



**THE NEXUS BETWEEN SOCIAL MEDIA AND ETHNIC IDENTITY: A STUDY OF  
STUDENTS AT DAYSTAR UNIVERSITY, NAIROBI, KENYA**

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## DECLARATION

This research project is my original work and has not been submitted to any other university.

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## **ABSTRACT**

The relationship between social media and ethnic identity has huge worldwide implications. Social media platforms serve as virtual spaces for people to express and reaffirm their ethnic affinities, whether they are cultural, ethnic, religious, or ideological. It is critical to comprehend how social media platforms contribute to the creation, maintenance, or alteration of ethnic identity as these platforms emerge as important venues for communication and information sharing. One major issue is the presence of online communities that reinforce established ethnic identities. The aim of the current study is, therefore to establish the nexus between social media and ethnic identity amongst a group of students at Daystar University, Nairobi. The study employed social identity theory, behavioral theory, primordialism theory, constructivism theory, ethnosymbolism, and instrumentalism theory. The current research utilizes a descriptive research design and a qualitative research approach to provide a comprehensive understanding of the concept under study. Data was collected using focused group discussions as well as an interview guide employed for primary data collection. Further, key informant interviews were conducted. Results indicate that students join social media for professional development, and it serves as a platform for cultural expression, community building, and identity formation. Moreover, social media is used for content creation and live streams of cultural events in their daily life. The students also use social media to connect with other ethnic members, learn about their own and other cultures, and express their cultural identity. Social media is used to promote ethnic identity by ensuring that in modern society there is a need to preserve culture. The study recommends that universities should implement programs that control the use of social media for social segregation and othering among students.

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## **ABBREVIATIONS**

ELF	Ethno-Linguistic Fractionalization
FGD	Focused Group Discussion
ICT	Communication and Technology
IKS	Indigenous Knowledge Systems
NACOSTI	National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation
SMBCs	Social Media Brand Communities
SMS	Short Message Sent
UKZN	University of KwaZulu-Natal

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Introduction

Individual identities are multifaceted, encompassing political, ethnic, economic, and religious dimensions. While this diversity enriches society, it can also lead to discrimination and bias, making individuals vulnerable to identity-based hate crimes. This vulnerability has become particularly evident in the digital age, where social media platforms can amplify discrimination against marginalized communities through hate speech and targeted attacks (Connelly, 2019; Wilson & Land, 2020). The evolution of social media has transformed users from mere consumers into active content creators who shape and negotiate their digital identities. While these platforms facilitate communication and information sharing, they can also become vehicles for spreading hate speech and contentious material that threatens community cohesion (Chetty & Alathur, 2018). This dual nature of social media necessitates careful examination of how these platforms influence identity construction and social group dynamics, particularly in multicultural settings.

This research aims to investigate how university students use social media to shape and negotiate their ethnic identities in digital spaces. It also explores how social media platforms enable or challenge ethnic identity development through content consumption, creation, and sharing, while also examining their impact on belonging, identity affirmation, and cultural heritage preservation (Radwan, 2022). While social media can empower marginalized groups and promote solidarity, it can also perpetuate discrimination and identity-based conflicts. As Alruwaili (2017) notes, online discourse has the potential to disrupt existing social hierarchies and power relations related to ethnicity and identity, making this investigation particularly relevant for understanding modern identity formation.

#### 1.2 Background of the Study

Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) are the traditional knowledge, practices, and beliefs passed down through generations within indigenous communities. These systems are an essential part of ethnic identity as they provide a cultural foundation that shapes individuals' worldview, social

relations, and connections to their environment (Ens et al., 2021). IKS encompasses a broad range of cultural elements, including language, rituals, agricultural knowledge, medicinal practices, and social norms, all of which play significant roles in the construction and preservation of ethnic identity (Shalom, 2023). Through communal participation in cultural practices and oral traditions, individuals are connected to their heritage and their community, creating a strong sense of belonging (Goerke & Anderson, 2020). These knowledge systems are more than just tools for survival—they are the mechanisms through which cultural continuity is maintained, ensuring that future generations inherit the values, customs, and traditions of their ancestors (Ens et al., 2021).

IKS are traditionally communicated through non-written forms, such as oral storytelling, songs, ceremonies, and the guidance of elders (Ens et al., 2021). This mode of transmission creates an intergenerational bond that ensures knowledge is not only preserved but also adapted to the evolving needs of the community. The continued relevance of IKS, despite technological advancements, underscores their resilience and adaptability. They provide a framework for interpreting the world, integrating local knowledge with broader cultural and ecological contexts (Langton, 2012). Through these systems, ethnic groups maintain a collective understanding of their history and cultural practices, which are crucial for the identity formation of individuals within these groups (Goerke & Anderson, 2020). Thus, IKS serve as the bedrock of ethnic identity, ensuring that cultural identity is grounded in a shared understanding of heritage, values, and customs.

However, the influence of IKS is now challenged by the advent of globalization and modern technologies that are reshaping how culture is experienced and transmitted. Social media platforms and digital technologies, which are central to the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR), offer new ways of expressing and sharing ethnic identity but also risk commodifying and diluting traditional knowledge (Shalom, 2023). While digital spaces provide opportunities for cultural revitalization, they also expose indigenous knowledge to the pressures of globalization and cultural appropriation, where authentic cultural expressions are often transformed for entertainment or commercial gain (Martínez-Navarro et al., 2020). Despite these challenges, IKS remain a vital source of cultural resilience, and their role in shaping ethnic identity continues to be crucial,

particularly for communities seeking to preserve their cultural integrity amidst globalized digital transformations (Langton, 2012).

The relationship between social media and ethnic identity has huge worldwide implications. Social media platforms serve as virtual spaces for people to express and reaffirm their ethnic affinities, whether they are cultural, ethnic, socioeconomic, political-religious, or ideological. These digital avenues enable the establishment of virtual tribes that transcend geographical limits and traditional constraints (Allen, 2022). From indigenous communities preserving their cultural history to diaspora populations connecting across continents, social media platforms provide opportunities for the revitalization and assertion of ethnic identities in an increasingly interconnected globe.

