviews, FGDs, and documents, which were arranged into categorical variables and reduced to themes through the process of coding and summarizing (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Data were organized, summarized, and analyzed digitally using Nvivo software tool to find patterns and themes undetectable by merely listening to the recorded audio or reading the transcripts (Nyumba et al., 2018). Creswell and Creswell (2018) explained that data collection, data analysis, and data report writing are interrelated.

Data analysis in this study did not follow a fixed approach; rather, data collection and analysis occurred simultaneously. Data collected qualitatively were transcribed before being classified, grouped, coded, and categorized to generate an understanding of the themes. Due to its creative software design for qualitative analysis of data, this study used Nvivo software (Yin, 2014) for coding text and images, for theme development, and for relating themes. Nvivo

enabled me to work with a wide range of qualitative data with the ability to import, code directly, and analyze.

Data Analysis Process

I used the following steps for the data analysis process, using multiple levels from the specific to the general. First, the data were organized and prepared for analysis by transcribing the interviews, scanning the material, typing the field notes, and arranging the visual material in different categories from the collected data; this provided an opportunity to reflect on the meaning of the information (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Second, the data were read and reread to glean the general ideas, the tone of the participants, and impressions about the depth, credibility, and use of the information. Third, coding began by organizing the data and linking portions of texts with written words in the margins that represent a category. Fourth, a description and themes from the coding process were generated to identify the setting of the people and the categories for theme analysis. Fifth, the description of the themes was represented by mentioning the chronology of events in a detailed discussion of several themes (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

I selected one professional transcriber and translator who speaks *Amharic* and English. They were selected based on the willingness and ethical acceptance to assist in translating and transcribing the collected data from key informant interviewees and FGD discussants for analysis.

Triangulation of the Data

Qualitative research relies on its trustworthiness to determine internal validation. Therefore, before I conducted the data collection, I triangulated my research questions and the purpose of my study with different experts from Addis Abeba and Wachamo in Ethiopia, who evaluated both the questions and the purpose of the study as a relevant topic to respond and contribute to the pressing issues that Africa in general and Ethiopia in particular are facing at the moment.

Moreover, I also consulted with the Peace Ministry, the Ministry of Women and Social Affairs, and the Ministry of Culture and Sports about my research area before I collected the data. These top governmental ministerial offices welcomed the project as feasible, relevant, and pivotal to playing an essential role in the country's wide-ranging sociopolitical and economic reforms and ongoing national dialogue after the war in the northern part of Ethiopia. They also mentioned the importance of this research to enhancing "homegrown knowledge" and the "medemer"—synergy initiative coined by the current prime minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed. Therefore, the triangulation of the data was relevant in its totality.

Credibility and Consistency

The measure of sound qualitative research relies on its trustworthiness to determine internal validation. In qualitative research, researchers check for the accuracy, credibility, consistency, and generalizability of their findings (Gibbs, 2007). Creswell and Creswell (2018) noted that in a qualitative research study, one must use procedural perspective strategies to check the accuracy of the findings and convince the readers of their accuracy. Reliability in qualitative research is also signified by whether the approach is consistent and generalizable (Gibbs, 2007).

Gibbs (2007) underlined qualitative reliability by the following four procedures, which I employed: (a) reading and rereading transcripts (reading and rereading) to make sure that they are free from mistakes, (b) making sure that there is no drift in the definition of codes during the process of coding, (c) coordinating communication among the coders (one coder is enough to check the transcribed data) by regular documented meetings and sharing the analyses, and (d) cross-checking the codes of different researchers by comparing results that are derived independently (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Protection of Human Subjects

Ethical considerations, especially the protection of human subjects, were prioritized in this qualitative research design. While conducting a study, a primary duty must be to respect the

rights, needs, values, and desires of the informants (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Locke et al., 2013; Marshall & Rossman, 2014; Yin, 2014). According to Armiger (1977), informed consent refers to how a participant's right to autonomy is protected. Because the data collection process in this study included key informant interviews and FGDs, informed consent forms were provided to all participants with sufficient explanation of the overall objective of the study.

Moreover, all interviews were administered according to the free will of the respondents; that is, they were informed that they may decline to answer any question posed. In addition, case stories were presented using pseudonyms to maintain the confidentiality of the study participants, and every effort was made to avoid unnecessary bias and risk. This study qualified as a minimal risk study because it represents no greater risk than that incurred in the daily routines of the study participants. The interviews took approximately 45–60 minutes. Some participants experienced some fatigue or boredom during the process due to their advanced age. To prevent this, the interview time was flexible, and the participant could discontinue the interview for any reason at any time. I assured the key informants and FDG participants that the information they gave would be used only for research purposes.

In addition, I diligently followed the IRB principles and guidelines at Pepperdine University. I obtained approval from the IRB committee at Pepperdine University before any data collection process took place (see Appendix C). Required information including the study purpose, methods, data collection process, analysis, interpretation, and plan for maintaining the confidentiality and ethics of the participants were included in the IRB application. After receiving IRB approval, recruitment began, and participants were fully informed of the procedures and risks that could occur in the research project before they agreed to take part (Roberts & Hyatt, 2019). This involved informing each participant of the study's purpose and its data collection process and obtaining written informed consent. Participants were reminded that their participation was entirely voluntary and that they had the option to leave the study at any time without penalty.

Participants were informed that their recorded responses to the study questions were strictly confidential, as were their demographic information and identities. According to Roberts and Hyatt (2019), digital recording raises ethical concerns during data collection. The authors suggested that researchers should first obtain permission to record from the participants and explain how the recordings will be used, stored, and ultimately destroyed after five years under IRB policies. Therefore, with the participants' consent, participant interviews were recorded and then transferred to my personal laptop computer. All collected electronic data were kept in password-secured folders on my hard drive for analysis. The data will be destroyed within five years of the study's completion.

A further risk that could have occurred, both while analyzing data and at the time of the transcription of the interviews, was the emotional distress I experienced while working with the material, so I selected one professional transcriber and translator who speaks Amharic and English. They were selected based on their willingness and ethical acceptance to assist in translating and transcribing the collected data from key informant interviewees and FGD discussants for analysis.

However, I had to listen to the audio again and again to cross-check if the transcriber had accurately transcribed the interviews. In addition, during the analysis I sought out an external panel of experts to cross-check the analysis's credibility and validity. Listening to the interviews, with their emotionally challenging topics, took me back to the interview situation and the feelings I had suppressed at that time. Furthermore, writing up the interviews and translating them from Amharic into English was also challenging. The responsibility of deciding what to leave out while feeling an obligation to report everything is overwhelming (Brounéus, 2011). At these moments, I shared my feelings of fatigue and anxiety with those close to me, including my family, friends, and the dissertation chair.

Regarding the incentives, the overall goal of this study was to obtain information from key informants who have unique experiences, attitudes, perceptions, and beliefs related to the

topic of the study. No remuneration was provided to the participants; however, possible benefits to the participants included traditional foods, money for transportations, and types of clothing that are considered signs of respect. In addition, participation in the study provided them with a greater awareness of their leadership skills and responsibilities as national elders of Ethiopia. Further, the participants greatly appreciated receiving a written recognition letter signed by me.

Chapter Summary

This study used a qualitative research approach with an explanatory case study design. I employed interviews with key informants, FGDs, and observation to gather data from primary data sources. Informants were selected using purposive and quota sampling methods with a nonprobability sampling technique. Thematic analysis was used for analyzing data. In addition, while conducting this research, ethical considerations regarding the human subjects were given high priority by obtaining written informed consent for all participant data collection and best practices regarding participants' demographic information, identities, and data collection and storage, according to the notice of approval for human research (see note in Appendix D) about IRB principles and guidelines at Pepperdine University.

Chapter 4: Findings

This chapter presents findings from all data gathered from key informants interviews and FGDS by focusing on the main research questions. The policy-related documents regarding ICRMs and their institutions have supported the data gathered from Key informants and FGD to understand the barriers, as perceived by Ethiopia's national elders and Ethiopia's women ambassadors of peace, to revitalizing ICRMs and incorporating them within the federal criminal justice system of Ethiopia.

There were five main research questions:

- RQ1: What are or are not the elders' perspectives on how effectively Indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms work locally in Ethiopia?
- RQ2: How do or do not Ethiopia's national elders perceive the institutionalizing of multiethnic Indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms within Ethiopia's federal criminal justice system?
- RQ3: In what ways do or do not Ethiopia's national elders perceive Ethiopia's ethnocentric/monoethnocratic governance system as lacking the qualities necessary for an inclusive, united, democratic, and economically strong nation?
- RQ4: How do or do not Ethiopia's national elders perceive the role of women in promoting peace and unity in Ethiopia?
- RQ5: In what ways do or do not Ethiopian elders believe that future generations in Ethiopia can ensure the sustainability of Indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms?

Twenty key informant interview participants addressed RQs 1–3. RQs 4–5 were addressed by 15 women ambassadors of peace and 14 regional and local elders—a total of 29 focus group participants who attended in four separate groups. To achieve the study's objective using responses to these five research questions, the data were collected, transcribed, organized by category, and coded. In this chapter, the results are organized thematically

according to each research question.

Demographic Information for Key Informants/Focus Group Discussions

Each participant was assigned a unique code with a designation that identified their ethnic group, for example, HKII- Hadiya Key Informant Interview. In addition, each ethnic group confers different titles on its elders based on their deep knowledge of traditional law and their practical experience applying ICRMs. The nomination of elders relies primarily on their experience and acceptance by the broader community rather than the individual's age. The following are key informant position descriptions of national elders as defined by each ethnic group:

- *Aba Gada*: the title given to an Oromo or Hadiya elder who is considered a “father,” which means guardian over all the democratic traditional institutions of Oromo ethnic groups. He is nominated and/or elected by the broader ethnic community and can serve up to eight years.
- *Berkefat*: the title given to a Hadiya elder who plays the role of opening the meeting with agenda during the conflict resolution process.
- *Coordinator*: the title given to an elder who is a vice leader, father, or guardian of the democratic traditional institutions of his ethnic group.
- *Gard*: the title given to a Hadiya elder who possesses a deep knowledge of traditional law and extensive experience in the use of ICRMs. A Gard can transfer his title and authority to his immediate male family member.
- *Gogotta*: the title given to a Kambata or Tembaro national elder who is considered a “father” which means guardian over all the democratic traditional institutions of his ethnic group, based on the age of the elder.

- *Leader*: the title given to a Sebat Bet Gurage or Amhara national elder who leads the Sebat Bet Gurage's traditional institutions. He's also a "father" guardian who ensures the wellbeing of the democratic traditional institutions of his ethnic group.
- *Motte*: the title given to a Sidamo national elder who is considered a 'father', which means guardian over all his ethnic group and its traditional institutions. A Motte can transfer his power to his immediate male family member when he is too old or too physically weak to exercise his duties.
- *Secretary*: the title given to an elder who takes notes and guides the meeting agenda during the conflict resolution process.

The following Table 4, the key informants' demographic informations were outlined.

Table 4

Interviews—Demographics of Key Informants (National Elders)

| Pseudonym | Gender | Age | Education | Marital status | Position | Ethnic Group |
|-----------|--------|-----|---------------|----------------|---------------------------|------------------|
| HKII-1 | Male | 72 | High school | Married | Garad | Hadiya |
| HKII-2 | Male | 66 | High school | Married | Berkefat Digna | Hadiya |
| HKII-3 | Male | 70 | BM | Married | Aba Gada | Hadiya |
| HKII-4 | Male | 64 | MA | Married | Berkefat | Hadiya |
| OKII-1 | Male | 65 | BA | Married | Aba Gada | Oromo |
| GKII-1 | Male | 85 | Elementary | Married | Elders' Coord. | Gurage Sebat Bet |
| GKII-2 | Male | 62 | BM | Married | National Elder | Gurage Sebat Bet |
| GKII-3 | Male | 77 | BM | Married | Leader | Gurage Sebat Bet |
| AKII-1 | Male | 77 | Middle school | Married | Leader | Amhara |
| AKII-2 | Male | 75 | BM | Married | Elder | Amhara |
| KKII-1 | Male | 83 | Elementary | Married | Leader | Kembata |
| KKII-2 | Male | 70 | Elementary | Married | Gogota (father of elders) | Kembata |
| AFKII-1 | Male | 78 | Elementary | Married | Elder | Afar |

| Pseudonym | Gender | Age | Education | Marital status | Position | Ethnic Group |
|-----------|--------|-----|-------------|----------------|--------------------------|--------------|
| GAKII-1 | Male | 61 | MBA | Married | Elder Coord. | Gamo |
| GAKII-2 | Male | 62 | MBA | Married | Leader | Gamo |
| GAKII-3 | Male | 50 | MBA | Married | Elders' Secretary | Gamo |
| SKII-1 | Male | 48 | High school | Married | Motte (father of elders) | Sidama |
| SKII-2 | Male | 56 | Elementary | Married | Elder | Sidama |
| SKII-3 | Male | 45 | MBA | Married | Elder | Sidama |
| SKII-4 | Male | 56 | Elementary | Married | Elder | Sidama |

In the following Table 5, focus group demographic information were detailed.

Table 5

Focus Group Discussion—Demographics

| Pseudonym | Age | Education | Work Exp in Years | Position | Ethnic Group |
|---|-----|--------------|-------------------|--------------------------|--------------|
| <i>Women Peace Ambassadors- Focus Group 1</i> | | | | | |
| WAP FGD-1 | 39 | High school | 2 | Peace Ambassador | Amhara |
| WAP FGD -2 | 65 | High school | 4 | Peace Ambassador | Amhara |
| WAP FGD-3 | 38 | High school | 4 | Peace Ambassador | Tigray |
| WAP FGD -4 | 41 | First degree | 4 | Peace Ambassador Leader | Amhara |
| WAP FGD -5 | 49 | First degree | 4 | Peace Ambassador Manager | Amhara |
| WAP FGD -6 | 39 | First degree | 2 | Peace Ambassador | Oromo |
| WAP FGD -7 | 45 | High school | 2 | Peace Ambassador | Oromo |
| <i>Women Peace Ambassadors- Focus Group 2</i> | | | | | |

| Pseudonym | Age | Education | Work Exp in Years | Position | Ethnic Group |
|----------------------------------|-----|------------------|----------------------|---------------------|--------------|
| WAP FGD -8 | N/A | First degree | 4 | Peace Ambassador | Oromo |
| WAP FGD -9 | 50 | High school | 4 | Peace Ambassador | Amara |
| WAP FGD 10 | 40 | High school | 4 | Peace Ambassador | Tigre |
| WAP FGD 11 | 43 | High school | 4 | Peace Ambassador | Oromo |
| WAP FGD 12 | 62 | First degree | 4 | Peace Ambassador | Amara |
| WAP FGD 13 | 45 | High school | 4 | Peace Ambassador | Amara |
| WAP FGD 14 | 61 | Middle school | 4 | Peace Ambassador | Amara |
| <i>Men-Elders- Focus Group 1</i> | | | | | |
| SEFGD-1 | 65 | Elementary | 20 | Elder | Sidama |
| SEFGD-2 | 30 | Elementary | 10 | Elder | Sidama |
| SEFGD-3 | 82 | Elementary | 25 | Elder | Sidama |
| SEFGD-4 | 42 | Elementary | 10 | Elder | Sidama |
| SEFGD-5 | 35 | Elementary | 8 | Elder | Sidama |
| SEFGD-6 | 48 | Diploma | 15 | Elder | Sidama |
| SEFGD-7 | 49 | Degree | 10 | Elder | Sidama |
| SEFGD-8 | 79 | Diploma | 30 | Elder | Sidama |
| <i>Men-Elders- Focus Group 2</i> | | | | | |
| TEFGD-1 | 70 | Elementary | 2 | Elder | Tembaro |
| TEFGD-2 | 80 | High school | 18 | Elder | Tembaro |
| TEFGD-3 | 85 | Elementary | 32 | Elder | Tembaro |
| TEFGD-4 | 75 | Elementary | 23 | Elder | Tembaro |
| TEFGD-5 | 65 | High school | 19 | Elder | Tembaro |
| TEFGD-6 | 68 | High school | 15 | Elder | Tembaro |
| TEFGD-7 | 72 | High school | 23 | Elder | Tembaro |

Results

In this section, the main findings of the data collection and analysis conducted for this study are reported concisely and objectively. The results are organized by research question,

and for each research question, by theme. The key informant interviews and FGDs participants in the chapter were cited as: (Pseudonym code and place of interview).