However, this global viewpoint emphasizes the complex dynamics and constraints that exist in the interaction between social media and ethnic identities. While these platforms can strengthen ethnic members' sense of belonging and solidarity, they also have the potential to aggravate divisions and disputes, especially when used for political or divisive purposes (Gerbaudo, 2018). Furthermore, the rapid spread of information and amplification of voices on social media can empower marginalized tribes to assert their rights and identities while also perpetuating stereotypes and misinformation (Evelina & Safitri, 2021). Understanding the global implications of social media on ethnic identity requires an in-depth study of its double potential as a tool for empowerment and a cause of dispute in modern society.

Ethnic identity is created by personal self-conception and social dynamics. Ethnicity means a shared sense of cultural heritage, characterized by traditions, language, history and religion (Yahaya, 2020). The shared heritage normally binds individuals belonging to a specific ethnic group. This herniate creates a difference between one ethnic group and another. Therefore, ethnic identity is rooted in the individual perspectives and the group affiliation. It enables self-identification following the ancestry lineage as well as maintaining and practicing cultural practices which define a social group. Thus, ethnicity offers a sense of belonging that creates its continuity for both individual and group identity.

Ethnicity has been shaped by social, historical, and political contexts, and, this concept has faced a lot of different interpretations and renegotiation over the past few years (Young, 2018). In the

advent of colonialism, migration, and globalization the concept of ethnic identities has been transformed and expressed in different ways. In this context, individuals many times over experience shifts in their ethnic identity resulting from personal choices as well as changing social circumstances. Sometimes individuals emphasize on different aspects of their ethnicity on the basis of their locality and ethnic context. The relationship between social structures and personal agency has become evident that the major ways of ethnic identities are constructed through historical progression and sustained in the long run (Musitha & Mafukata, 2020).

Moreover, ethnicity interconnects other aspects of identity, such as religion, race, politics, and nationality, indicating how individuals perceive themselves and how they perceive others (Jaspal, & Cinnirella, 2012). These connections result to different experiences of identity, on how people navigate through multiple conflicting sources of social identification. As noted by Young (2018), an individual or individuals may simultaneously identify themselves with specific ethnic heritage and national identity, and still experience both unity and tension between two affiliations. Thus, understanding ethnicity helps in highlighting the significance of considering how different identities interact and influence one another. This approach depends on the diverseness on human identity.

In the United States, the convergence of social media and ethnic identity has far-reaching ramifications for the country's social and political landscape. Social media platforms serve as virtual gathering places for people from various ethnic origins, such as ethnic, racial, cultural, and ideological groupings, to express themselves and engage in discourse (Eubank, 2019). From Native American tribes conserving their cultural legacy to online groups built around similar interests or political affiliations, social media provides an avenue for the establishment and reinforcement of ethnic identities in the American context.

The use of social media can help vulnerable tribe members communicate, build solidarity, intensify existing divisions and fuel social tensions (Reilly, 2021). These issues may polarize ethnic groups, preventing healthy discourse and spreading disinformation. Furthermore, using social media for political reasons might worsen inter-group disputes and widen societal divides (Gallacher, 2021). Thus, in the United States, understanding the function of social media in developing ethnic identity needs a comprehensive consideration of its impact on both community cohesion and societal

divisiveness. The technique applied is for Facebook users in the entire population of the United States to discover ethnic demographic features and how they relate. It can be observed that while Facebook has always been varied, diversity has increased over time, resulting in a population that now closely resembles the entire US population. The different ethnic groups interact with one another in an assortative manner, and these groups have distinct profiles in terms of demographics, opinions, and site feature utilization.

Social media has redefined the thinking around the capacity and intensity of interaction among individuals and groups of people across national and international borders (Islamy, 2020). Through App designs that encourage near addiction to use in various platforms, it is becoming more probable that public debates and social protests start, are fanned and may even be resolved online in these platforms. While studies from the global North have generated important insights, they are 'predicated on media-saturated societies with broad access to digital media technologies that have extended the range of media choices available to consumers' (Bosch et al., 2020, p-349-364), and hence cannot always facilitate understanding of the African context. In the African context, research on the nexus between digital media and politics has grown incrementally over the past decade (Nyabola, 2018).

One of the internet-based technologies that has tremendously transformed the world is social media. Many contemporary scholars see social media as collaborative online applications which enable and encourage participation, conversation, openness, creation and socialization amongst community of users (Schivinski and Dabrowski, 2016). The mass permeation of social media platforms in everyday life has led to an extension of the public sphere, by creating an additional space for citizens to share information and engaging in innovative communication practices with elected and unelected officials. Research has also shown that platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp and Twitter have also enabled activists in both democratic and autocratic contexts, to perform a variety of political activities like posting, re-tweeting, quoting or replying to tweets about politics, and engaging politicians and political parties, allowing users to participate in political debate.

In Africa, the connection between social media and ethnic identity reflects the continent's rich cultural fabric and complex historical legacy. Social media platforms have become critical outlets for Africans to declare their ethnic ties, celebrate cultural heritage, and communicate with fellow

tribe members, whether they live in their home countries or all over the world (Alakwe & Ogbu, 2017). From the Maasai of East Africa to the Yoruba of West Africa, social media acts as a digital arena for tribes to express their presence and negotiate their identities in the modern era.

However, the African perspective emphasizes the various issues that come with social media's impact on ethnic identity. While these platforms allow tribes to recover and share their stories, they can also increase existing tensions and disputes inside and across ethnic communities (Shakirullah et al., 2020). Ethnic polarization, disinformation, and hate speech are common on social media, exacerbating intergroup tensions and jeopardizing social cohesion. Furthermore, in areas beseeched by political unrest and ethnic warfare, social media can be used to instigate violence and create ethnic differences (Nyabuga, 2018). Thus, social media has the potential to empower African tribes, but its impact on ethnic identity must be negotiated with prudence to reduce the risk.

Navigating the African perspective, recognizing the continent's great diversity and complicated socio-political environments is critical, including through social media and ethnic identity. Social media platforms enable African tribes to assert their agency, magnify their voices, and mobilize for social change (Muinao & Ratnamala, 2023). However, the digital domain poses obstacles, such as the need to address issues of digital inequality, language variety, and cultural sensitivity. As African societies continue to tackle the challenges and opportunities posed by social media, this fosters inclusiveness, and responsible digital spaces become indispensable for nurturing a sense of belonging and unity across tribal boundaries while safeguarding against the divisive forces that threaten to undermine social harmony.