Research Question 1

RQ1 was, what are or are not the elders' perspectives on how effectively Indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms function at the local level in Ethiopia?. This question addressed 20 Key informants' interview data. Therefore, the following two themes were used to address the question: theme 1 was, elder mediation works by facilitating restorative justice, and theme 2 was, elder mediation is widely accepted, transparent, and effective in preventing escalation of conflicts.

RQ1/Theme 1: Elder Mediation Works By Facilitating Restorative Justice. Table 6 includes the six codes mentioned a total of 51 times during 20 key informant interviews that derived Theme 1. The codes were (a) court-ordered mediation, (b) elder mediation involves seeing both sides, (c) elders seek a cause of conflict, (d) parties that refuse to reconcile leave region, (e) restorative justice, and (f) social pressure to submit to elder negotiation.

Table 6

Theme 1 Codes

| Codes | <i>n</i> | % | Total excerpts |
|--|----------|-----|----------------|
| Court-ordered mediation | 3 | 15% | 3 |
| Elder mediation involves seeing both sides | 6 | 30% | 6 |
| Elders seek a cause of conflict | 8 | 40% | 10 |
| Parties that refuse to reconcile leave region | 1 | 5% | 1 |
| Restorative justice | 15 | 75% | 20 |
| Social pressure to submit to elder negotiation | 9 | 45% | 11 |

Note. *N* = 20

All key informants stated that ICRMs have existed for centuries in Ethiopia and have guided Ethiopians in times of frequent changes, affecting the durability of the ethnocentric

governmental system. Elders are also aware of the consequences of these conflicts, which hamper everyday life in the country. They fully understand that they can avert, manage, and resolve problems by employing ICRMs based on the process of restorative justice. Over the years, governmental structural changes have led to sociopolitical, economic, and environmental devastation compounded by an elevated level of trauma, anger, hatred, bitterness, ethnic hostilities, refugee crises, and property loss, as indicated by one of the key informants: “First, we need to comprehensively understand the type and cause of the conflict. Most of the conflicts are related to socio-economic, political, and environmental issues, which have wounded the people of Ethiopia badly” (HKII-1, HOSSANA).

At these times, in particular, the ICRMs employed by Ethiopia's traditional elders in their leadership roles have restabilized, reshaped, and reintegrated the lives of individuals, families, and communities that experience frequent conflicts related to borderlands, property damage, marital issues, and inheritance rights at the local, regional, and national levels. According to informants, elders employ victim-offender mediation, driven by their personal experience, perceptions, and emotions. They aim to transform a conflict by reintegrating the offender into the community, as stated by the following informant: ICRMs are vital tools in the community for solving conflicts, including family, borderland, car accidents and conflicts between one tribal group and another. So now, when one tribe fights with another, local elders call us to see the cases. We make all the investigations and ask them what has happened, how this has happened, in which circumstances this happened, and whether it was deliberate or accidental. We ask the victims and the wrongdoers, the community, and the local elders (SKII-1, Hawassa).

In the view of participants in this study, restorative justice practices have helped to create auspicious conditions for peace and harmony. This begs the question of why Ethiopia's traditional elders can resolve conflicts and bring about peaceful conditions when the government cannot. According to informants, elders have the opportunity to understand comprehensively disputes that arise in their communities on the spot at the grassroots level,

enabling them to handle conflicts ranging from serious crimes such as murder to minor offenses. According to elders, at present, even though the ICRMs are not legally recognized by the formal justice system, elders can request that a case be dealt with in a local traditional court, and any government court will allow the elders to take over the case. As one informant indicated: “Even if the case goes to a normal court, it will accept our procedure, and the court will let us see the problem in our Indigenous way of resolving the issue” (SKII-3, Hawassa).

The implication here is that out of convenience and for practical purposes, government officials entrust traditional elders with the authority to resolve local problems, as it is more difficult for government courts to identify the source of local conflicts and address them effectively. Government officials, courts, and lawmakers alike realize that the elders live within the community, are more familiar with the local culture, are better able to deal with parties in conflict, and can impose symbolic sanctions on wrongdoers. The formal system of justice in Ethiopia is designed to uphold only intangible legal and retaliatory principles or the legal principle of retribution, which in most cases ignites further resentment, conflict, and the removal of offenders from society, often by imposing lengthy prison sentences. In contrast, the elders’ non-adversarial, restorative justice-oriented, victim-offender mediation process is based on reconciliation, a fact noted by the following informant: Indigenous conflict resolution is person-oriented; what we do with the mechanisms is to restore the relationship of two or more people that have been broken because of the conflict. We bring them back to the community because both victims and wrongdoers are needed in the community. (GAKII-1, Arba-minchi)

As practiced by the elders, restorative justice includes acknowledgment of the truth of the victim by the offender through symbolic or material compensation, an oath of non-retaliation and prevention of further disputes between the conflicting parties, and the reintegration of the offender into the community through healing rituals, a celebration of closure, and the regaining of peace in the community. One informant described: “We transform the conflict by bringing the

perpetrators to the victim's home so that the family member of the victim can hug the wrongdoers and make peace while eating and drinking together. That means we bring them back to the community” (SKII-1 Hawassa).

When applying their traditional conflict resolution mechanisms, the elders consider the prevailing conditions and the nature of the conflict on the ground. For minor, less complex social issues, community elders mediate by providing helpful, promising ideas for an agreement without sanctioning offenders. In this way, disputants can reach a consensus and conclude a final agreement. If an agreement is not finalized, the elders encourage the contending parties to resume mediation by bringing in additional close family members from both sides. As arbitrators, the elders invite both parties to express their opposing ideas, take note of their arguments, and then make binding decisions. The elders enjoy traditional autonomy with the power to uphold the social order of society through fair and reasonable judgment, sanctions, and compensation; however, even when perpetrators disagree with the elders' decisions, they accept them as binding out of fear of a lifelong curse.

All respondents in the study agreed that Ethiopian society generally fears a curse. Any misfortune that befalls an individual or family, such as a death, crop failure, injury, drought, famine, severe storms, or swarms of locusts, is attributed to the arrival of a curse. Ascertaining the truth in any dispute prevents a curse and opens the door to resolving conflicts in such a way that the opposing parties will mutually consent to an elder's judgment. As the elders conduct their conflict mediation in the public spaces of the community, the search for truth engenders trust and flexibility, particularly when sanctions on the guilty party are softened based on the offender's willingness to repent followed by a welcome back into the community.

Elders from different ethnic groups employ a variety of mediation processes in their respective traditional institutions. For instance, elders in the Gurage Sebat-Bet ethnic group in the Southern Nation, Nationalities, and Peoples region of Ethiopia rely on two widely used, centuries-old institutions: *joka kitcha* and *gurdanna*. According to the informants, these

traditional legal institutions determine the punishments when societal rules are transgressed. Similar traditional legal institutions exist for the Oromo (the *gada* system), the Hadiya and Kembatta (the *seera* social institution), the Gamo ethnic group (*dubusha*), and the Sidama (*affini*). Conflict resolution mediation also differs in practice. Ethnic groups such as the Oromo, Amhara, and Afar conduct their final reconciliation process by a river or lake, which is carefully chosen because water is the symbol of peacemaking. Oromo elders finalize this process by providing compensation, or *gum*, a strategic tool that restores peace and reintegrates both victims and perpetrators into the community.

For the Hadiya, Kembata, Gurage, Gamo, and Sidamo ethnic groups, the final reconciliation process is carried out in front of the victim's house with certain rituals, such as slaughtering animals or holding fresh grass, or by women *randicho* in Gurage culture (*karichcha* among Sidama) sprinkling honey mixed with water on the offenders, the victims, and their families. In short, Ethiopia's ICRMs undergird political administration, social interaction, and means of conflict resolution within each cultural society. Informants affirmed that relations between individuals, tribes, and territorial units are regulated by these institutions, which are purely democratic in that every citizen has a right to express themselves, be heard, and be given attention. Most of the informants interviewed strongly believe that conflict resolution processes are integral, time-proven, accessible societal conventions that foster forgiveness, reconciliation, and improvement of social relationships by preventing, mitigating, managing, and resolving conflicts within and between ethnic groups and within communities. Moreover, they asserted that ICRMs are important tools for removing the root causes of conflict and ensuring the harmony necessary for socioeconomic development.

RQ1/Theme 2: Elder Mediation Is Widely Accepted, Transparent, and Effective in Preventing Escalation of Conflicts. Table 7 includes the six codes mentioned a total of 66 times during 20 key informant interviews that derived Theme 2. The codes were (a) elder mediation is cost-free, (b) elder mediation is acceptable to Ethiopians, (c) elder mediation is

quick, (d) mediation is local, (e) mediation is transparent and public, and (f) mediation is collaborative

Table 7

Theme 2 Codes

| Codes | <i>n</i> | % | Total excerpts |
|---|----------|-----|----------------|
| Elder mediation is cost-free | 9 | 45% | 11 |
| Elder mediation is acceptable to Ethiopians | 14 | 70% | 16 |
| Elder mediation is quick | 7 | 35% | 8 |
| Mediation is local | 9 | 45% | 9 |
| Mediation is transparent and public | 7 | 35% | 8 |
| Mediation is collaborative | 11 | 55% | 14 |

Note. *N* = 20

Elders living in areas of frequent discord have long been engaged in conflict mediation processes and are culturally, spiritually, and philosophically interconnected and interdependent with one another in their efforts to maintain peace in their communities. They are also well aware that formal legal procedures are often ineffective in resolving conflicts. Informants in this study maintained that ICRMs have long been accepted by most Ethiopians in rural communities regardless of age, gender, occupation, and region and by various institutions, including local governmental administration at the kebele level. These informants all agree that the 80% of Ethiopians who are agrarians and who dedicate most of their time and energy to farming and animal husbandry do not want to waste time traveling far from their homes, usually on foot, to the courts in the cities when traditional elders and parties in a conflict live close by. In such rural and remote areas, where the formal justice system does not operate, traditional courts administered by elders employ ICRMs to dispense justice, as indicated by a key informant:

In most of our region, people don't use a formal legal system; they don't know it. They go to the Gada System, and Aba Gadas (fathers of Gada) and elders should resolve any

conflict that arises in the community. For example, if you go to Borana, Tulema, Arisi, or anywhere else in the region's rural areas, people in those regions need to learn the governmental structure. In the same way, when you go to different places, the priority is given to elders rather than the governmental structures. (OKII-1, Addis Ababa)

Informants explained that in these communities, people believe these mechanisms and the guidance of their traditional elders have more benefit for them in terms of cost, energy, and time than that provided by formal courts. In addition, conflicting parties believe that the elders possess more knowledge about the causes of disputes than do the other courts.

Subtheme 2.1. In Preventing the Escalation of Conflicts, Indigenous Conflict

Resolution Mechanisms Are Transparent. Most informants believed that ICRMs, or mediation, is transparent because all aspects of the mediation process are conducted in the presence of the offender, the victim, their families, and tribal members from the opposing sides. Elders in the study asserted that transparency in the process of conflict resolution is essential. Open hearings are conducted in public, where most of the community can participate and hear the negotiations, and elders render judgments after receiving testimony from both sides and in full view of the public.

The resolution process starts with the perpetrator's immediate family and close relatives sacrificing an animal, a necessary precondition for initiating the peace process and for the victim's burial, without which the victim's family may resort to retaliation. Once these steps are completed, further investigation is carried out, usually for up to 30 to 40 days. The elders advise the parties in conflict to avoid regular contact to prevent possible reprisals and counter-reprisals, and clan members of the victim are held to a solemn promise not to take any action against the perpetrator(s). In fact, in most Ethiopian ethnic groups, perpetrators accused of murder must conceal themselves for a time to avoid escalating the conflict because the victim's family may pursue the alleged murderer to avenge the crime. According to the informants, when serious

offenses such as murder or injury occur, more elders are needed to mediate a conflict to ensure greater impartiality.

Once the initial investigations are carried out in private, open-air meetings—*dubusha* (in the Gamo culture), *affini* (in Sidama), *seera* (in Hadiya and Kembata cultures), and *joka kicha* (in Gurage Sebat Bet)—are held to verify evidence from witness accounts and testimonials based on argumentative presentations by the conflicting parties. Then, the elders' judgments are announced in public with all participants present. Describing this conflict resolution process in the Gada system, an Oromo elder explained, "We decide after asking opinions from the conflicting parties, tribal elders, and family members and make sure that this person will be corrected for his mistake and reintegrated into the community" (OKII-1, Addis Ababa).

Inclusiveness is a core component of the restorative justice process through the application of ICRMs, as attested to by study informants: "We don't attend the conflicting parties individually; we attend them in the process of the conflicting parties and the community. We solve the problem together with different elders in open places" (HKII-1&2, Hosanna).

Subtheme 2.2. Indigenous Conflict Resolution Mechanisms, or Mediation, Are Effective in Preventing the Escalation of Conflicts. Due to the frequency of local, regional, and national conflicts in Ethiopia, many people are accused of both major and minor crimes. Therefore, relying only on the formal justice system, which, according to the informants, is weak, incompetent, corrupt, and limited in its investigative capacity, makes justice significantly longer and slower. Furthermore, formal courts are usually expensive and unaffordable for the majority of Ethiopians.

Because of these deficiencies, key informants and FGD participants agreed that, in most cases, it was more advantageous to pursue justice utilizing ICRMs. Informant explained: We save the conflicting parties from the normal court, which is costly, unfair, far from where people live, weak, and takes a lot of time to resolve problems. We also save

them from police stations because, before they present themselves, the conflicting parties should be at police stations for at least 48 hours. (HKII-2, Hosanna)

Informants further maintained that justice decided by the elders was fairer because ICRMs are applied at the grassroots level, focus more on identifying the cause of disputes, and are concerned with discerning the truth. Elders and their communities strongly believe that upholding the truth and respecting facts contribute to a good life while ignoring the truth adversely affects smooth and acceptable social interaction and a well-regulated way of life. To resolve a dispute, an elder can threaten the conflicting parties by saying, “You receive blessings if you speak the truth, but if you hide the truth, you and your generation will be in trouble.” In other words, truth-telling is more than an obligation, it also invokes a spiritual dimension (GAKII-3, Arba-minchi).

In addition to the respect for truth, these mechanisms de-escalate conflict in other ways. According to one informant:

ICRMs focus on the interconnectedness and coexistence between ethnic groups by creating trust, promoting forgiveness and reconciliation, and reinforcing the restorative justice system, and there is no problem concerning ethnic coexistence and shared values and beliefs. (GAKII-3, Arba-minchi)

As a result, ICRMs have not only drawn the attention of the broader community in Ethiopia but also the Ethiopian government, which has decided to adopt and mainstream these mechanisms in areas of the country that are experiencing conflicts.

The example most often mentioned by study participants is the intervention by Gamo elders in 2018 to prevent retaliation after dozens of Gamo citizens were killed and thousands displaced from the city of Buryau, a subjacent city of Addis Ababa, in what appeared to be an incident of ethnic cleansing by Oromo youth. As youth groups in Arba-minchi, Gamo, and Gofa, in southwestern Ethiopia, prepared to attack Oromo banks and businesses, Gamo elders, kneeling symbolically and holding freshly cut grass in their hands, intervened, begging the

youths not to attack the Oromos, thereby preventing further bloodshed. According to the informants, this would not have been possible if Ethiopian law enforcement had been called in.

Research Question 2

RQ2 was, how do or do not Ethiopia's national elders perceive the institutionalizing of multiethnic Indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms within Ethiopia's federal criminal justice system?

RQ2 was addressed using interview data from 20 key informants. The following themes were used to address the question: theme 3 was, perceptions of institutionalization are positive, and theme 4 was, barriers to institutionalizing ICRMs include vested political and financial interests in the for-profit adversarial court system.

RQ2/Theme 3: Perceptions of Institutionalization Are Positive. Table 8 indicates that theme 3 was derived from four codes mentioned a total of 58 times during 20 key informant interviews. The codes were (a) Indigenous conflict resolution should be taught in schools, (b) Indigenous conflict resolution should be used for all case types, (c) positive perception of institutionalization, and (d) relationships between federal and traditional systems should be cooperative.

Table 8

Theme 3 Codes

| Code | <i>n</i> | % | Total excerpts |
|---|----------|-----|----------------|
| Indigenous conflict resolution should be taught in schools | 6 | 30% | 8 |
| Indigenous conflict resolution should be used for all case types | 7 | 35% | 7 |
| Positive perception of institutionalization | 18 | 90% | 25 |
| Relationships between federal and traditional systems should be cooperative | 12 | 60% | 18 |

Note. *N* = 20

Although no formal established legal or institutional framework lends official recognition to ICRMs and their institutions, Ethiopian government officials routinely rely on the wisdom, leadership, and social acceptance of traditional national elders for the success of their political endeavors due to limitations in official outreach to rural settlements and their acceptance by these communities. Often, elders are invited by government officials to participate in conflict management and resolution, a sure sign that the government recognizes the pivotal role that national elders and their ICRMs play in advancing peace and stability. National elders and ICRMs have always helped local, regional, and federal government officials settle complex disputes between ethnic groups, which otherwise would have had dire consequences for the country's sociopolitical, economic, and environmental development.

At times, government officials and the formal legal system play a minimal role in resolving conflicts and addressing pressing societal problems compared to the efforts of Ethiopian national elders and their traditional institutions. All 20 key informants agreed with the idea that there is an urgent need to institutionalize and empower ICRMs and their institutions within the federal criminal justice system. Moreover, elders maintained that the government should not only consider these traditional restorative justice processes as a part of the formal justice system but also create a structural framework that supports traditional leaders and protects their institutions to ensure lasting peace and prosperity, not only in the countryside but in the cities.

Elders acknowledged that while the federal Constitution recognizes the settlement of disputes through customary laws and religious-based adjudication on matters arising between individuals, the federal criminal justice system is limited in its ability to deal with routine conflicts occurring in rural and remote localities. Cognizant of this, the government encouraged the application of alternative dispute resolution mechanisms in civil cases and ethnic conflicts that take place at the local level. Though Article 34 of the federal Constitution allows the parties involved in a conflict, based on mutual consent, to seek alternative dispute resolution

mechanisms to resolve marital, personal, and family disputes, the elders argued that the government should also afford them full recognition using federal legislation (Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia Proclamation No. 1/1995).

One way to formally recognize these mechanisms is to incorporate them into the country's educational system so that Ethiopian youth can learn and sustain these valuable practices. Informants from different ethnic groups noted, "Educational policy has to include these mechanisms so that children should learn from these values and cultural endowment" (AKII-1, Bahir-Dar), and another elder added, "Cultural values, practices, and beliefs should be promoted, and our young generation should be instructed" (SKII-1, Hawassa). For this to happen, both bottom-up and top-down educational initiatives are paramount. One informant asserted, "Especially, our next generation should learn at the higher educational level. Academicians have to do research and write it to transmit these valuable tools to the younger generation" (Samara; AFKII-1).

Institutionalizing ICRMs and their traditional institutions within the federal governmental structure will pave the way for needed social change. Therefore, government leaders and lawmakers must focus on ways that the formal justice system and the traditional system of justice can work together cooperatively, complementing and contributing to the constructive evolution of each other. As one informant asserted:

The policymakers, experts, researchers, and academicians have to be involved in this process to justify the importance of these mechanisms and it will be useful for strengthening the country's legal system. There should be cooperation between the government and traditional institutions. (AKII- 1, Addis Ababa)

Comparing the formal legal system to the practice of ICRM, key informants delineated specific areas of cooperation, competition, and overlaps between the two approaches to justice. Areas of cooperation include conflict prevention, mitigation, management, resolution, mobilizing the community to achieve development goals, and settlement of civil litigation cases.

On the other hand, a conflict between Ethiopia's formal legal system and the ICRMs when, for example, the members of a local community fail to comply with the decision of a traditional court, violate the norms and values of their traditional elders by appealing to the formal courts, and receive a different judgment in their favor, thereby undermining the legitimacy of the elders. In such cases, informants object to unnecessary government intervention and interference, which puts the government at odds with local communities. Informants insisted that it is vital to maintain the autonomy of ICRMs and their unchallenged authority to resolve conflicts at the local level as one elder from Kembatta ethnic group stated,

Our decision is autonomous even if the case is murder, no policemen should interfere in our decision unless we allow them to, we decide after asking opinions from the conflicting parties, tribal elders, and family members and make sure that this person will be corrected for his mistake and Those wrongdoers are judged by correctness. In fact, correctness does not hurt anyone, and it allows them to grow and live together peacefully. (KKII-1, Shinsicho)

The elders uniformly agreed that ICRMs are essential tools in their role as adjudicators and necessary for maintaining the high respect and recognition they receive from their communities as stated by the elder "the larger community of the country respect us, they know that we work only for the wellbeing of the community. We work based on the truth" (SKII-4, Hawassa).

Moreover, the informants recommended that the government consult with traditional elders at the national level and design ways of deploying these elders to address societal problems that the federal legal system has been unable to resolve. Informants maintain that this could be accomplished by enacting legislation that would give ICRMs and their institutions a more critical role in cementing good governance, peace, stability, and development in rural communities throughout Ethiopia as it stated by the elder from Afar "...however, if the government makes all efforts to bring these issues to the legislative bodies and be approved, it

will be good” (AKII-2, Semera). Hence, a comprehensive approach should be designed to overcome possible challenges to the institutionalization of ICRMs within the Ethiopian formal criminal justice system.

RQ2/Theme 4: Barriers to Institutionalization Include Vested Political and Financial Interests in the For-Profit Adversarial Formal Court System. Table 9 indicates that theme 4 was derived from four codes mentioned a total of 56 times during 20 key informant interviews. The codes were (a) corruption and profiteering, (b) political interference, (c) religious interference, and (d) wrongdoers not imprisoned by elders.

Table 9

Theme 4 Codes

| | <i>n</i> | <i>%</i> | <i>Total excerpts</i> |
|-------------------------------------|----------|----------|-----------------------|
| Corruption and profiteering | 17 | 85% | 24 |
| Political interference | 11 | 55% | 16 |
| Religious interference | 4 | 20% | 5 |
| Wrongdoers not imprisoned by elders | 9 | 45% | 11 |

Note. N = 20

Key informants acknowledged challenges to the formal recognition and institutionalization of ICRMs within the Ethiopian federal legal system. One obstacle is systemic corruption and profiteering. As an example, informants pointed out that the federal courts reach judgments based on evidence obtained from three witnesses. Most of the time, these witnesses are either paid, obligated, or forced by political elites to bear witness without knowing the facts of a case. Commonly, witnesses are close family members or friends of the accused who testify in their favor with little or no familiarity with the specific case. One informant explained:

Normal court only needs three witnesses. Most of the witnesses are false because they do it in reach of money, or they are obliged to do by the politicians or important people. Some

witnesses are the family members of the offender and they don't want to make his or her family be sentenced. A lot of corruption in the legal system of Ethiopia. (HKII-1, Hossana)

In addition, lawyers, judges, and government officials often desire a certain outcome in a trial. They might be bribed and bear false witness. Or they seek to thwart the elders' efforts to block the elders' recognition by the government (AKII-2, Bahir-Dar). Routinely, defendants in both civil disputes and criminal cases are found guilty due to false witness, lack of money, social status, or political influence. Then, the convicted party returns from the formal adjudication process to their home community where the dispute or crime occurred filled with resentment and a desire for retaliation, which often sets off a vicious cycle of violence that can prevail from generation to generation, especially in crimes of murder.

Another challenge to the traditional justice system mentioned by informants is interference by political elites, who exploit the broad popular support for traditional elders to promote unpopular political programs by flattering elders during their political campaigns. One elder stated that during their political campaigns or meetings, they invite us to bless their meetings and remain as an observer of the meetings, they don't allow us to be part of the decision making. Nevertheless, we [elders] should not be manipulated and needed by these politicians only when conflicts arise, but they forget us (SKII-4, Hawassa).

Informants complained that the formal justice system in Ethiopia is manipulated and politicized by politicians who directly or indirectly interfere in the justice system. As one informant stated: "There are also political interests; most conflicts are caused by political elites who don't want peace and stability in the country. As a result, they don't want to hear the truth; they want to manipulate the normal legal system in their favor" (GKII-2, Wolkite). Elders also argued that, frequently, judgments handed down by the formal justice system are neither fair nor just, and those litigants with influential friends or family members associated with the federal courts gain quick judgments in their favor.

Other barriers to institutionalizing ICRMs within the federal criminal justice system were noted by informants in the study. Some corrupt government officials and attorneys refuse to exercise ICRMs in criminal justice cases to delegitimize legal experts who maintain that traditional elders can resolve many legal criminal cases now handled by the formal courts. Informants also pointed out that the content of formal laws and processes in Ethiopia, mainly derived from western jurisprudence, are strange, not clear even to lawyers, and seemingly incompatible with traditional justice practices.

Additionally, there is interference from teachings promoted by western-oriented Christianity in Ethiopia, which often seeks to disparage traditional Ethiopian cultural practices as stated by one informant: “Sidama regional state is full of Protestant Christians, and these Christians don't like the Indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms. These groups of people are creating destruction and want to eliminate a lot. They preach that the young generation should hate cultural values, principles, and beliefs” (SKII-1, Hawassa).

Then, there is the impact of globalization and a mindset conditioned by western-oriented education, which disdains Indigenous cultural values, principles, and practices, with the result that Ethiopia's younger generation has little interest in the values and traditions of Ethiopia and no desire to forge multiethnic cultural symbiosis. As a participant in the study noted, for example: “Our young generation are not following our footsteps, education system in the countries doesn't allow them to maintain our cultural values. Educational system is copied from France, England, and Italy” (GKII-1, Arbaminchi).

Elders, too, are not immune to corruption. According to informants, elders sometimes delay decisions in search of personal profit or political favor, distorting the decision-making process during and after mediation and reconciliation processes. One informant indicated, “That doesn't mean that some of our elders are not being manipulated by political elites, as sometimes they don't do what they are supposed to do. Either they are conditioned by political influence or by money” (HKII-1, Hosanna).

Another challenge mentioned by the informants is attributed to the previous federal government that came to power in 1991 by overthrowing the dictatorial Derg Regime. This government theoretically accepted the 1995 amendment to the constitution that recognized the legitimacy and importance of traditional customary law in family matters but in practice failed to support or empower traditional leaders and institutions. As one informant explained, "Government should strengthen the Indigenous conflict resolution institutions. Indigenous conflict resolution and traditional institutions should be autonomous and not influenced by politicians and government interference" (SKII-1, Hawassa).

A final barrier noted by informants is the lack of a comprehensive policy and strategic direction for the implementation of conflict resolution mechanisms within the peacebuilding framework consistent with the federal and regional state constitutions. Though the federal constitution states that ICRMs and traditional customary law can be used at the local level to adjudicate marital and individual disputes, local government leaders lack the ability and commitment to deploy them in their daily activities. As one informant explained: Another obstacle is political representatives who don't know the rules and regulations. They are not representatives of the people; if they were representatives of the people in the government offices, they would know the needs of the people. They don't have a clear policy orientation to guide the national elders and optimize their pivotal role in peacebuilding (GKII-1, Wolkite). Hence, informants urged the government to explore ways to protect and promote endowed cultural practices, such as conflict resolution mechanisms and traditional institutions that have contributed and continue to contribute significantly to the peace and security of the country.

Research Question 3

RQ3 was, in what ways do or do not Ethiopia's national elders perceive Ethiopia's ethnocentric/monoethnocratic governance system as lacking the qualities necessary for an inclusive, united, democratic, and economically strong nation? This research question addressed using interview data from 20 key informants. Therefore, the following theme was used

to address the question: theme 5, the previous governmental system is perceived as tribally divisive.

RQ3/Theme 5: The Previous Governmental System Is Perceived as Tribally

Divisive. Table 10 indicates that theme 5 was derived from eight codes mentioned a total of 76 times during 20 key informant interviews. The codes were (a) previous system allowed violence, (b) previous system did not resolve conflict resentment, (c) previous system was authoritarian, (d) previous system was tribally divisive, (e) interethnic cohesion was endemic, (f) negative perception of the Derg regime, (g) positive perception of Haile Selassie regime, and (h) TPLF dominates executive decision making.

Table 10

Theme 5 Codes

| Codes | <i>n</i> | % | Total excerpts |
|--|----------|-----|----------------|
| Previous system allowed violence | 7 | 35% | 7 |
| Previous system does not resolve conflict resentment | 4 | 20% | 6 |
| Previous system was authoritarian | 6 | 30% | 7 |
| Previous system was tribally divisive | 16 | 80% | 23 |
| Interethnic cohesion was endemic | 6 | 30% | 7 |
| Negative perception of the Derg regime | 9 | 45% | 11 |
| Positive perception of Haile Selassie regime | 5 | 25% | 6 |
| TPLF dominates executive decision making | 7 | 35% | 9 |

Note. *N* = 20

Most of the informants emphasized that Ethiopia abounds with ethnic tribes and clans based on descent from common ancestors, each group having its language, centuries-old history, and deeply rooted customs and religious and cultural practices. Currently, the Ethiopian nation consists of eleven regional states, each state dominated by a majority ethnic group. Although the constitution of 1991 grants all ethnic groups the right to political self-government, this stipulation was politicized by the TPLF that controlled the federal administration before the

current government of Prime Minister Abiy, creating ethnic tensions nationwide. Referring to this regime, GKII-2 lamented:

Because of the political immaturity in Ethiopia, we are having a lot of conflicts in society. Our country is rich, and we have everything, but we don't have peace because of the political and governmental structure that is based on ethnicity. One obstacle is that the government destroyed our unity by dividing people into ethnic groups.