Social media is motivational to individuals' use of social media as an avenue for economic, social, and political identity (Koiranen et al., 2020). For starters, social media provides a forum for students to demonstrate their abilities, talents, and accomplishments, potentially improving their future economic chances through job possibilities, internships, or entrepreneurial endeavors. Furthermore, students utilize social media to connect with classmates, join communities of common interests, and grow their social networks, meeting their desire for social belonging and affiliation. Social media enables students to engage in political discourse, activism, and advocacy, including expressing opinions, mobilizing support for issues, and participating in civic engagement

efforts. Whether seeking economic possibilities, social connections, or channels for political expression, university students are drawn to social media as a diverse platform for creating and negotiating their identities within larger economic, social, and political settings.

In the digital age, university students use social media as a dynamic platform to create and express their many social identities. Students negotiate and promote many aspects of their identities through curated profiles, status updates, and interactions with peers, such as cultural backgrounds, academic interests, hobbies, and social group memberships. Social media allows students to experiment with multiple personalities and express themselves in ways that reflect their desired self-image or social objectives (Alakwe & Ogbu, 2017). Furthermore, platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter function as virtual communities where students may connect with like-minded people, seek validation from their peers, and build new social networks that extend beyond their physical campuses (Hu et al., 2020). University students actively build their social identities by interacting and presenting themselves online, negotiating the challenges of belonging and self-representation.

Students use social media as a diverse platform to express a variety of social identities. Students utilize social media to represent their multi-dimensional identities by promoting academic achievements and intellectual hobbies as well as honoring cultural heritage and ethnic backgrounds (Heidari et al., 2023). They also share hobbies, interests, and passions, which leads to connections with peers who share similar affinities, and the formation of online communities centered on mutual interests. Additionally, students join social groups, clubs, and organizations to promote events and causes while expressing their dedication to common principles (Elsayed, 2021). Furthermore, social media allows students to establish their professional identities, network with professionals, showcase talents, and seek job prospects. Through these various kinds of social identity, university students traverse the complications of self-expression and community-building in the digital age.

Furthermore, a study done by Otieno and Mukhongo (2015) reveal how Kenyan youth both in Kenya and diaspora use social media to weave their own political narratives and present them in forums that accommodate their views without fear of censorship or regulation that characterizes offline communications. There are also studies that indicate that most youth use social media as

the only available tool for protesting against some policies of government and in the field of development and its impact on the youth, for instance, on civic engagement (Kashara, 2022). Although research has been conducted on social media in general, little qualitative research has been conducted on users' perceptions and experiences of social media particularly on why Kenyan youth has not embraced social media as a tool of resisting the use of tribalism and ethnicity and its power in capturing and running the state. It has to be clarified that tribalism and ethnicity have remained Kenya's single most intractable challenges that has been passed on from colonial and post-colonial generations (Obala & Mattingly, 2014). With the rise of social media among the youth in Kenya, one wonders why tribalism and ethnicity continue to remain defining factors of Kenyan politics among the youth.

There are studies that reveal how most Kenyan youth use social media as an instrument of social activities such as staying in-touch, staying up to date, entertainment, communication, content sharing, and to meet new people among others (Kamau, 2017). Some studies indicate that most youth use social media as the only available tool for protesting against some policies of government and in the field of development and its impact on the youth, for instance, on civic engagement (Bosch, Admire and Ncube, 2020; Kashara, 2022). There are also studies that have concentrated on the most popular social media platforms used by Kenyan youth, primarily on Facebook and Twitter (Ndiege, 2019). Although research has been conducted on social media in general, little qualitative research has been conducted on users' perceptions and experiences of social media particularly on why Kenyan youth has not embraced social media as a tool of resisting the use of tribalism and ethnicity and its power in capturing and running the state (Busolo and Ngigi, 2018; Onyalla, 2018; Kibet and Ward, 2018; Brinkman, 2019.). It has to be clarified that tribalism and ethnicity have remained Kenya's single most intractable challenges that has been passed on from colonial and post-colonial generations (Obala and Mattingly, 2014). With the rise of social media among the youth in Kenya, one wonders why tribalism and ethnicity continue to remain defining factors of Kenyan politics among the youth

Among university students, a study done by Njoroge (2013) reveals that Kenyan students use social media for political information seeking, sharing, and online expression. Social media also promotes new forms of social, economic and political behavior that goes beyond tribalism and

ethnicity. However, limited research has demonstrated why university students display tribal and ethnic likes and hatred on social media networks (Ngethe, Lagat and Maina, 2021). Further the study argues that university students within university spaces hold key to detribalizing and transforming the nature of Kenyan politics - there is dearth of research that explores important role that social media play in determining how prejudices and behavior that reject, exclude and often vilify persons based on the perception that they are outsiders or foreigners to the tribe or ethnic community, are constructed among university students in Kenya. Hence, the link between the use of social media and issues of tribal identification, socialization and mobilization among Kenyan university students remain under-researched.

University students make meaning around their ethnic or ethnic identities, using a variety of digital tools and interactions to traverse their cultural history in modern circumstances. Koironen et al. (2020) asserted that students create narratives that highlight their tribal or ethnic roots using curated postings, images, and discussions, reinforcing their sense of belonging and connection to their group. They share personal tales, customs, and symbols, fostering a sense of pride and cultural continuity. Furthermore, social media allows students to navigate the complexities of their tribal or ethnic identities, examining how these identities intersect with other elements of their lives, such as academic pursuits, social relationships, and career goals. By participating in discourse with classmates from other backgrounds, students get insights into the diverse experiences and perspectives within their community, contributing to a richer knowledge of their own identity.

Nevertheless, making sense of tribal or ethnic identities on social media is fraught with difficulties and contradictions. Students may come across stereotypes and cultural appropriation in online places, causing them to face and refute traditions regarding their tribe or race (Elsayed, 2021). Furthermore, the digital sphere dissolves conventional tribal or ethnic boundaries as students navigate through hybrid identities molded by global influences, migration, and cosmopolitan lifestyles. As a result, while social media allows students to declare and explore their tribal or ethnic identities, it also requires critical thinking and negotiation as they navigate the complexity of identity building in the digital era.