Although Ethiopians are ethnically divided, most of the people have an ethnically mixed heritage due to intermarriage among ethnic groups and the need to interconnected and interdependent. Culturally speaking, the interconnectedness and coexistence between ethnic groups are remarkable and display a high degree of shared values and beliefs. Ethnic strife in Ethiopia, on the other hand, has been caused by its political leaders, who politicize ethnic differences in their pursuit of power, as noted by GAKII-2: "I understand this [the ethnocentric/monoethnocratic governance system] because I was alive during the regime of Emperor Haile Selassie, the Derg, the EFEDER, and what is now called prosperity."

During the EFEDER, the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front, national unity increasingly deteriorated. People stopped living together harmoniously, and conflicts arose nationwide as divisive ethnic groups competed for power (GAKII-2, Arba-minchi). As a result, Ethiopia became a country burdened by monoethnocratic rule, resulting in deficient policies coupled with incompetent implementation and a lack of constituent support for the betterment of society. This authoritarian regime rejected the participation of other ethnic groups in governing the country, independently presiding over unpopular policies. As one informant reflected:

I understand very well, and I know that there has been authoritarian governance system with the control of everything by one or few people. Especially from the northern part of Ethiopia. We who live in the southern and others part of Ethiopia had been considered as a secondary people. We had to do what they could tell us. We didn't get chance for the political participation and decision-making. (KKII-1, Shinshicho)

A majority of elders in this study believe that most conflicts in Ethiopia arise from the trauma of the unresolved massacres and tragedies caused by a long-standing ethnocentric system of governance that was politically, socially, and economically noninclusive. Disempowered ethnicities struggled to achieve regional autonomy and self-governance, two necessary conditions to mitigate the social, economic, political, and environmental challenges that exist within the country's social institutions. Likewise, most informants agreed that national and regional disintegration, crises of political legitimacy, and ethnic- and religious-based conflicts are all due to the ethnocentric federal governance that dominated the country for years. Some informants argued that conflicts will persist as long as the divisive political culture in the country, a legacy of past regimes, continues to cause regional disintegration within and among neighboring regional states.

Regarding socioeconomic and regional discord in the country, informants noted three leading causes. First was the unfair distribution of wealth caused by the country's ethnocentric governance system, through which the distribution of the budget was controlled by one dominating political party or group that apportioned wealth based largely on race and social stratification. A second source of economic and social conflict is endemic poverty, unemployment, the unstable cost of living, and incompetent management of natural resources, especially land valuation. Informants mentioned students who graduate from universities and lack job opportunities. Frustration and anger then drive them to engage in a variety of illegal activities. Furthermore, the unpredictable, fluctuating cost of living angers the average citizen, who blames the government, which leads to further societal conflict.

A third cause of conflict mentioned by elders is cultural, relating to the disrespect shown by some ethnic and national groups toward the culture, language, and religion of other ethnic groups. Belittling another's culture undermines the interdependence and peaceful coexistence on which national unity and stability in Ethiopia depend. Worse is the historical trauma of ethnic cleansing and the suppression of cultural traditions and language practiced by dominant political

elites in the past, is which now manifest as suspicion and a desire for revenge by formerly oppressed groups.

When asked how conflicts of interest between society and government officials should be managed to forge a united, inclusive, and economically strong nation, elders and informants had differing views. Some elders opined that the power of persuasion is instrumental in convincing government officials to work for the unity of the country rather than for their own personal or ethnic group's interests. They apply persuasion to form and modify people's attitudes, beliefs, and actions based on their reputation for working unceasingly toward peacekeeping and peacebuilding to settle complex conflicts among different ethnic groups, individuals, communities, and regions. One informant highlighted the challenge that elders face in unifying the country:

If the nation doesn't bring about national equality, political equality, economic equality, benefit from development, cultural equality, it will not serve. It will be just a political grumbling when you celebrate the nation and Nationalities of People Day. For example, like the people of Gamo, we are a unique people in the tenth rank of the population in Ethiopia, but we have no representatives in politics; we have no representations in the House of Federation and House of representation of Peoples. In this situation, the governmental structure did not allow us to support our culture, language, and political representation and to support our economy. (GAKII-2, Arba-minchi)

Other elders believe that the need for fair and equitable justice in Ethiopia demands greater commitment on the part of political leaders. Informants suggested that the government welcome increased participation by the elders and their traditional institutions in the formal criminal justice system and should seek the elders' cooperation in creating a united, peaceful, and economically strong nation at the grassroots level. This could be achieved, informants claimed, by elders encouraging people in rural areas to preserve traditional cultural beliefs and to live within the nation's multicultural society more interdependently.

A majority of informants highlighted the following: the role of Indigenous elders in ensuring lasting peace, justice, and sustainable development in Ethiopia by joining together and coordinating with each other for the common good. The need for government officials to work collaboratively with traditional elders in conflict resolution processes helps to support when disputes spiral into violence and exceed the investigative capacity of these officials. And a commitment by government officials to work with the Indigenous courts to prevent ethnic discord and to promote peace and socio-economic development.

Research Question 4

RQ4 was, how do or do not Ethiopia's national elders perceive the role of women peace ambassadors in promoting peace and unity in Ethiopia? This research question was addressed using interview data from 29 individuals divided into four focus groups based on gender and title. Thus, the following theme was used to address the question: theme 6, women are equal with elders in conflict resolution and peacekeeping.

RQ4/Theme 6: Women Are Equal With Elders in Conflict Resolution and Peacekeeping. Table 11 indicates that theme 6 was derived from eight codes mentioned a total of 47 times during focus groups aggregating 29 participants . The codes were (a) elders collaborate with women in mediation, (b) Ethiopian society is patriarchal, (c) Ethiopian women are oriented toward peace, (d) women mediate at the universities, (e) women perform conflict resolution roles, and (f) women's mediation activities are locally oriented. This question was answered using focus group data.

Table 11

Theme 6 Codes

| Code | <i>n</i> | % | Total excerpts |
|--|----------|------|----------------|
| Elders collaborate with women in mediation | 4 | 100% | 11 |
| Ethiopian society is patriarchal | 2 | 50% | 5 |
| Ethiopian women are oriented toward peace | 4 | 100% | 10 |

| Code | <i>n</i> | % | Total excerpts |
|---|----------|------|----------------|
| Women mediate at the universities | 2 | 50% | 4 |
| Women perform conflict resolution roles | 4 | 100% | 13 |
| Women's mediation activities are locally oriented | 2 | 50% | 4 |

Note. *N* = 29

Responses to this question focused on the perceptions of two male elders and two women ambassadors of peace, who participated in the FGDs to help expand this study's analysis of the role women play, specifically the Ethiopian women ambassadors of peace, in promoting peace and unity in Ethiopia and in implementing ICMRs in urban, local, and regional communities throughout the country. While the views expressed often diverged according to gender, both groups recognized the direct and indirect contributions women make to peacekeeping and peacebuilding efforts, as well as the recognition accorded to women peace ambassadors by both the government and the public for their social and economic emancipation.

Both the male elders and women focus group participants underscored the crucial role that women peace ambassadors play in preventing, resolving, and transforming conflicts between individuals and between communities. Women focus group participants emphasized that they contribute in equal measure to men in peacekeeping mediation and are accepted as equals by the male elders, as well as by the government's Ministry of Peace in which they serve. Moreover, they highlighted their efforts in quelling disputes that arise in various social settings—for instance, in stadiums, between political parties, in villages and subcities, and between husbands and wives, as noted by one of the women ambassadors of peace:

We were on the conflict frontline where the two political parties' fighters and one of our members took office and administrated for 21 days. Then after reconciling them, she handed over the office. After that, we discussed peace with the elders and the regional states' presidents. Moreover, we entered the Universities (where the conflict usually

occurs) to talk with the university presidents, the students, and the personnel of the universities. Furthermore, we are called to calm the conflicting parties when conflict happens in the stadium. (WAPFGD-1a, Addis Ababa)

Both the elders and the women peace ambassadors agreed that women possess unique skills and employ special strategies to stabilize volatile situations and promote peace and unity within and among different ethnic groups in Ethiopia. One of the group participants noted:

Women in the whole of Ethiopia use some expressions to convince the conflicting parties. For example, to calm down combatants, they might say, "For the sake of my breast that you suckled when you were born, stop fighting! I prohibit you with the bones of my dead family and for the sake of my womb that did hold you in for nine months, stop fighting." No one can continue fighting if women express these. Because it will be a curse for those who pass over this symbolic expression. (WAPFGD-2b, Addis Ababa)

Women can intervene directly between disputing parties to stop conflicts by deploying a variety of symbolic behaviors available only to women, including stooping down on their knees, dropping their traditional belts, and waving traditional clothes with symbolic meaning in front of disputants. In addition to their peacekeeping and conflict mediation roles, elders in FGDs emphasized that women peace ambassadors play an essential role in families as wives and mothers and contribute to peacebuilding by instructing their children in the ways of peace and by inculcating the norms, principles, sanctions, beliefs, and values of their society. Respondents agreed that Ethiopian women peace ambassadors are responsible for restoring tranquility in their marriages, within their immediate and extended families, and even among their neighbors. According to one group participant:

We are mothers. Simply mother means everything in Ethiopia. We are also sisters and wives. So, we have all the values. Here in Ethiopia, no one disobeys his mother or doesn't listen to his wife and her sister. I know people don't take this as a great value.

We have a habit that we can resolve conflict starting from our home when conflicts occur between husband and sons. (WAPFGD-1, Addis Ababa)

The male elders pointed out that women have much influence in convincing their husbands, children, neighbors, and communities to cease further violence because, by tradition, women are esteemed for their high moral principles in all Ethiopian villages. In addition, according to the respondents, to become an ambassador of peace, a woman must be married, which is of great significance, because Ethiopians believe that women unite two separate clans when they marry into a different clan and so can build a bridge between two communities.

While elders value women for their moral fortitude, their essential role in maintaining stability and harmony within their communities, and their effective participation in conflict mediation and peacekeeping, they continue to assert traditional patriarchal, male-dominant attitudes and practices. For instance, women peace ambassadors are permitted to use conflict resolution mechanisms only in family settings and related rituals, and while women do participate in and influence the process of conflict resolution, men are totally in control; women are not acknowledged for any outcomes of the resolution process.

Women ambassadors of peace in this study were cognizant of prevailing societal attitudes toward women and the limitations imposed on their participation in peace-building processes, which also exclude them from the opportunity to define and address their apprehensions and ignore their experience and knowledge of conflict resolution. Yet, they also maintained that their position in Ethiopian society has been strengthened by the perception that they are natural peacemakers, more pacific than men, and often considered models of morality and sanctity in their activities as peacemakers. SEFGD-3, Hawassa commented on women as peacemakers:

A woman who resolves conflict is a woman who manages herself, has to be the wife of the elders, respects others, accepts what she is told to do, and the one who is accepted by society. Moreover, the one who humbles herself and respects others, advises

goodness, and opposes theft and adultery is considered a peace ambassador. This is because peace ambassador women are honest, hate wrongdoing, and have influence and acceptance.

The women ambassadors also had the clear conviction that they must empower themselves to overcome the restrictions that prevent them from receiving the recognition for peacekeeping that they deserve. WAPFGD-7a, Addis Ababa, a woman ambassador commented:

I agree that we have a men domination culture, but things are changing. For example, I have attended the marriage mediation ceremony of more than ten women. There is one where I went to the family of the brother and the woman's family to mediate and sign together as equals to the men. It means anywhere, in a settlement, in a traditional neighborhood. The patriarchal culture had made the mediation done only by men. So, we have to push ourselves out; we have to push out. Even in conflicting resolution processes, I have done more reconciliation work than anyone else, so we have to push ourselves out. We have to break this old way of thinking.

Confronted with this challenge, the women ambassadors of peace established a nonprofit organization at the national level under the auspices of the Ethiopian Ministry of Peace. The women ambassadors of peace put forward formal political platforms and promotes its agenda at the grassroots level. Its mission is to promote peace by women becoming frontline actors, organizers, and social activists.

Besides contributing to peace initiatives, conflict resolution, and sociopolitical transformation in many public settings in Ethiopia, including universities, schools, and political arenas, the women ambassadors of peace provide voluntary service in the Ministry of Peace as monitors of good governance, administrative competency, and accountability of government officials. In FGDs, these women touted their contribution to the recent nomination of commissioners for the national unity dialogue, their involvement in governmental and

nongovernmental institutions to make their voices heard, and their self-empowerment as agents of peace.

The women respondents also asserted that they have the potential to exert considerable influence on the current peace negotiations between the national government and Tigrayan leaders because of their reputation, soft hearts, acceptance by the community, and active participation in conflict resolution mechanisms alongside the national elders and peace commissioners. As a result, they believe they are now beginning to be recognized, accepted, and welcomed for their essential work in society, as one expressed in the following statement: People have started accepting us and valuing our work in peacebuilding; even those ministers of the government, National Defense Force, national elders, students in the universities, and community policymakers are welcoming us to work with them closely. They believe that we can do more, and we can solve the problems that have not been able to be solved by them. (WPAFGD-1, Addis Abeba)

Summing up participant responses to theme 6, women peace ambassadors and male elder group participants agreed on the following points. One, women can play a pivotal role in conflict resolution because they have power indirectly and informally as sisters, mothers, and wives within their communities, which gives them the right to assist and assess in conflict resolution. Two, women provide men with differing views of a dispute. Three, women support, advise, and participate in condemning or exonerating parties in conflict and teach children and other women in villages about the importance of peace. Four, women can mobilize their communities and help trace the root causes of a conflict to create a more durable peace. Five, women can often prevent the recurrence of violence by addressing its causes and mitigating its effects through reconciliation, institution building, educating their children, and socializing with their neighbors to impress upon them the urgency of living in peace and coexistence. Six, women peace ambassadors and elders are convinced that peace is possible in Ethiopia through their peacebuilding efforts.

Research Question 5

RQ5 was, in what ways do or do not Ethiopian elders believe future generations in Ethiopia can ensure the sustainability of Indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms?. This research question was addressed using interview data from 29 individuals divided into four focus groups based on gender and title. Therefore, the following theme was used to address the question: theme 7, the sustainability of traditional conflict mediation should be ensured through formal and informal instruction of children and the documentation of oral traditions.

RQ5/Theme 7: The Sustainability of Traditional Conflict Mediation Should be Ensured Through Formal and Informal Instruction of Children and the Documentation of Oral Traditions. Table 12 indicates that theme 7 was derived from four codes mentioned a total of 16 times during focus groups aggregating 29 informants. The codes were (a) fathers should teach conflict resolution to their children, (b) government should promote education in conflict resolution, (c) oral traditions should be documented, and (d) women should teach conflict resolution to children. This question was answered using focus group data.

Table 12

Theme 7 Codes

| Code | <i>n</i> | % | Total excerpts |
|--|----------|------|----------------|
| Fathers should teach conflict resolution to their children | 2 | 50% | 4 |
| Government should promote education in conflict resolution | 4 | 100% | 4 |
| Oral traditions should be documented | 2 | 50% | 2 |
| Women should teach conflict resolution to children | 3 | 75% | 6 |

Note. *N* = 29

Both men and women focus group participants acknowledge that ICRMs are oral and have yet to be systematized in educational and policy settings to guarantee their sustainability

and durability. Most study participants stressed the need to transmit these mechanisms to future generations within the family setting. Fathers and mothers are responsible for inculcating in their children the cultural values, beliefs, and principles that have been handed down in Ethiopia for millennia. An elder summed this up:

We usually use our conflict resolution mechanisms orally, which we learned from our ancestors. However, we don't know if the next generation can do what we are doing now orally. Because their lifestyle now is so modern. Consequently, there is an urgent need to transmit these mechanisms to future generations within the family setting. As fathers, mothers, and sisters, we must enculturate our children. We need to teach them and show them how it is supposed to be done. (TEFGD-4a, Tembaro)

Both elders and women ambassadors were concerned that Indigenous cultural values have been eroded by external forces and foreign influences, most prominently neocolonialism, globalization, and cross-cultural influences, resulting in Ethiopia's young people losing interest in their traditional culture. In its place, Ethiopian youths have adopted western styles in music and dress, and values related to a family structure that promote greater individualism in society. Traditionally, Ethiopians have always embraced communal values such as family unity, respect for the elderly, the dignity of labor, participation in cultural festivals, and so on. Yet, today's Ethiopian youth are more self-interested and eschew the time-honored values of cooperation and coexistence. A woman peace ambassador explained the issue this way:

The problem is the formation and education of our children. We need to teach them all these values and practices of living together. Our children are becoming individuals; they spend the whole day watching tv or on their cellphone. We need to create a space where they should learn how to live together with respect and love. We need to transmit the importance of peace and security in our society. (WAPFGD-1a, Addis Ababa)

Elders and women ambassadors in the study attribute the rise of community violence in some parts of the country to this alarming trend. They insist that Ethiopian cultural values and

the traditional legal system be promoted and made more appealing to Ethiopian youth. According to the group participants, Ethiopians should jealously guard their cultural heritage because it imparts a distinct and unique Ethiopian character. Both participant genders called for the participation of younger Ethiopians in the Indigenous conflict resolution process by listening to the elders. Known for their veneration of elders, Ethiopians hold that it is the elders' responsibility to transmit traditional values and practices to the next generation, based on respect for seniority, which is considered obligatory for Ethiopian youth. Informants then recommended that young people learn about the origins of ICRMs and write them down to ensure that they are preserved for posterity.

Focus group participants of both genders also proposed that the government establish a research program for the documentation and analysis of ICRMs at the federal and regional levels under the auspices of the Ministry of Culture and Sport and the Ministry of Peace. Study participants maintained that in an ethnically diverse country, understanding one another's culture and lifestyle, building sustainable peace, and appreciating the role of Indigenous knowledge in maintaining peace and stability is of utmost importance. According to a group participant, "The government body [Ministry of Culture and Sport], which is appointed to safeguard and give care to maintaining peace and integration with the different ethnic groups, should work people to people for integration at every level" (SEFGD-5a, Hawassa).

Participants recommended that ICRMs be included in the curricula of Ethiopia's education system at the secondary and university levels. In this way, Ethiopian young people would acquire knowledge of these mechanisms and help guarantee their sustainability. Culture is learned, and there must be an avenue through which the younger generation gains access to information concerning the values, practices, and beliefs of their society, as noted by the following group participant:

The government must establish an educational policy to include peace studies from elementary school to higher education. Educated people should be involved in this

issue, and the next generation should get involved. If everything that is done now is written down, it will be passed down to the next generation. Mass media has to broadcast what is being done and has to document it for the next generation. So, we need collective action for the sustainability of ICRMs in the next generation. There should be research that binds different conflict resolution mechanisms processes in each ethnic group in Ethiopia. The government should establish researchers who dedicate to this area. (WAPFGD-5b, Addis Ababa)

Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations

This qualitative study, using an explanatory design, aimed to identify the barriers, as perceived by Ethiopian national elders and women ambassadors of peace, that may impede the institutionalization of ICRMs within the federal criminal justice system of Ethiopia to spur social change and to provide a clear policy orientation for this incorporation to take place.

The literature review in Chapter 2 detailed the effectiveness and applicability of African ICRMs and how these have played a significant role in creating the conditions for sustainable peace, as recognized by anthropologists in academic and popular literature over the last few decades. Research for this study explored how these ICMRs have been practiced in Ethiopia's local communities for centuries and their pivotal role in resolving several types of disputes when empowered by ethnic elders and women ambassadors of peace at the grassroots level.

Although the existing literature emphasizes the potentiality, applicability, and functionality of the ICRMs at the local (Kebele) and community levels in Ethiopia, I identified the following gaps. First, not one legal scholar demonstrated a clear legal framework or policy for the institutionalization of the ICRMs within the country's formal federal criminal justice system. Second, ICRMs are oral by nature and have not been systematized in educational and policy settings in the country. Third, no scholarly writings mention their systematization or any documentation regarding the sustainability and durability of these mechanisms. Fourth, most of the research concentrates only on Ethiopia's national and local elders, all men, who administer these ICRMs disputes, while women have been largely ignored in their engagement as peacebuilding and conflict resolution actors. Instead, researchers on this issue have focused on women as victims of sexual and gender violence rather than assessing their role in conflict resolution and peacebuilding projects. Therefore, this study addressed these gaps by posing the following research questions.

Research Questions

- RQ1: What are or are not the elders' perspectives on how effectively Indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms work locally in Ethiopia?
- RQ2: How do or do not Ethiopia's national elders perceive the institutionalizing of multiethnic Indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms within Ethiopia's federal criminal justice system?
- RQ3: In what ways do or do not Ethiopia's national elders perceive Ethiopia's ethnocentric/monoethnocratic governance system as lacking the qualities necessary for an inclusive, united, democratic, and economically strong nation?
- RQ4: How do or do not Ethiopia's national elders perceive the role of women in promoting peace and unity in Ethiopia?
- RQ5: In what ways do or do not Ethiopian elders believe that future generations in Ethiopia can ensure the sustainability of Indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms?

Context

From its inception as a modern nation-state in the mid-19th century, Ethiopia has experienced internal and external conflict due to deficient governmental and sociopolitical structures, resulting in deeply rooted problems that have created serious roadblocks to the country's social, political, and economic development. These problems have spawned ethnic and religious-based conflicts leaving a legacy of trauma, anger, hatred, and divisiveness that the country's formal laws and courts have been unable to resolve.

Therefore, this study has proposed the need for an Ethiopian national leadership framework that accentuates and raises consciousness of the importance of social change by promoting a nonadversarial, restorative system of justice to maintain Ethiopians' long history of coexistence, social solidarity, and interconnectedness. In light of the conflicts that now beset the country, it is time for a new national framework that brings the government's agenda into closer

alignment with the needs, aspirations, and lifestyle of the broader community and instills in government officials, individuals, and communities a commitment to work together to uphold the principle of reconciliation as the central component of peacebuilding.

To this end, the servant leadership model incorporating ubuntu-based ICRMs conflict resolution are necessary to form a government that society considers fair and just and that can bring about peace and stability in Ethiopia. In pursuing justice, this change model prioritizes the importance of community, solidarity, consensus-building, and shared humanity over a victim's need for retribution and the formal legal system's fixation on punishing an offender. Therefore, it is imperative to implement this framework of ubuntu-based ICRMs within the federal criminal justice system.

The ubuntu-based ICRMs are based on a constructivist worldview that considers restorative justice as constructed socially, grounded in Ethiopians' unique, centuries-old cultural values, principles, and beliefs. Hence, because it involves people, this study has employed a qualitative approach with an explanatory design conducted by employing key informant interviews and FGDs.

Researcher Role

In this qualitative research method with explanatory design, during the key informant individual interviews, my primary role was to be the data collection instrument, which was a challenging task as it involved asking people to talk about things that may be very personal to them. However, I was aware of how my might impact conversations with the participants to delve into more intimate, sensitive issues with them.

Even though I had personal experiences as the middle son, whose father is an elder of the Hadiya Ethnic community, whose mother is from the Kembatta ethnic group, whose brothers and sisters have married their husbands and wives from different ethnic groups. I had awareness, knowledge, and sensitivity to the issues, so I made efforts to be an insider—sometimes to calibrate, stimulate and provoke participants' views and to open a conducive

environment for the interviewees—as an objective viewer by raising probing questions, then listened to the explanatory process of the key informants, then asked more probing questions to get to deeper levels of the conversations to build a whole picture of the ideas and theories from a wide variety of sources. Concerning focus group discussions, my role was that of the facilitator or moderator directing them to the topic.

Discussion of Findings

Informants in the study enumerated a number of barriers to the institutionalization of the traditional justice system and its ICRMs within the formal justice system of Ethiopia. Without exception, informants expressed frustration with systemic corruption and profiteering by government officials and the formal courts. National elders in the study emphasized that the federal courts decide cases based on evidence obtained from witnesses who are either paid off or pressured by powerful politicians to bear witness without knowledge of the facts of a case (HKII-1, Hossana). Informants also stressed that the formal justice system in Ethiopia is manipulated and politicized by politicians who directly or indirectly seek favorable decisions. The traditional justice system, according to informants, also must deal with interference by political elites, who promote popular political programs by publicly flattering traditional elders to win the support of the broader community.

In addition, informants noted that teachings promulgated by western-oriented education and those of some Protestant Christian Churches often disparage traditional Ethiopian cultural practices (SKII-1, Hawassa). Moreover, a mindset conditioned by western cultural influences and the impact of globalization has caused Ethiopia's younger generation to abandon the country's endowed cultural values, principles, and traditional practices (GKII-1, Arbaminchi).

Furthermore, although the previous ERDEF government theoretically accepted the 1995 amendment to the Constitution that recognized the legitimacy and importance of traditional customary law in family matters (Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, Proclamation No. 1/1995), it failed to support and empower traditional leaders and institutions.

Even though the federal constitution allows ICRMs and traditional customary law to be used at the local level in marital and individual disputes, local government leaders lack the commitment to implement them. Finally, informants pointed to the lack of a clear policy and direction for incorporating conflict resolution mechanisms within the peacebuilding framework outlined in both federal and regional state constitutions.

Preliminary Study Conclusions

The study revealed that mediation performed by elders in restorative justice through ICRMs has been in place for centuries in Ethiopia. This system of traditional justice has guided Ethiopians through changes affecting the durability of ethnocentric governments by restabilizing, reshaping, and reintegrating the lives of individuals, families, and communities who frequently are involved in conflicts related to borderlands, property damage, marital issues, and inheritance rights at the local, regional, and national levels. Therefore, the study confirmed that Ethiopia's national elders have a comprehensive understanding of disputes that arise in their respective communities, which enables them to handle conflicts ranging from serious crimes such as murder to minor offenses.

Results of the study indicated that Ethiopia's ICRMs facilitate better relations between individuals, tribes, and territorial units that are regulated by these social institutions because they enable every citizen to express themselves, be heard, and be given attention. Ethiopian's national elders strongly believe that conflict resolution processes foster forgiveness, reconciliation, and improvement of social relationships; they prevent, mitigate, manage, and resolve conflicts between their communities.

Transparency is integral to the Indigenous conflict resolution process; the entire mediation process is conducted in the presence and participation of offenders, victims, their families, tribal members from opposing sides, and the community at large.

The ethnocentric federal governance system that has dominated the country for decades is responsible for national disintegration, crises of political legitimacy, and ethnic and religious-

based conflicts. Therefore, inclusive and diversified political participation is paramount to minimizing conflicts that beset the country. In addition, comprehensive national dialogue should take place to bring about long-lasting peace and social cohesion in the country.

Although the formal legal establishment does not officially recognize ICRMs and their institutions, Ethiopian government officials depend on the wisdom, leadership, and widespread acceptance of national elders for the success of their policies within rural communities. In addition to formally incorporating traditional restorative justice processes into the criminal justice system, the government must establish means to support and protect traditional leaders and their institutions in their efforts to ensure lasting peace and prosperity in the country.

Women are able to mobilize their communities, determine the root causes of a conflict, maintain peace, and prevent violence from recurring through reconciliation, institution building, educating their children, and urging their neighbors to coexist peacefully as equals to elders. In addition, women have a clear conviction of empowering themselves to overcome the stereotypes that impede them from being involved in the conflict resolution process more actively and receiving recognition as activists for peacekeeping with their servant leadership style.

Women are involved in sustainable peace initiatives at the national level by participating as members of commissioners for the national dialogue to contribute comprehensively to the root cause of the conflict that beset the country for centuries at the national level. Moreover, women work closely with the federal and city governmental administrative offices as observers to advocate for civil society and communities against administrative inadequacy, lack of accountability, and lack of transparency to prevent conflict.

Women have a unique capacity to prevent the recurrence of violence by addressing its causes and mitigating its effects through dialogue, reconciliation, institution building, educating their children, and socializing with their neighbors to impress upon them the importance of

coexisting in peace. In sum , all focus group respondents' believed that women are largely better than men in conflict prevention, mitigation, and resolution as they are more soft-hearted.

Finally both Key informants and Focus Group Discsuion participants clearly revealed the differences between formal and traditional justice systems; therefore, the idea of a formal justice system in Ethiopia implies that the perpetrators should be arrested, tried, and sentenced for an amount of time depending on the weight of the case, which could lead to a waste of energy, time, and money because of the high number of people who are normally accused of participating in wrongdoing. Therefore, relying solely on the formal court system could make the justice process unnecessarily long. Moreover, the formal justice system in Ethiopia is designed to uphold only intangible legal and retaliatory principles or the legal principle of retribution, which in most cases ignites further resentment, conflict, and the removal of offenders from society, often by imposing lengthy prison sentences. In addition, the normal court system in Ethiopia reaches judgments based on evidence obtained from three witnesses. Most of the time, these witnesses are paid, obligated, or forced by political elites to bear witness without knowing the facts of a case. Typically, witnesses are close family members or friends of the accused who testify in their favor despite having no familiarity with the matter.

In contrast, the traditional justice system in Ethiopia is derived from what society considers to be fair; elders and women ambassadors of peace understand the community's social setting and interact with and give emphasis to the spiritual as the main source of knowledge whereby morals and justice supersede the law. Their traditional justice system aims to direct how individuals and communities should behave toward each other. As a result, traditional elders and women ambassadors of peace direct the court system through non-adversarial, restorative, or victim-offender-mediation that seeks to reconcile the parties in conflict along with their communities, promoting coexistence, interdependence, and reintegration rather than retribution. Moreover, elders and women ambassadors of peace live

within the community, are more familiar with local cultural dynamics, and understand the problem comprehensively from the grassroots level.

Therefore, government leaders and lawmakers must learn from traditional elders and women ambassadors of peace ways of conflict prevention, mitigation, resolution, and transformation for the betterment of the community. They must also work together cooperatively for prevention, mitigation, resolution, and transformation of the conflicts that may occur in the community and collaboratively contribute to each other's constructive evolution.

Recommendations for Practice and for Future Research

Government leaders and lawmakers must focus on ways in which the formal justice system and the traditional system of justice can work together cooperatively, complementing one another and contributing to the constructive evolution of each.

Proper attention must be paid to protecting, promoting, and developing Indigenous knowledge and its institutions; therefore, Indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms should be incorporated into educational and policy settings to advance socioeconomic development to guarantee their sustainability and durability. A research program should be established to document and analyze ICRMs at the federal and regional levels under the auspices of the Ministry of Culture and Sport and the Ministry of Peace.

Government leaders should welcome the increased participation of the national elders and their traditional institutions in the country's formal criminal justice system and seek the elders' cooperation in creating a united, peaceful, and economically strong nation at the grassroots level.

Lawmakers must enact legislation that facilitates ICRMs and their institutions playing a more significant role in cementing good governance, peace, stability, and development in rural communities throughout Ethiopia. Yet, in the absence of a broader strategy of political change and social transformation, the development and empowerment of local communities can be of only limited and temporary significance. More importantly, Ethiopians from diverse ethnic and

religious groups must be encouraged to live more interdependently within the nation's multicultural society to effect transformative social change.