While the 2010 Constitution has made strides in addressing social inequity, ethnicity in Kenya continues to prevail. Despite significant constitutional strides to address social inequities, the

spectre of ethnicity continues to cast its shadow over the nation. Ethnicity is explained as a deeply ingrained practice, manifesting in a profound commitment to one's ethnic origins. This commitment results in the demonization or exclusion of individuals from other ethnic groups, perpetuating divisions within Kenyan society.

Mafeje (1971), asserts that ethnicity is the habit and practice of having an extraordinarily strong bond or loyalty to one's tribe of origin such that it either demonizes or excludes other ethnic groups that do not belong to that particular group. Mangcu (2017) noted that ethnicity is a social injustice that reproduces itself in various short-term and spatial contexts by renewing ancient prejudices and utilizing them to make discriminatory practices appear right. Ethnic groups in Kenya are used as cultural and traditional practices to define one's kinship and social networks. However, most of the time, ethnicity serves as a foundation for stereotypes used as a factor that divides Kenyans along their ethnicity and ethnic groups rather than uniting them.

Ethnicity is a complex term that encompasses cultural, historical, and social undertones. Ethnicity affects people's identities and how they interact with others in society. Sociologists frequently see ethnicity as a social construct that separates people into groups according to common cultural characteristics, including language, religion, and customs. Khunti et al. (2020) argued that ethnicity is socially determined and transcends biological distinctions, and it is essential to the development of social relationships and group affiliations. These ethnic affinities help to form distinctive groups with their own customs, beliefs, and social mores which influences how people view themselves and interact with others.

Othring is a social process in which individuals or groups are regarded and treated as fundamentally different or inferior because of perceived disparities from the dominant social norm or in-group (Caprar et al., 2022). This process frequently includes the creation of stereotypes, and hierarchies that maintains the division between "us" and "them." This can be perceived through cultural dimensions, ethnic identification, or ideological differences. This "us versus them" dynamic is a basic part of ethnic identity, in which individuals set boundaries between themselves and others they consider to be outsiders. Individuals improve their sense of belonging and cohesion within their tribe by reinforcing in-group rules, values, and behaviors, while also excluding or marginalizing those seen as others. This ethnic othering can take many forms, ranging from biases

and stereotypes to outright acts of discrimination and prejudice, sustaining cycles of social separation and conflict. Understanding the causes behind ethnic identifications and othering is vital for cultivating empathy, enhancing intergroup understanding, and building more inclusive communities.

This concept strengthens group cohesion and identification while also instilling a sense of superiority over perceived outsiders (Spears, 2021). Ethnic identifications frequently result in the formation of stereotypes and prejudices against people perceived as different, establishing social hierarchies and perpetuating discrimination. Social media platforms, in the digital sphere, provide a solid ground to amplify and reinforce the concept of ethnic identities as individuals seek validation and affirmation within similar online communities. However, digital othering can aggravate societal divisions by creating echo chambers and preventing empathy and understanding for others outside one's community. Khumancha & Khumancha (2020), noted that understanding the mechanisms of othering in ethnic identifications is critical for encouraging inclusivity, empathy, and constructive conversation across varied social groupings.

In addition to social element of behavior determination, socio-psychological elements also play a significant role to explain the behavior of individual or community. These Socio-psychological elements encompass a wide range of factors that are associated with by individual psychological processes as well as the societal influences (Savari, et al, 2022:13077). Socialization is one of the primary factors of socio-psychological development, wherein the lifelong process involves individuals to internalize the norms learnt, values, and social skills applicable in their society. This process starts at childhood level with interactions with family members, peers at schools, and other through media (Knapp et al., 2021 p-204-220). This interaction shapes an individual's behavior and identity and guiding their behavior in various social contexts. For example, the way parents administer discipline to their children, the cultural narratives presented by media and the expectations set by educators, determines how individual social norms are developed.

Social influence is another socio-psychological element that shapes human behavior. This includes compliance, conformity, and obedience (Severijns et al., 2023). Where conformity refers to the tendency on individuals relating to their beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors with those of a group where they belong, this is normally driven by a desire for being accepted in the group.

Additionally, compliance entails changing one's behavior as a result of direct request from another person, whether to avoid punishment or get a reward. Lastly, obedience which is an element of social influence is shaped by following directives or orders given by an authority, this may be against one's own moral judgments but it has to be followed. These forms of social influence highlight the power and expectations to shape other individuals' behavior.

Group dynamics and social identity also play a significant role in shaping individual behavior. Social identity theory posits that a person's sense of who they are is based on their group memberships, such as nationality, ethnicity, social class, or even hobbies (Charness, & Chen, 2020, p-691-713). This affiliation provides a sense of belonging and self-esteem but can also lead to in-group favoritism and out-group discrimination. Individual behavior can be influenced by group dynamics, such as groupthink. Further, the desire for harmony and conformity within a group can result in irrational decision-making (Hogg, 2021:263-316). Understanding these dynamics helps explain why individual actions are different from group settings as compared to when they are alone.

In some circumstances, there has been deliberate orchestration of animosity where some content is created aimed at fostering resentment, hostility, or animosity towards a group, particular individual, or entity (Rathje et al., 2021). The process can sometimes start with finding controversial themes or issues that elicit strong emotional responses from the target audience. The narrative is designed to accentuate existing tensions or generate perceived grievances, fostering enmity through deliberate framing and selective information presentation. Furthermore, utilizing the anonymity and dynamics of social media platforms can aggravate enmity by encouraging the establishment of politicized and radicalized online communities (Hartman et al., 2022). Further, misinformation dissemination, personal attacks, and cultivating "us versus them" mentalities are frequent techniques used to exacerbate divisions where one group generates enmity toward the targeted entity. Repeated exposure to such content can harden enmity among social media users, sustaining a cycle of conflict and polarization inside online networks.

Furthermore, ethnicity can be investigated psychologically, with a focus on how it affects the establishment of a sense of identity and belonging. People negotiate their ethnic identities as they move through their social settings; this may entail accepting, modifying, or rejecting cultural

aspects that are specific to their ethnicity. The dynamic character of this process is emphasized by Phinney's model of ethnic identity development, which also emphasizes the significance of exploration, commitment, and resolution in the formation of a stable and affirmative ethnic identity (Phinney, 1993). A more complete understanding of how ethnicity shapes both individual and collective experiences within diverse civilizations is made possible by recognizing ethnicity from these many angles.