During and after a conflict occurs, government officials should work collaboratively with traditional elders in dispute mitigation, management, resolution, and transformation to prevent the escalation of violence to a level that exceeds the investigative capacity of these officials.

Given that ICRMs originated with people at the grassroots level and are not executed by the state, the autonomy and unchallenged authority of ICRMs at the local, regional, and national levels must be maintained, unhindered by political interference.

Some national, regional, and local elders in Ethiopia have tendencies to engage in internal conflict, which is exacerbated by feeling superior to one another, the refusal of others to acknowledge them as rightful elders, and profiteering or attempting to extract money from the conflicting parties before and after dealing with the conflict resolution process, as typically their service is free of cost. Therefore, to overcome the gaps mentioned, governmental offices under the auspices of the Ministry of Culture and Sports, Ministry of Peace, and the Ministry of Women Social Affairs should look for ways to accentuate awareness among the elders by creating national elders' forums and providing training at the local, regional, and national levels.

The empowerment of women is central to peacebuilding and social change in Ethiopia. Hence, in ICRMs, women should be treated as equals to the elders and actively engage in all decision-making by considering women's needs and real-life experiences and the different roles they adopt in conflict prevention as the country's perception has been masculinized in the conflict resolution mechanisms process.

Involving women in the conflict resolution process helps bridge the two communities, the community where they were born and the community in which they have gotten married. This is because women in Ethiopia don't belong to the clan where they are married.

Empowering women in the ICRMs in Ethiopia propels them to be a voice to advocate against gender inequality, sexual abuse, domestic violence, and women's abductions that occur

as part of patriarchal norms that have dominated for centuries in most of the rural and remote areas in Ethiopia.

Wise Elders/Women Leadership Development in Africa (WEWLDA)

Implications for Practice and Theory

Addressing problems associated with government leadership and weaknesses in the legal system of Ethiopia, and in many other African nations, requires an African solution to effect change in leadership and make citizens' voices heard. However, both elders and women in Ethiopia face challenges, as the impacts of globalization and the mindset of the younger generation are being conditioned by modernization and the digitalized world. This leads to disdain of not only traditional cultural values and practices but also the elders who practice the traditional institutions by making them vulnerable and powerless, delegitimizing their restorative justices practices through the ICRMs process, and not accepting conventional ways of thinking.

Moreover, in most cases, elders are exploited with a paltry minimum wage from their retirement, and they remain poor without being enabled to meet their concrete needs, including their daily expenses when they move from place to place for their peacekeeping and peacebuilding duties. In addition, elders' lack of education and the verbal nature of ICRMs are another impediment to confronting and dealing with today's complex problems, which necessitates the involvement of the Information Network Security Agency (INSA), advanced military laboratory services, security cameras, and DNA test practices to accurately find the root cause of problems that occur in the community. Consequently, elders' role in ICRMs could prevail in an unknown future.

On the other hand, women are still vulnerable in the leadership of ICRMs in most African countries and in Ethiopia in particular due to the following reasons: (a) the prevailing research conducted on this issue has mainly focused on women's victimization in conflict as well as sexual and gender-based violence rather than actors in the ICRMs, and (b) the prevailing societal attitudes and the existence of powerful male-dominated perceptions and social norms regarding

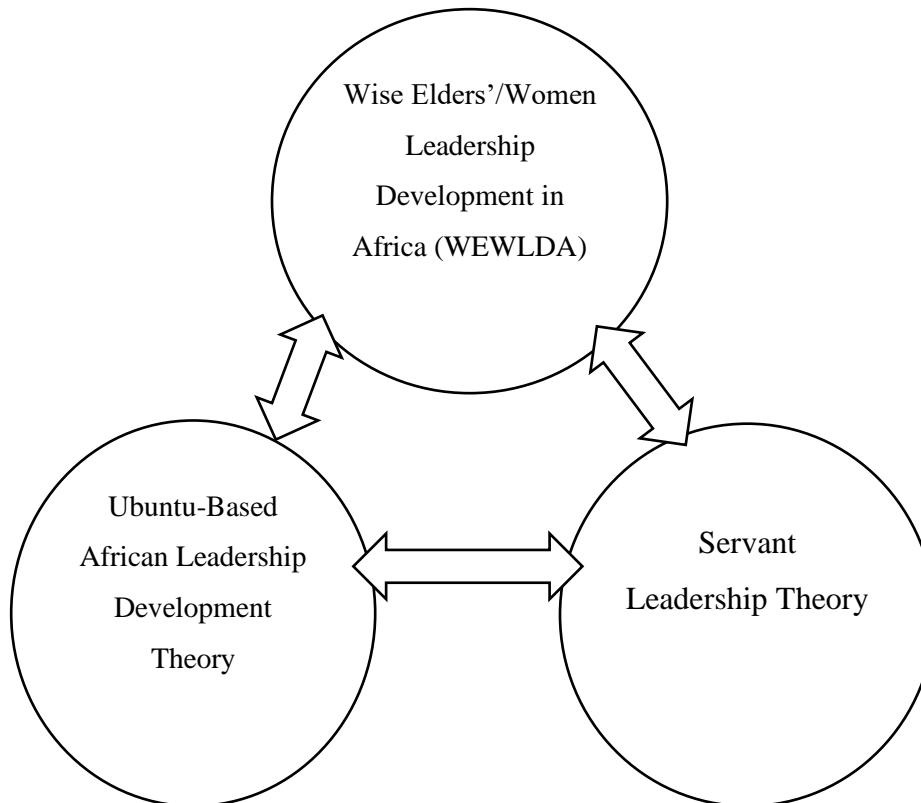
women's behavior in most communities are more conservative. As a result, they are denied the opportunity to define and address their concerns and needs. Moreover, their experiences and knowledge of the conflict in question have been erased from the public agenda and decision-making.

Confronted with these self-critiques and challenges, I believe the ICRMs should be revitalized and cross-pollinated creatively within the enclosed structure of Africa's multifaceted cultural endowment, which different generations and genders can adopt; this, in turn, will open doors for the participation and adaptation of younger generations and women. This revitalization process should be done in both nationally- under the collaborative auspicious of the Ministry of Culture and Sports, Ministry of Peace, and Ministry Women and Social Affairs and continentally - under the collaborative auspicious of the African Union member state representatives and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the African Union Peace and Security Council (APSC). Therefore, I created a change model called the Wise Elders/Women Leadership Development in Africa (WEWLDA; Figure 4), which is collectivist, humane, and underpinned by both the theoretical concept of ubuntu-based African leadership development and the theory of servant leadership to overcome the challenges mentioned above.

I am cognizant that this model cannot provide solutions for the multifaceted challenges facing African leadership in general and Ethiopia in particular. Still, I am confident that it would open avenues for further research, including further research in this area. Therefore, in the Figure 4 I demonstrated the Wise Elders'/women's Leadership Development in Africa framework that underpins Servant Leadership and Ubuntu-based Leadership.

Figure 4

Wise Elders/Womens Leadership Development in Africa Underpins Servant Leadership, Ubuntu-Based Leadership, and Wise Elders/Women Leadership Models



WEWLDA combines the concept of ubuntu-based African leadership with servant leadership theory. WEWLDA is collectivist and humane in nature and is comprised of the following elements.

Ubuntu-Based Leadership Development Theory

Ubuntu-based African leadership developed by various African anthropologists, leadership theorists, and theologians, including Tutu (1999), Malunga (2005), Mbigi (2005), Mbiti, (1975), Ncube (2010), Murithi (2009), and Kuada (2010) employs the African philosophical concept of ubuntu and emphasizes collective action. It is built on five interrelated principles:

- sharing and the collective advantage of opportunity and responsibility,
- the importance of a human being and human relationships,
- patriotism,
- participatory decision making in the exercise of leadership, and
- reconciliation as a goal of conflict resolution.

Ubuntu, a Bantu term first used by Desmond Tutu (1999), emphasizes the traditional African cultural values of interconnectedness, peaceful coexistence, and social solidarity and promotes a culture of empathy, cooperation, and resource-sharing. African leaders, acting in accordance with ubuntu cultural values, are more accountable, humane, and democratic. They understand that their power and legitimacy emanate not from control but from sharing power.

Servant Leadership Theory

Smith (2005) underlined Greenleaf's (1970) servant leadership framework in four steps: "service to others, a holistic approach to work, promoting a sense of community, and sharing of power in decision making" (p. 4). In these steps, Greenleaf emphasized all of the following: role modeling, sacrificing for others, meeting others' needs, development of individuals, serving the community first, recognizing and rewarding individuals, expressing humility to and respect for others, collective decision making, empowering others, involving others, inspiring others, persuading others, sharing power, adopting a holistic approach that considers emotional, rational, ethical and spiritual perspectives, and being socially responsible, authentic, honest, trustworthy, and loving.

Eight Steps of WEWLDA

WEWLDA includes the many interconnected benefits, values, and principles inherent in mediation, reconciliation, and restorative justice. The key principles are listed in the next sections.

Step 1: Trustworthiness in Serving Others

Trustworthiness is central to Indigenous conflict resolution and wise elders and women's leadership. The elders and women ambassadors of peace of Ethiopia have a moral duty to render accurate judgments based on their deep wisdom-based knowledge of the traditional justice system and their experience in reconciliation and peacebuilding. Their judgments must be free of discrimination or bias toward one side or the other, including members of their own families.

Step 2: Reconciliation in the Restorative Justice Process

Reconciliation is the outcome that elders, women ambassadors of peace, and the community strive to achieve. It is the source of blessings that the elders wish to bestow, the guarantee of the country's peace and stability, the display of unity, and the proof of the continuity of harmonious social interaction by the parties in conflict. In ICRMs, reconciliation is the process that invites perpetrators to reintegrate into the community with the promise of no further discord.

Step 3: Consensus Building Based on Open Discussion

In deploying conflict resolution mechanisms, traditional elders have greater autonomy than formal court procedures allow. This typically encompasses consensus-building based on open dialogue and the exchange of evidence to clarify problems that triggered the conflict.

Step 4: Inclusiveness in Decision Making

Inclusiveness is a core component of the restorative justice process through the application of ICRMs. Elders and women ambassadors of peace meet together with all involved in a conflict—the victim, the offender, their families, and the entire community present.

Step 5: Transparency in Their Leadership

In conflict resolution led by wise elders and women ambassadors of peace, transparency is essential. Every measure is taken to prevent, mitigate, manage, and resolve a conflict, and

the resolution is conducted openly in a public forum in which all are afforded the opportunity to argue, negotiate, provide references, and make judgments after testimony is heard.

Step 6: Accountability to Ensure Performance in the Leadership Process

Local, regional, and national elders and women ambassadors of peace who represent their community at any level of responsibility will be persecuted if they violate the standard procedures and values of the conflict resolution process. An elder or a woman who fails to observe the traditional code of conduct will lose all his authority. These local leaders and women ambassadors of peace in discussion with subordinates approve rules and standards of procedure in the conflict resolution process. Their decisions are then passed down to the rest of the community. The fact that the community has the power to remove a traditional leader who the people do not want at any time and appoint another in his place is an important democratic feature of the traditional justice system.

Step 7: Flexibility in Their Leadership

Traditional elders and women ambassadors of peace can be flexible during the Indigenous conflict resolution process. They can renew traditional or customary laws by meeting in public forums with their community. Their flexibility is also evidenced when they welcome wrongdoers back into the community and when they soften sanctions based on the contrition that wrongdoers demonstrate.

Step 8: Legitimacy in Their Problem-Solving

Traditional wise elders and women ambassadors of peace from different ethnic groups in Ethiopia are respected and accepted by the broad community. They are the main actors in the conflict resolution process because they have the power and legitimacy to maintain social harmony. The following Table 13 demonstrated the comparison between Ubuntu-based African Leadership Development, Servant Leadership, and WEWLDA Models.

Table 13

Comparing Ubuntu-Based African Leadership Development, Servant Leadership, and WEWLDA Models

| Models | Authors | Leadership Framework |
|--|---|--|
| 1. Ubuntu-based African Leadership Development | Tutu (1999), Malunga (2005), Mbigi (2005), Mbiti, (1975), Ncube (2010), Murithi (2009) | (1) sharing and the collective rights of opportunity and responsibility, (2) the importance of a human being and human relationships, (3) patriotism, (4) participatory decision making in the exercise of leadership, and (5) reconciliation as a goal of conflict resolution. |
| 2. Servant Leadership | Greenleaf (1970), Brubaker (2013), Patterson (2003), Sendjaya & Cooper (2011), Smith (2005) | “Service to others; a holistic approach to work; promoting a sense of community; and sharing of power in decision making” (Smith, 2005, p. 4). |
| 3. WEWLDA | Sugamo (2023) | (1) Trustworthiness in serving others (2) reconciliation in the restorative justice process (3) consensus-building based on open discussion (4) inclusiveness in their decision-making (5) transparency in leadership (6) accountability to assure performance in the leadership process (7) Flexibility in their leadership (8) Legitimacy in the conflict resolution process |

WEWLDA Leadership Framework

The WEWLDA as a change model incorporates the three most salient qualities represented by Ethiopia’s traditional elders and women ambassadors of peace: authority, legitimacy, and acceptance by the larger community. In the WEWLDA change model, these qualities must also extend to both the leadership style of Ethiopia’s federal and regional governments and the country’s formal legal system. WEWLDA, based on ubuntu-based African

leadership development and servant leadership, is premised on the belief that solidarity is commonly beneficial and can shift a leader's orientation from a focus on personal interest to one of cooperation, power sharing, and a global mindset by taking into account the wellbeing of others through the process of restorative justice, societal reconciliation, and caring.

WEWLDA-inspired leaders are thus able to transcend their narrow, centralized interests and engage in collective action for effective conflict resolution and institutional leadership. WEWLDA would imbue a leader's efforts to reform a divided and wounded nation with a spirit of coexistence, social solidarity, interconnectedness, and nonadversarial restorative justice and offer perspectives toward long-term cooperation and consensus-building decision making. Moreover, a WEWLDA-based approach to leadership could shift the perspective of Ethiopia's government from a focus on ethnocentric or monoethnocratic interests to a policy of global cooperation, inclusion, and the wellbeing of all Ethiopians.

Like ubuntu-inspired leadership, the WEWLDA leadership style derives from a collectivist orientation, specifically the functional family group that originated in African societies (Kuada, 2010). Adopting WEWLDA as a change model leadership approach means that the actions, purposes, ideas, and thoughts of Ethiopia's leaders would emerge from this family concept, which includes service to the community based on the moral and ethical obligations one extends to their family.

Therefore, by observing the principles of WEWLDA and practicing ethical leadership behavior, particularly in matters concerning the formal justice system, Ethiopia's top government leaders could become more attentive to the needs and aspirations of their people.

In sum, as a driver of change, WEWLDA, incorporating an ubuntu-based African leadership approach together with the servant leadership model, will inspire Ethiopia's top government leaders to shift their ethnocentric/monoethnocratic leadership approach to a participatory and inclusive leadership mindset. Therefore, in the following Table 14, the

strategies from the implementation plan: the WEWLDA framework from change that could guide the core strategies for the identified implementation plan was detailed.