In Kenya, ethnicity has changed over time as a result of social, political, and historical influences. Kenya is renowned for its multi-ethnic landscape, with many different ethnic groups that all add to the country's unique fabric (Mulubale, 2017). According to Kenya's national bureau of statistics survey in 2023, Kenya has a total of 42 ethnic groups. Out of these the largest ethnic group is the Kikuyu (8,148,668), followed by the Luhya (6,820,000), the Kalenjin (6,358,113), Luo (5,066,966), the Kamba (4,663,910), the Somalis (2,780,502), the Kisii (2,703,235), the Mijikenda (2,488,691), the Meru (1,975,869), the Maasai (1,189,522), and the Turkana (1,016,174). Thus, given these statistics, the dominant ethnic group is the Kikuyu. However, Kenyans' views of ethnicity have been greatly influenced by the historical legacy of colonialism. Divide and rule was a strategy used by the British colonial government, which heightened tensions between different populations and highlighted ethnic divides. In modern Kenya, the perception of ethnicity has been shaped by this history (Bedasso, 2015).

Kenya's ethnic diversity, poses a wide range of cultural landscapes that has over the years posed a challenge for national unity (Bosire, & Fiseha, 2022:159-176). Historically, ethnic tensions have periodically surfaced, particularly during electoral periods, where political alliances often align with ethnic affiliations, exacerbating divisions. The underlying tensions were highlighted in the 2007-2008 post-election violence which led to significant international efforts to create peace-building and reconciliation reducing tension among the communities. Despite the extent of diversity there is some restored progress in fostering inter-ethnic and social cohesion and harmony through initiatives like the 2010 constitution which promoted devolution and equitable resource distribution. The conflict resulting from marginalization among some communities still exists and this indicates that achieving lasting ethnic harmony remains a challenge.

Ethnicity has been a prominent issue in Kenyan politics since the postcolonial era (Kabiri, 2014). Ethno-political mobilization has occurred in the nation on occasion, giving rise to issues such as ethnic-ism and ethnic favoritism. Political parties and coalitions have occasionally formed along ethnic lines in Kenya due to the competitive nature of the country's politics (Bedasso, 2015). As a result, there have occasionally been ethnic tensions and wars. Nonetheless, initiatives to advance inclusivity and national unity have also been made, realizing the significance of bridging ethnic divides for the country's overall success. The 2010 adoption of a new constitution, for instance, marked a change in how ethnicity is viewed and handled in Kenya by resolving historical injustices and fostering inclusivity. Kenya has been found to be one of the leading countries regarding social media usage in East and Central Africa where Twitter, Facebook, WhatsApp, and other online platforms are a part of everyday life (Mare, 2018; Njeru, 2021; Nyabola, 2018). It is on these social media platforms that have been used to fuel violent ethnic protests in Kenya. For instance, in the 2007 election, there are claims that social media played a role in antagonizing ethnic groups against each other, which resulted in the 2007/2008 post-election violence.

Research reveals that social media has been used as media in protest movements in Kenya. Some studies reveal that social media (both old and new) plays a key role in fueling tribalism and ethnicity in Kenya. For instance, in the 2007 election, there are claims that social media played a role in antagonizing tribes against each other that resulted into the 2007/ 2008 post-election violence. Similarly, it is said that although voting patterns in the March 2013 and 2017 elections were clearly along ethnic lines just like in 2007, there was no physical post-election violence like was the case in 2008. There are also scholars who argue that rather than perpetuating ethnic hatred the social media has played a key role in promoting reconciliation and sustainable peace in Kenya during and after the 2007/8 post-election violence (Gakunju 2017). What is clear in the foregoing arguments is that social media has become pivotal in creating civic spaces for robust political debate and speaking truth to power (Mare, 2018) especially among the youth both locally, and in the diaspora to weave their own political narratives and present them in forums that accommodate their views without fear of censorship or regulation.

Social media platforms have been utilized, for instance, to spread false information and create polarizing narratives during election seasons, which has exacerbated ethnic confrontations in the

real world. Scholars have investigated how social media influences the escalation or reduction of ethnic conflicts in Kenya.

There is an increase in social media use among university students in Kenya as an instrument of social interaction and civic education. This has led to an expectation that social media platforms should play a leading role in promoting an anti-ethnic mind set among Kenyan university students. However, there have been many instances of ethnic expressions among university students on social media (Kamau, 2017; Koross & Kosgei, 2016). While published research on ethnicity is extensive (Kamau, 2022; Kimani, 2018; MacWilliam, 2012; Ngarachu, 2014; Shilaho, 2018; Waller, 2013), it has rarely investigated the link between the use of social media and ethnic identity construction among Kenyan university students. Using social identity (Hogg & Ridgeway, 2003; Tajfel & Turner, 1986) and behavioral theories (Alland, 1973; Kelley & Michela, 1980), this study will explore the link between the use of social media and ethnic identity construction among Kenyan university students. The existing lack of scholarship on the link between the use of social media and ethnic identity construction among Kenyan university students is an undertaking this study seeks to explore and achieve.

In Kenya, similar to other countries, social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, and Twitter have somehow increased the level of freedom of speech despite the guidelines and regulations given by the government authorities (Cohen & Kahne, 2012; Kamau, 2017; Mare, 2018; Velasquez & LaRose, 2015). Due to the functions of liking, loving, and sharing on online social media, many people have participated in affirmation of posts that are ethnic in nature, even without being aware of doing so. Most of the time they do so by creating fake accounts and without writing the messages themselves.

Ethnic identification has become a feature and projection of social media users on what they think or feel toward another person of a particular ethnic group (Nyabola, 2018). These projections on social media are increasingly becoming ways through which ethnic stereotypes and prejudices are spread among the youth. Consequently, social media has emerged as a powerful tool for ethnic socialization and mobilization. Rather than dismantling ethnic fears and hatred, Kaigwa (2017) and Wanjiru (2021) contended that social media has become a key tool for transmitting stereotypes that divide Kenyans along their ethnic lines.