Table 14

Strategies for the Implementation Plan: The WEWLDA Framework for Change Will Guide the Core Strategies for the Identified Implementation Plan

| Eight steps of WEWLDA | At the national level | At the global level |
|---------------------------------------|--|--|
| | Core strategies: Influence and transform the retributory formal legal structure into a restorative, nonadversarial justice system. | Core strategies: Work with diplomatic communities and the African Union to promote and galvanize the African Union's Agenda of 2063—building a peaceful, and socioeconomically integrated continent (Aniche, 2020). Optimize the African Women's Peace Activists' Initiatives to synergize the women's role in the cross-border and continental peacekeeping |
| (1) Trustworthiness in serving others | Build the capacity of public services to execute successfully government policies and programs designed to promote national unity. Integrate women as role models in creating a peaceful environment in society. | Build a strong and sustainable shared vision and take action to achieve peace and development among all Horn of African nations (Ayferam & Muchie, 2016; Asfaw, 2017). Propel on the existing women who are community activists of peace and security at the continental level for the betterment of the continent. |

| Eight steps of WEWLDA | At the national level | At the global level |
|--|--|---|
| (2) Reconciliation in the restorative justice process | Focus on human relationships as the central component of peacekeeping and conflict transformation. Make women share their valuable experiences of being models of peace by nature in the country. | Recommend to African Union member state representatives and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) to engage with policy think tanks with expertise in policy-related research (Asfaw, 2017). Put more emphasis on African women participation to bring their empirical and experiential evidence to the table. |
| (3) Consensus building based on and democratic dialogue in the decision-making process | <p>WEWLDA leaders have more flexibility in matters related to the formal justice system than do current government leaders.</p> <p>Implement political reforms by appealing to patriotism and nationalism in order to mitigate ethnic- and religious-based conflict. Make more representation of women in the national dialogue commissioners.</p> <p>Establish a framework of coexistence, social solidarity, and interconnectedness among different ethnic groups to transcend divisive ethnic interests and to offer perspectives toward long-term peace in the nation.</p> | <p>Engage existing partners such as the Intergovernmental Authority on Drought and Development (IGADD) and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) to mitigate the effects of recurring severe droughts and natural disasters (Ayferam & Muchie, 2016; Dersso, 2014). Empower women of Africa to help mobilize the local communities and educate about the green legacy and climate change by developing interactive systems through networks of cross functional teams that drive a high level of collaboration.</p> <p>Reach out to the Intergovernmental Authority Development (IGAD) member nations (Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, and Uganda) to promote a sense of community that aspires to maintain peace in the region</p> |

| Eight steps of WEWLDA | At the national level | At the global level |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| | | (Dersso, 2014; Michael, 2016) |

| Eight steps of WEWLDA | At the national level | At the global level |
|--|--|--|
| (4) Inclusiveness in their decision-making | <p>Foster cultural integration among ethnic groups by facilitating sustainable peace and boosting resilience to the adverse impacts of conflicts, refugee crises, and hatred for each other.</p> <p>Co-construct what can be done practically within interethnic groups and should be done morally in building future capacity towards the national unity.</p> <p>Encourage government institutions, including the Ministry of Peace and the Ministry of Culture and Sports, to improve measures to safeguard cultural values and promote interconnectedness.</p> <p>Increase the representation by traditional elders and women ambassadors of peace in both legislative bodies (House of Federation and House of People's Representatives) in order to infuse public service with a more democratic spirit, to promote better delivery of public goods and services, and to improve accountability</p> <p>Implement social reforms by promoting public decision making and participatory and collaborative action.</p> | <p>Integrating Horn of Africa leaders and community activists to work toward peace and security in the region. Engage the African Union Peace and Security Council (APSC) to provide a framework to implement comprehensive conflict prevention, mitigation, management, resolution, and transformation. (Asfaw, 2017; Dersso, 2014; Michael, 2016).</p> <p>Discover the existing strengths of the Pan-Africanism and include more women in this movement to nurture a creative and innovative change within the African Union.</p> <p>Engage the African Union Peace and Security Council (APSC) to provide a framework to implement comprehensive conflict prevention, mitigation, management, resolution, and transformation. (Asfaw, 2017; Dersso, 2014; Michael, 2016).</p> <p>WEWLDA- inspired leadership can coordinate a shared policy vision with regard to trade, customs, transport, communications, and agriculture and promote the Free Trade Agreement (Ayferam & Muchie, 2016).</p> |

| Eight steps of WEWLDA | At the national level | At the global level |
|--------------------------------------|---|---|
| (5) Transparency in their leadership | <p>The fundamental cause of conflict is inequitable distribution of economic and political power and the demand for access to political and economic benefits. Therefore, improve transparency and equitability in the public service sector. Promote social development by focusing on peacebuilding and peacekeeping to reduce ethnic and religious-based conflict.</p> | <p>Implement WEWLDA Model of leadership in order to fight against corruption, administrative inadequacy, inhumane leadership, transparency, and accountability in the governmental leaders at the continental level. Moreover, empower more women leaders at the top of the governmental offices to optimize the good leadership. Therefore, African Union change his old why of creating socioeconomical and political policies and create ways to innovate and empower young leaders for the continent.</p> |

| Eight steps of WEWLDA | At the national level | At the global level |
|---|---|--|
| (6) Accountability as an assurance of performance in the leadership process | Develop a sense of accountability in the public service sector. Engage in social development by focusing on peacebuilding, and peacekeeping to reduce ethnic and religious-based conflict | WEWLDA inspires African governmental leaders to account for their structural corruption, administrative inadequacy, and inhumane and authoritarian leadership and creates in them a global leadership mindset to open forums with equal participation of women for project feedback. |

| Eight steps of WEWLDA | At the national level | At the global level |
|---|--|---|
| (7) Flexibility in their leadership | <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 100%; height: 15px; margin-bottom: 5px;"></div> Implement economic reform of government monopolies by privatization businesses and industries and promoting the private sector. Implement political reform in order to transition from a centralized power structure to on of multilateralism, diversity, inclusivity, and shared destiny | WEWLDA Promotes joint development strategies with the diplomatic community and existing foreign partners that fuse macroeconomic policies with programs in social, technological, and research-related fields. |
| (8) Legitimacy in their conflict resolution process | Wise elders enjoy widespread respect and acceptance by the broader community because of their leadership style, their role in the reconciliation process, and their ability to engender and maintain social consensus. | The idea or concept of ‘An African solution for the African problem cannot be fully functional without integrating and implementing the Indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms within the African Union Peace council that connects other African elders on board. |

In the following eight steps, I wanted to convey how governmental leaders in Africa and Ethiopia might mitigate the gaps that the study identified. I underlined the recommended actions for national and continent leaders by employing the WEWLDA model.

Step 1: Trustworthiness in Serving Others

In this step, leaders embrace a purpose beyond their personal interests to prioritize and serve the needs of others by listening to their followers and empathizing with those whom they lead. At the national level, Ethiopia’s top federal and regional state leaders need to strengthen the public service to enable the successful execution of government policies and programs for

the betterment of society. This will require Ethiopia's leaders to behave ethically and morally and to work diligently to improve transparency and accountability in the public service sector. Serving others faithfully will also require the leaders to focus on the social, economic, and environmental development of the country.

In terms of the economy, Ethiopia's top leaders must provide incentives for the manufacturing, mining, and agro-processing industries. Pertaining to social development, the leaders should concentrate on public education and healthcare in order to reduce the high poverty and mortality rates in the country. Regarding the environment, the leaders can facilitate sustainable use of Ethiopia's natural resources and implement measures to mitigate recurring droughts, human-made disasters, and natural disasters (Ayferam & Muchie, 2016; Dersso, 2014).

At the global level, Ethiopian leaders need to build a strong and sustainable shared vision and develop an action plan for peace and development with all of Ethiopia's Horn of Africa neighbors by implementing foreign policy reforms (Dersso, 2014; Michael, 2016). To optimize fast, standardized financial services, Ethiopian leaders should encourage the diplomatic community and African Union state members to streamline mechanisms for foreign investment transactions and market exchange.

In addition, Ethiopian leaders should urge the diplomatic community and the African Union to invest in more policy-related research. This will allow existing partners such as the Intergovernmental Authority on Drought and Development (IGADD) to mount a stronger regional and global effort in order to mitigate the disastrous effects of ecological degradation and boost regional cooperation to achieve food security, environmental protection, economic cooperation, regional integration, and social development (Ayferam & Muchie, 2016; Dersso, 2014).

Step 2: Reconciliation in the Restorative Justice Process

At the national level, Ethiopia's top federal and regional state leaders should mandate the redressing of wrongs committed during ethnic conflicts and roll out new policies for public

services. The public service sector must be more responsive to the needs of the Ethiopian public and provide better delivery of public goods and services. In addition, government leaders must engage in organizational restructuring and improve human resource management systems.

At the global level, working with the diplomatic community and the African Union, Ethiopia's senior government leaders can implement sociopolitical and economic reforms with policymakers who have a stake in regional peace, security, and development. Here, the core strategy should include organizing a policy forum at the African Union with IGAD member states to engage with policy think tanks that have expertise in policy-related research (Ayferam & Muchie, 2016; Dersso, 2014). Ethiopian government officials can also begin working with the APSC to reinforce the existing institutional framework for implementing a comprehensive peace plan in the Horn of Africa that encompasses conflict prevention, peacemaking, peacekeeping, postconflict reconstruction, and peacebuilding in the region (Dersso, 2014).

The Ethiopian leaders must also work at the global level to diversify Ethiopia's international partnerships to include a greater number of western and nonwestern countries—for instance, Italy, France, the United States, India, China, Brazil, and Turkey. Many of these nations are turning their eyes to Ethiopia to carry out their investments in Ethiopia's manufacturing, mining, housing, tourism, and agro-industries (Michael, 2016).

Step 3: Consensus Building Based on Open Discussion

At the national level, Ethiopian leaders' main concern should be to unite the divided nation. This requires healing the country, which has been suffering from renewed ethnocentric conflict. To promote greater coexistence, social solidarity, and interconnectedness between different ethnic groups, Ethiopia's top federal and regional state leaders need to implement political reforms that appeal to nationwide patriotic sentiments of cooperation and national unity and do away with centralized power structures.

At the global level, leaders should reach out to the IGAD and the African Union member states to promote a sense of pan-African community, to strengthen the joint Free Trade Agreement, and to work collaboratively to resolve disputes between the nations in the region.

Step 4: Inclusiveness in Their Decision Making

At the national level, a critical step for Ethiopia's top federal leaders and regional state presidents would be to adopt a new mindset, pivoting from a failed leadership style characterized by ethnocentrism, centralized power, authoritarianism, inhumanity toward their own citizens, and the inability to deal with domestic sociopolitical and economic problems with a progressive global mindset and approach. This new mindset requires a shift from centralizing power to instituting democratic reforms, permitting more public participation in policymaking decisions, welcoming political diversity, and abolishing government-controlled monopolies in favor of a free market with greater privatization of industry and commerce.

Globally, Ethiopia's government leaders can promote joint development strategies with existing international partners and apply macroeconomic policy and programs to inform and equip macroeconomic policy and programs with the latest sociological and technological research. The leaders should share their policy vision with existing partners in the areas of trade, customs, transportation, and the agro-industry and promote the Free Trade Agreement (Asfaw, 2017; Dersso, 2014; Michael, 2016) by facilitating foreign and cross-border investment (Ayferam et al., 2016). Furthermore, Ethiopia's federal leaders can work to cement regional integration by sharing both policy vision and decision making to ensure peace, security, and economic development.

Step 5: Transparency in Their Leadership

In Africa, in general, and Ethiopia, in particular, the fundamental cause of conflict has been inequitable distribution of economic and political power and the demand for access to political and economic benefits. Therefore, the WEWLDA approach would be to enhance the

transparency and equitability of public services and to facilitate social integration by focusing on peacebuilding and peacekeeping to reduce ethnic and religious-based conflict.

Step 6: Accountability to Ensure Performance in the Leadership Process

Ethiopia, like many African countries, must develop institutions such as its civil service, parliament, and judiciary at the continental level, creating interlocking oversight and self-regulatory systems. These institutions need to be free of corruption and play a more active role in fighting corruption. The rule of law is also essential to guarantee the protection of human rights, ensure governmental predictability, create a climate conducive to private sector activity and domestic and foreign investment, and enforce adherence to formal rules of behavior. Court rulings must be protected from political interference, and judicial independence must be ensured.

Step 7: Flexibility in Their Leadership

The WEWLDA model will help Ethiopia's government to transition from a centralized power structure to one of multilateralism, diversity, inclusivity, and shared destiny by privatizing governmental business and industry monopolies and encouraging the private sector to participate in this process.

At the continental level, Ethiopia's leaders should pursue joint development strategies with the diplomatic community and existing foreign partners that fuse macroeconomic policy with social integration programs informed by research-related fields.

Step 8: Legitimacy in the Conflict Resolution Process

Wise elders enjoy respect and acceptance by the broader community for their leadership style, their work in reconciliation, and their ability to forge social consensus. For these reasons, their legitimacy as traditional leaders is unquestioned.

Chapter Summary

Harnessing the WEWLDA with the ubuntu-based African leadership approach and the servant leadership model can empower Ethiopia's leaders to develop a deep sense of

community originating from shared practices. WEWLDA incorporates the esteemed qualities of Ethiopia's traditional elders and women—authority, legitimacy, and acceptance by the larger community—in a leadership style that could effectively achieve sustainable peace and security. Emphasizing social responsibility, this change model provides greater opportunity for Ethiopia's national elders and women ambassadors of peace to engage in peace initiatives, conflict resolution, sociopolitical transformation in many public settings, and voluntary service as monitors of good governance, administrative competency, and accountability of government officials to ensure lasting peace, justice, and sustainable development in Ethiopia.

In addition, the WEWLDA model can inspire government officials to work collaboratively with traditional elders and women ambassadors of peace in conflict resolution processes when disputes escalate into violence and exceed the investigative capacity of federal officials. This change model will also require a commitment by government officials to work with the Indigenous courts to prevent ethnic discord and to promote peace and socioeconomic development. Furthermore, the WEWLDA model enables national and regional state leaders to engage in collective solidarity, community relationships, and social sensitivity by adopting new approaches to governing and management practices.

WEWLDA promotes accountability and integrity as the basis of democratic and ethical values. This will help Ethiopia's top leaders to find practical expression of the values of truthfulness in serving others, reconciliation in the restorative justice process, consensus building based on open discussion, inclusiveness in their decision making, transparency in their leadership, accountability for their actions and decisions, flexibility in their leadership, and legitimacy in resolving ethnic and religious-based conflicts.

Furthermore, the WEWLDA model will allow Ethiopia's federal and regional government leaders to recognize the multifaceted contributions of women to peacebuilding and reconciliation, especially in the Indigenous conflict resolution process.

Finally, the WEWLDA as a change model will inspire Ethiopian leaders to prioritize consensus, democratization, and collaborative development through community-based values, solidarity, and inclusivity.

Limitations of the Study

This research has several limitations that could have influenced the results obtained. First, given that Ethiopia comprises 85 ethnic groups and that each ethnic group has its own Indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms administered by one or more elders, it was impossible to interview representatives from all ethnic groups. Therefore, I adopted an inductive strategic research approach to generate findings from a small and narrow group of 20 national elders, 14 regional and local elders, and 15 women ambassadors of the peace, each of whom possessed rich information about the topic. Further ethnographic research on the issues explored in this study might yield additional information and insights from Ethiopian ethnic groups that were not covered.