In the recent past, Kenya has seen both encouraging and unsettling trends concerning ethnicity (Kamau, 2017). Through steps to promote inclusivity and constitutional reforms, the nation has worked to overcome historical ethnic tensions and advance national unity. Politics in Kenya is still heavily influenced by ethnic identity, with political allegiances frequently following ethnic lines (Bedasso, 2015). Election competition has occasionally widened ethnic gaps, and worries about ethnicity continue. Social media's ability to magnify polarizing narratives has made it both a source of worry and a tool for mobilization during elections and other politically tense events.

A number of scholars Abok and Kwanya (2016) and Owidi and Njoroge (2021) who have contributed to a body of knowledge on the use of social media as a tool for political socialization, mobilization, electoral violence, community development and integration among the youth - such studies have not interrogated the perceptions of Kenyan university students on issues of social media and ethnic/ tribal identification. Kenya's youth, who account for a sizable share of the population, are pushing beyond ethnic divides to demand a more inclusive and cohesive national identity. The need for embracing diversity and creating a common national identity that transcends racial or ethnic affinities is becoming more widely recognized. In order to create a sense of togetherness and shared destiny among Kenya's diverse population, attempts to form a good trajectory for ethnicity must include civic education, grassroots initiatives, and continuous discourse.

### **1.3 Statement of the Problem**

The advent of social media has profoundly reshaped the way individuals interact with information, construct identities, and engage in public discourse (Gündüz, 2017). While social media provides numerous opportunities for connectivity and cultural exchange, it also raises significant concerns regarding its impact on social cohesiveness and intergroup relations, particularly in relation to ethnic identity (Kent & Li, 2020). As social media platforms become central in communication, it is crucial to understand how they contribute to the creation, maintenance, or alteration of ethnic identity in the digital age. One major concern is the emergence of online communities that reinforce established ethnic identities, where users are often exposed to content that aligns with their prior beliefs and ethnic affiliations (Rafi et al., 2020; Duncheon, 2020). These virtual echo chambers can result in a narrowing of perspectives, which may help to consolidate ethnic identities

while fostering an environment prone to stereotyping, prejudice, and intergroup conflict. This is further exacerbated by the fact that social media algorithms frequently prioritize content based on user choices, amplifying ethnic biases and potentially creating divisions among different groups (Duncheon, 2020).

Another critical issue raised by social media is the dissemination of misinformation and hate speech, particularly during sensitive times such as elections or periods of social unrest (Hilary & Dumebi, 2021). The rapid transmission of controversial content on these platforms has the potential to aggravate existing tensions, resulting in the further division of ethnic groups and increasing social polarization. The role of social media in shaping ethnic identity-based disputes must be understood in depth, as this understanding is vital for developing effective policies to combat misinformation, promote responsible online behavior, and establish a more inclusive digital environment (Ombui, 2021). The complexity of how social media affects ethnic identity highlights the need for research that examines the intricate relationship between online and offline aspects of identity formation. By investigating how individuals navigate and manage their ethnic identities in the digital space, we can gain critical insights into the role of social media in mobilizing communities along ethnic lines and its implications for social and political dynamics (Mishra, 2020).

The pervasive use of social media in university settings has created a paradoxical challenge where increased digital connectivity appears to reinforce rather than transform ethnic divisions. Despite widespread adoption of platforms like WhatsApp, Facebook, TikTok, and Instagram, university students' ethnic identities often become more entrenched rather than evolving through cross-cultural exchange. Ngethe et al. (2021) observe that while online social networks have become normalized for personal connectivity, they frequently serve to solidify existing ethnic boundaries rather than bridge them. This digital entrenchment of ethnic identity is particularly concerning given the documented risks of cyberbullying, identity theft, and ethnic profiling in online spaces (Owidi & Njoroge, 2021). Studies by Chang et al. (2010) and Heidari, Salimi, and Mehrvarz (2023) reveal that despite universities' significant investment in digital resources, social media platforms often function as echo chambers that amplify ethnic divisions rather than as tools for intercultural understanding. This is exacerbated by what Chetty and Alathur (2018) identify as the growing

reliance on social networks for political activism and social discourse, where ethnic affiliations can become further polarized. Using Daystar University as a case study, this research investigated how social media platforms can be better leveraged to promote positive ethnic identity development while mitigating their potential to reinforce harmful ethnic divisions.

#### **1.4 Research Questions**

1. What motivates university students to use social media as a space for economic, social, and political identification in Kenya?
2. How do university students use social media to construct their social identities and how does indigenous knowledge systems influence this process?
3. What forms of social identification do university students use on social media?
4. How do university students in Kenya (de)construct, (re)negotiate, and make meaning of their ethnic identities on social media
5. How aware are university students of the seemingly inherent ethnic identity tensions between Kenya's plural communities expressed on social media?
6. How does the inherent ethnic tension influence the usage of different social media platforms by university students?

#### **1.5 Research Objectives**

1. Establish what motivates university students to use social media as a space for economic, social, and political identification in Kenya.
2. Examine how university students use social media to construct their social identities and integrate Indigenous Knowledge Systems
3. Reveal different forms of social identifications that university students use on social media.
4. Determine how university students in Kenya (de)construct, (re)negotiate, and make meaning of their ethnic identities on social media
5. Establish whether university students are aware of the seemingly inherent ethnic identity tensions between Kenya's diverse communities expressed on social media.
6. Find out how these inherent ethnic tensions influence the utilization of various online social networks by students in universities.

## **1.6 Significance of the Study**

The study findings will help the Commission of Social Cohesion and Conflict Mitigation in Kenya in comprehending the impact of social media on ethnic identity, which is essential for enhancing social cohesion and mitigating future conflicts. Understanding the mechanisms by which social media upholds ethnic boundaries or promotes inclusive dialogue enables governments and community leaders to formulate targeted strategies that enhance positive interactions and bridge divides. The findings may inform initiatives aimed at enhancing digital literacy and promoting suitable online behavior. Understanding the dissemination of misinformation and hate speech on social media, particularly concerning ethnic identity, can inform the creation of educational programs and interventions aimed at teaching users to critically assess content and participate in constructive online discussions.

This study's results may inform the development of legislation and regulations governing social media platforms. Governments and regulatory agencies can utilize evidence-based insights to create frameworks that tackle issues related to the intersection of social media and ethnic identity, aiming to balance freedom of expression with the mitigation of harmful online activities. Examining the negotiation of ethnic identities in digital contexts could identify opportunities for community development and inclusivity. The study may identify instances where social media platforms facilitate relationships across ethnic divides, offering valuable insights for fostering a shared identity and understanding. This study enhances the understanding of evolving identity dynamics in the digital era. This work enhances the literature on the socio-cultural impacts of technology, providing scholars and researchers with insights into the complex relationship between social media and ethnic identity, thereby advancing the fields of social sciences and communication studies.

## **1.7 Scope of the Study**

The study took place at Daystar University in Kenya, providing a focused geographical and institutional context for examining the intersection of social media and ethnic identity among university students. This specific setting was selected because it offered a controlled environment where the research could be contextually grounded while acknowledging that social dynamics and social media usage patterns varied across different locations and educational institutions. The

choice of Daystar University enabled the researcher to conduct an in-depth examination of how students within a particular institutional context navigated their ethnic identities through social media platforms.

The research methodology was qualitative in nature, employing interviews and focus group discussions as primary data collection methods. These approaches were particularly valuable as they facilitated the gathering of rich, detailed insights into students' lived experiences regarding their use of social media and its influence on their ethnic identity construction. The qualitative methodology allowed participants to share their personal narratives, perspectives, and experiences in their own words, providing context-specific understanding of how they negotiated their ethnic identities in digital spaces. This approach was especially relevant given the complex and nuanced nature of ethnic identity formation and expression through social media platforms.

Ethical considerations formed a crucial component of the study's scope, with strict protocols being implemented to protect participants' wellbeing and ensure voluntary participation. Given the sensitive nature of discussions around ethnic identity in the Kenyan context. The researcher maintained rigorous ethical standards throughout the research process. This included obtaining proper consent, protecting participant privacy, and ensuring confidentiality in data collection and analysis. The ethical framework was particularly important given the potential vulnerability of students when discussing matters related to ethnic identity and social media use, aspects which often intersected with broader social and political dynamics in Kenya.

### **1.8 Limitations of the Study**

The study may face number of limitations; to begin with respondents may be hesitant in providing information due to fear of victimization on privacy. However, the researcher will mitigate this by providing the relevant documents for privacy and anonymity. The researcher will use the letters from the university that explains the study purpose. Further, explaining that the research is purely for academic purposes and that their information was treated with confidentiality.

### **1.9 Dissertation Layout**

Chapter one presents the introduction of the topic under study, background explaining the research topic and the concept under study. It also presents, the statement of the problem, the objectives

guiding the study, research questions, as well as the significance of the study. Furthermore, the chapter presents scope and study limitations. The second chapter will present a review of literature, summary, and gaps in literature. Chapter three will cover the theoretical framework for the study viz the social identity theory and behavioral theory. Chapter four will present the research methodology in terms of the research design, target population, sampling design, sample size and, data source, pilot tests, and diagnostic tests used to generate empirical information that answers the research questions. Furthermore, data collection procedures, data analysis, and ethical issues will be presented in this chapter. Chapter five will present the analysis and interpretation of data and lastly chapter six will provide the key findings of the study, summary of the thesis and conclusion.

### **1.10 Definition of Key Terms**

<b>Animosity</b>	refers to strong hostility or antagonism toward someone or something. It is characterized by intense dislike, resentment, or ill will, often manifesting in unfriendly or aggressive behavior.
<b>Ethnic marginalization</b>	refers to the systematic exclusion or disadvantaging of certain ethnic groups from general participation in the economic, social, and political life in the society.
<b>Ethnic othering</b>	ethnic othering is the process by which certain ethnic groups are perceived and treated as inferior, and fundamentally different, compared to a dominant normally taken as alien.
<b>Social media</b>	refers to online platforms and technologies that enable users to create, share, and interact with content and each other.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter presented the literature review based on the study variables. A summary of the empirical review and conceptual framework sourced through secondary data is illustrated in this chapter. The conceptual framework elaborated the relationship between independent variables and dependent variables. The chapter provided the empirical literature review covering the study objectives on the nexus between social media and ethnic identity. The chapter presented the relationship between tribalism and ethnic identity - also unpacking the concept of ethnicity. Additionally, the chapter will present the ethnic identity in the global context as well as the African continent. Moreover, the ethnic identity in the Kenyan context was reviewed. Further, the chapter outlined the relationship between ethnicity and colonialism and emerging ethnicity post colonialism. Lastly the chapter outlined how modernity is related to ethnicity culture.

#### 2.2 Tribalism and Ethnic Identity

In the early post-colonial era, modernization theorists, influenced by functionalist perspectives, viewed tribalism as particularistic and rooted in ascriptive factors rather than universalistic and achievement-oriented values, considering it detrimental to modern society's development (Freeman, 2020). While social science has struggled to make precise distinctions between tribes, ethnic groups, and nations, the Smith theory (1759) provided valuable insights by highlighting modern nationalism's contingent nature while acknowledging ethnic continuity's important role in its formation. Primordialist theories of ethnicity and nationalism gained significant influence because they effectively explained the enduring strength of ethnic sentiments that other sociological and political theories assumed would fade with modernization. In the contemporary world of nation-states, ethno-nationalist movements, and various non-ethnic forms of solidarity, there emerged an urgent need to reassess enlightenment ideals of cosmopolitanism to promote social change, while incorporating valuable insights from theories of ethno-nationalism. This reassessment acknowledged the persistent significance of ethnic identity in modern society while recognizing the need for more inclusive approaches to national development.