A second limitation of the study concerns conditions that existed on the ground in Ethiopia while research was being conducted. During that time, August 2022 to November 2022, Ethiopia was in the midst of unrest and civil war. Internet connection was spotty; there was limited access to some areas, banned access to others, and a general lack of security from one regional state to another. This affected data collection in certain population centers. For example, it was impossible for me to reach Tigray Regional State, the epicenter of the country's ongoing civil war. In parts of Oromia Regional State, Ethiopia's most populous area, I had to be escorted by soldiers for my personal safety due to social and economic problems that people were confronting. Nearly impassable roads in some rural areas of the country also hindered data collection. Nevertheless, I carried on in with the dissertation journey, putting up with the daily hardships, even risking my own safety at times, for the betterment of Ethiopia.

Since a ceasefire was declared in November 2022 in a peace negotiation between the Ethiopia's Federal Government and the Tigray People's Liberation Fronts (TPLF) in Pretoria,

South Africa, led by the African Union, conditions throughout the country may return to some normalcy, affording future researchers more opportunity to contact informants in regional states and rural localities that I was unable to investigate.

A third limitation involves some discrepancies in translating the collected data from the Amharic, Sidamo, and Tembaro languages into the English language. There are words and phrases in some regional languages and dialects that lack precise English translations, and this might have influenced the results obtained, leading to a biased conclusion. (For example, *affini and hallale* in Sidamo language; *Mada* in Tembaro language and *Edir* in Amharic language.) As a result, further data collection would be needed to determine more precisely the lexical choices in the inclusion criteria.

Conclusions and Recommendations

ICRMs are traditional practices that wise elders and women ambassadors of peace apply to resolve and sustain peace and stability in Ethiopia. Wise elders and women ambassadors of peace routinely use these conflict resolution mechanisms to prevent, mitigate, resolve, and transform society. ICRMs are widely used and respected by the broader community in Ethiopia since they are time- and money-saving practices. Moreover, the implementation and execution of IMCs are focused solely on non-adversarial, open, person-oriented, and restorative justice.

However, these mechanisms are plagued by a range of internal and external factors including a lack of clear policy orientation towards ICRMs; the lack of a fair, efficient, and accessible system of justice delivered by competent, independent, and accountable legal institutions in the country; political interference; a lack of government attention towards ICRMs and their traditional institutions to capitalize on them and work collaboratively; and misunderstandings of some religious denominations regarding ICRMs. Furthermore, the educational system is still tied to the western world, is counterproductive to the culturally grounded society, and does not truly reflect the lifestyle of the people.

Therefore, the institutionalizing of ICRMs and their traditional institutions within the country's criminal justice system in Ethiopia in order to spur social change and to provide a clear policy orientation for this incorporation to take place .To achieve these policy orientations, Ethiopia's federal and regional state leaders need to accentuate and raise awareness of the importance of a leadership mindset in promoting and expanding national and international coexistence, social solidarity, and interdependence with the aim of transcending ethnocentric interests and guiding Ethiopia through wide-ranging sociopolitical and economic reforms. Therefore, the Wise Elders/Women Leadership Development in Africa model was designed to overcome and fill the gaps the study identified and provide guidance based on the core strategic actions of the leaders.

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APPENDIX A

Key Informant Interview Questions Guide

RQ1: How do or do not Ethiopia's national elders perceive the institutionalizing of multiethnic Indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms within Ethiopia's federal criminal justice system?

- 1.1. To what extent do you believe that your ethnic group's conflict resolution mechanisms will be accepted within the Ethiopian federal criminal justice system?
- 1.2. Compared to the federal criminal justice system in Ethiopia, how effective can ubuntu-based Indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms be in resolving criminal cases?
- 1.3. What obstacles exist to recognizing the legal status of Indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms?
- 1.4. What do you think should be done next to integrate Indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms within Ethiopia's criminal justice system?

RQ2: In what ways do or do not Ethiopia's national elders perceive Ethiopia's ethnocentric/monoethnocratic governance system as lacking the qualities necessary for an inclusive, united, democratic, and economically strong nation?

- 2.1. How do you think lasting peace and stability can be achieved in Ethiopia?
- 2.2. How do you help the nation to move forward with inclusive, united, democratic, and economically strong?

RQ3: What are or are not the elders' perspectives on how effectively Indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms work locally in Ethiopia?

- 3.1. Tell me about your experience(s) using ubuntu-based Indigenous mechanisms to resolve conflicts.
 - 3.1.a. What tools or strategies have you used that have been particularly effective in resolving conflicts?
 - 3.1.b. What were the responses of the participants involved?
- 3.2. What challenges have you faced implementing ubuntu-based Indigenous conflict mechanisms in mediating and resolving disputes?

RQ4: How do or do not Ethiopia's national elders perceive the role of women in promoting peace and unity in Ethiopia?

- 4.1. What are women's strengths in the process of peace making?
- 4.2. What strategies do you/women use to deal successfully with challenges in your/their role as peace makers?
- 4.3. How do you think women ambassadors of peace will apply ubuntu-based conflict resolution mechanisms differently from men?
- 4.4. What can be done to promote and expand the participation of women in conflict resolution mediation?

RQ5: In what ways do or do not Ethiopian elders believe that future generations in Ethiopia can ensure the sustainability of Indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms?

- 5.1. How and where can Ethiopia's next generation learn to use ubuntu-based Indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms effectively?
- 5.2. Indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms are oral by nature. How do you think they should be documented, systematized, and protected?
- 5.3. What other factors might guarantee the effectiveness and continuity of Indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms in Ethiopia?

APPENDIX B

Key Informant and Focus Group Informed Consent and Demographic Information

INFORMED CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH ACTIVITIES (በምርምር ውስጥ

ለመሳተፍ የተደረገ ስምምነት)

➤ **Demographic Information of Key Informant Interview** (የተናጥል ቃለ መጠይቅ ምላሽ ሰጪዎች ዳራ፤ መረጃና መግለጫዎች።)

- 1.1. Name (Pseudonym Code No.) (ስም ከድ) _____
- 1.2. Gender (ጾታ) _____
- 1.3. Age (ዕድሜ) _____
- 1.4. Educational Status (የትምህርት ደረጃ) _____
- 1.5. Marital Statues (የጋብቻ ሁኔታ) _____
- 1.6. Profession (ሥራ) _____
- 1.7. Position (የሥራ ኃላፊነት) _____
- 1.8. Place of Work (የሥራ ተቋም) _____
- 1.9. Place of Interview (የቃለ መጠይቅ ቦታ) _____
- 1.10. Date of Interview (የቃለ መጠይቅ ቀን) _____

THE QUEST FOR INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF INDIGENOUS CONFLICT RESOLUTION MECHANISMS IN THE ETHIOPIAN CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM (በፌደራል ኢትዮጵያ የወንጀል ሕግ

ፍትህ ሥርዓት ውስጥ የሀገር በቀል የግጭት አፈታት ዘዴዎችን ተቋማዊ ማድረግ ይቻል ይሆንን በሚል ርዕስ የተደረገ የምርምር ጥናት ላይ)

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Daniel Wolde Sugamo as a doctoral student in Global Leadership and Change at Pepperdine University. You have been carefully selected because you are one of the Ethiopian elders representing your ethnic groups at the national, regional, and local levels, women nominated as “ambassadors of peace” at the national level in Ethiopia. Your participation is voluntary. Before deciding whether to participate, you should read the information below and ask questions about anything you do not understand. Please take as much time as you need to read the consent form. You may also decide to discuss participation with your family or friends. You will be asked to give your personal information and sign this form if you choose to participate. You will also be given a copy of this form for your records.

እኔ ዳንኤል ወልዴ ሱጋሞ እባላለሁ። በፔፐርዲን ዩኒቨርሲቲ፣ በዓለም አቀፍ አመራር እና ለውጥ በሚል የትምህርት ክፍል በፌደራል ኢትዮጵያ የወንጀል ሕግ ፍትህ ሥርዓት ውስጥ የሀገር በቀል የግጭት አፈታት ዘዴዎችን ተቋማዊ ማድረግ ይቻል ይሆንን በሚል ርዕስ ላይ የድጎረ-ምረቃ (Ph.D.) ፕሮግራም የምርምር ጥናት እያደረኩ ያለሁ

ተመራማሪ ነኝ)። የዚህ ምርምር ጥናት የተናጥል ቃለ መጠይቅ (KII) ጥያቄዎች ተሳታፊ ሆነው የተመረጡበት ምክንያት ስለ ጥናቱ በቂ ዕውቀትና ተፈላጊ ተመክሮዎች ስላሉዎት ነው። ለዚህ ጥናት የተመረጡት ጎሣዎችን (ብሄረዎችን) በአካባቢ፣ በክልልና በብሄራዊ ደረጃ ከሚወክሉት ሽማግሌዎች አንዱ በመሆንዎ ነው። በጥናቱ ውስጥ ለመሳተፍ ከመወሰንዎ በፊት ከታች በዝርዝር የቀረበውን መረጃ ማንበብ ይጠበቅብዎታል። ሲያነቡ ያልገባዎት ነገር ካጋጠመዎትም መጠየቅ ይችላሉ። ለዚህም ይረዳዎት ዘንድ የፈለጉትን ያህል ጊዜ ወስደው ይህንን ቅፅ ያንብቡ። አስፈላጊ ከሆነም በጥናቱ ውስጥ ያለዎትን ተሳትፎ በሚመለከት ከቤተሰብዎ ወይም ከወዳጆችዎ ጋር መመካከር ይችላሉ። ለመሳተፍ ፈቃደኛ ሲሆኑ የግል መረጃዎን ሰጥተው በዚህ ቅጽ ላይ እንድትፈረሙ ይጠየቃሉ። መረጃዎቹም ለምርምር ዓላማ ብቻ ጥቅም ላይ ይውላሉ። ከተቻለ የዚህ ቅፅ ቅጂም በሠነድነት ያገለግልዎት ዘንድ እንዲደርስዎት ይደረጋል።

By signing this form, you are acknowledging you have read the study information. You acknowledge that your participation in the study is voluntary; you are at one of the elder o/y women who represent your ethnic group at local and national level years of age; and that you are aware that you may choose to terminate your participation in the study at any time and for any reason without penalty

በዚህ ቅፅ ላይ ሲፈረሙ ስለታቀደው ጥናት አንብበው የተረዱ መሆንዎን በማረጋገጥ ነው። የእርስዎ ተሳታፊነትም ሙሉ በሙሉ በፈቃደኝነት ላይ የተመሰረተ መሆኑን ማረጋገጥ ይኖርብዎታል። እርስዎ በአካባቢዎም ሆነ በሀገር አቀፍ ደረጃ ጎሣዎችን ከሚወክሉ ከሽማግሌዎች አንዱ ነዎት። በዚህ ጥናት ውስጥ የሚኖርዎትን ተሳትፎ በፈለጉ ጊዜ ምክንያት ማቅረብ ሳያስፈልገዎት ማቋረጥ ይችላሉ። ይህን በማድረግዎ ደግሞ የሚደርስብዎት ቅጣት ወይም ተገሳፅ አይኖርም።

Documentation of informed consent የስምምነት መግለጫ

You are voluntarily making a decision whether or not to participate in this research study. Signing this form means that በዚህ ጥናት ውስጥ ለመሳተፍ ወይም ለመሳተፍ በሙሉ ፈቃደኝነት መወሰን ያስፈልጋል። በዚህ ቅፅ ላይ መፈረም ማለት

- (a) you have read and understood this consent form, የስምምነት መግለጫ ቅፁን አንብበው ተረድተዋል
- (b) you have had the consent form explained to you, የስምምነት መግለጫ ቅፁ ተብራርቶሎታል።
- (c) you have had your questions answered, and ጥያቄዎ ተመልሶሎታል
- (d) you have decided to be in the research study. በጥናቱ ውስጥ ለመሳተፍ ወስነዋል
- (e) You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep የዚህ የስምምነት መግለጫ ቅፅ ቅጂ እንዲደርስዎት ይደረጋል ማለት ነው።

Manual signature of research participant የተሳታፊው የእጅ ፈረማ

I have read the informed consent information provided above. I have been given a chance to ask questions. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form. By selecting below, I consent, begin the interview, and you are signing this form manually. You agree that your manual signature is legal on this form ከላይ የተዘረዘረውን የስምምነት መግለጫ አንብቤያለሁ። ጥያቄ ለመጠየቅም ዕድል ተሰጥቶኝ የሚያረካ ምላሽ አግኝቻለሁ። የዚህ ቅፅ ቅጂም ደርሶኛል። በዚህም መሠረት ከዚህ በታች የቀረቡትን አመራጮች ላይ ምርጫዬን በማመልከት በዚህ ጥናት ውስጥ ለመሳተፍ ተስማምቼያለሁ። ቃለ መጠይቁን ለመጀመርም ተስማምቼያለሁ። ፈረማዬን ህጋዊ በሆነ መንገድ በእጄ የማሰፍር ይሆናል።

I voluntarily and knowingly give informed consent to participate in this research. በፈቃድ ከዚህ በታች በመፈረም ስምምነቴን እገልጻለሁ።

Signature of the Interviewee (የቃለ መጠይቁ ምላሽ ሰጪ ስምና ፊርማ)

Date ቀን

Signature of Researcher (የተመራማሪው ስምና ፊርማ)

Date ቀን

APPENDIX C

Pictures of Key Informants and Fouse Group Participants







APPENDIX D

IRB Approval

Pepperdine University
24255 Pacific Coast Highway
Malibu, CA 90263
TEL: 310-506-4000

NOTICE OF APPROVAL FOR HUMAN RESEARCH

Date: October 25, 2022

Protocol Investigator Name: Daniel Wolde Sugamo

Protocol #: 22-06-1870

Project Title: THE QUEST FOR INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF INDIGENOUS CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN THE ETHIOPIAN CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM.

School: Graduate School of Education and Psychology

Dear Daniel Wolde Sugamo:

Thank you for submitting your application for exempt review to Pepperdine University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). We appreciate the work you have done on your proposal. The IRB has reviewed your submitted IRB application and all ancillary materials. Upon review, the IRB has determined that the above entitled project meets the requirements for exemption under the federal regulations 45 CFR 46.101 that govern the protections of human subjects.

Your research must be conducted according to the proposal that was submitted to the IRB. If changes to the approved protocol occur, a revised protocol must be reviewed and approved by the IRB before implementation. For any proposed changes in your research protocol, please submit an amendment to the IRB. Since your study falls under exemption, there is no requirement for continuing IRB review of your project. Please be aware that changes to your protocol may prevent the research from qualifying for exemption from 45 CFR 46.101 and require submission of a new IRB application or other materials to the IRB.

A goal of the IRB is to prevent negative occurrences during any research study. However, despite the best intent, unforeseen circumstances or events may arise during the research. If an unexpected situation or adverse event happens during your investigation, please notify the IRB as soon as possible. We will ask for a complete written explanation of the event and your written response. Other actions also may be required depending on the nature of the event. Details regarding the timeframe in which adverse events must be reported to the IRB and documenting the adverse event can be found in the *Pepperdine University Protection of Human Participants in Research: Policies and Procedures Manual* at community.pepperdine.edu/irb.

Please refer to the protocol number denoted above in all communication or correspondence related to your application and this approval. Should you have additional questions or require clarification of the contents of this letter, please contact the IRB Office. On behalf of the IRB, I wish you success in this scholarly pursuit.

Sincerely,

Judy Ho, Ph.D., IRB Chair

cc: Mrs. Katy Carr, Assistant Provost for Research