Ferrera, (2015) conducted an in-depth literature review to examine the evolutionary factors influencing the evolution of tribal instincts and behaviors. The research adopted the Darwinian theoretical framework on social instinct and morality which laid the foundation for the evolution of tribal/ethnic discourse. Results revealed that the idea of group selection was key factor that suggested that tribes with members willing to prioritize group interests over their own would have an advantage in competition. This perspective introduces a moral dilemma: the connection between loyalty and unity within a group and hostility towards external groups. While tribalism often implies a moral double standard, suggesting that human tendencies for "us-and-them" categorization don't inevitably lead to conflict (Ferrera, 2015). Interactions between groups can range from peaceful cooperation to hostility and violence. Moreover, the Bowen family systems theory (1966) was utilized to elucidate the emotional processes crucial for understanding this spectrum of outcomes, starting with an examination of the balance between individuality and collective identity. The concept of differentiation of self is explored in the context of tribalism and social change processes

Tikumah (2023) conducted a study on the colonial creation of tribalism in Africa. While acknowledging some truth in colonial influence, the study found that attributing the creation of tribalism solely to colonialism was an oversimplified and exaggerated accusation. The research revealed that in precolonial Africa, tribal groupings and inter-group conquests existed even before European colonization. Furthermore, Tikumah (2023) argued that colonialism did not create but rather intensified tribalism in Africa by energizing group consciousness through the introduction of new tribal classifications and names, alongside the provision of selective educational and economic opportunities. This differential access to colonial education and resources ultimately created new forms of social stratification, leading to what the study described as a form of educational enslavement for certain African communities that were excluded from these opportunities.

Tribalism and ethnic identity have long played central roles in shaping societies and human interactions. Tribalism, rooted in loyalty to one's group, provides a strong sense of belonging and unity. Historically, it served as an organizing principle for governance, economic cooperation, and social solidarity in many African societies (Falola & Fleming, 2020). Ethnic identity, meanwhile,

encompasses shared cultural markers like language, religion, and traditions, reinforcing community ties and cultural preservation. During the colonial era, tribalism was manipulated by imperial powers through divide-and-rule strategies, institutionalizing ethnic divisions for administrative convenience and control (Michalopoulos & Papaioannou, 2016). This manipulation left lasting effects, as ethnic identity became politicized, influencing power dynamics in post-colonial states.

In contemporary politics, tribalism often undermines efforts to build inclusive governance structures. Political systems in many African nations are shaped by ethnic alliances, where leaders prioritize their ethnic group over national interests, leading to marginalization and inter-group competition. In Kenya, for example, political alignments during elections often reflect tribal loyalties, sometimes resulting in violence, as seen in the 2007 post-election crisis (Human Rights Watch, 1993). Such conflicts are often exacerbated by disparities in resource allocation, with accusations of favoritism fueling grievances. While tribalism can enhance group cohesion, its divisive aspects often hinder efforts to create equitable and democratic societies, where national identity should ideally transcend ethnic affiliations.

Economically, tribalism and ethnic identity create both opportunities and challenges. On one hand, ethnic solidarity fosters informal safety nets, where resources and opportunities are shared within the group. However, this often leads to nepotism and exclusion of outsiders, reinforcing inequalities. In urban centres, tribal networks influence access to housing, education, and employment, perpetuating ethnic hierarchies (Obala & Mattingly, 2014). Additionally, globalization introduces further complexity, as traditional tribal structures adapt to modern economic systems. While this process often brings opportunities for growth, it also threatens to erode cultural practices, as global economic integration pressures communities to prioritize competitiveness over traditional ways of life (Hirsch & Lopes, 2020).

Tribalism and ethnic identity are also deeply entwined with cultural preservation and social cohesion. Ethnic groups have historically relied on their shared identity to maintain traditions and pass down cultural knowledge. For instance, Somali pastoral communities have resisted the homogenizing forces of modernization, preserving their cultural practices and ways of life

(Gashaw, 2017). Yet, these positive aspects of ethnic identity are frequently overshadowed by its role in conflict. Competition for resources, often framed along ethnic lines, drives disputes in regions like the Sahel, where tribal rivalries fuel ongoing instability (Akinola & Ramontja, 2023). This tension between cultural preservation and inter-group rivalry highlights the dual-edged nature of tribalism.

Abdelrahim (2023) conducted a study examining the influence of tribalism on oppression levels in African countries. Through a systematic literature review and analysis of hypothetical evidence, alongside secondary data from the Freedom Human Index (2020), the research employed simple linear regression analysis to establish relationships between variables. The findings revealed a positive and significant relationship between tribalism and oppression. The study made significant contributions to existing literature by empirically identifying new indicators of oppression and developing a conceptual framework for future research. The research concluded that these findings would be valuable for policymakers seeking to understand the origins of various social issues including violence, oppression, powerlessness, marginalization, and cultural imperialism, thereby enabling them to develop targeted policies for addressing these challenges affecting African communities.

Addressing the challenges posed by tribalism and ethnic identity requires fostering inclusive systems that respect diversity while promoting unity. Post-genocide Rwanda offers a valuable example, where national reconciliation efforts emphasized unity and a shared national identity, reducing ethnic tensions (Ngarachu, 2014). Education, equitable governance, and intercultural dialogue are critical tools for mitigating the divisive aspects of tribalism. Additionally, the rise of digital platforms presents both risks and opportunities; while social media can amplify tribal divisions through hate speech, it also has the potential to foster cross-cultural understanding when used responsibly (Bosch et al., 2020). Ultimately, balancing cultural preservation with the demands of modern nation-states remains a central challenge in addressing tribalism and its implications for society.

### **2.3 Unpacking the Concept of Ethnic Identity**

Unpacking ethnic identity involves delving into the complex interplay of individual self-conception, culture, and heritage (Uy, 2018). Ethnic identity is shaped by social dynamics, historical experiences, and personal reflections. The process begins with understanding one's lineage and the cultural practices passed down through generations, including traditions, language, and values that form the foundation of one's ethnic background (Arora et al., 2021). These cultural elements provide a sense of belonging by which a community creates continuity, linking individuals to a larger community that transcends time. However, ethnic identity can be influenced by societal narratives and external perceptions, affirming and challenging one's understanding of their own heritage.

Thomas et al. (2020) examined the determinants of social identity in Africa across diverse African societies. The study employed qualitative approaches, such as ethnographic fieldwork, in-depth interviews, and case studies to capture the main experiences of ethnic identity among African communities. Quantitative surveys were also utilized to analyze patterns and correlations in ethnic identification across various demographics. Findings consistently reveal that historical legacies, colonial boundaries, language, and cultural practices influenced ethnic identity in Africa by contributing to both pride and contention within multi-ethnic nations. Many studies highlight that ethnic identity can foster community solidarity but can also be exploited politically, leading to tensions or conflict. Researchers recommend promoting inclusive national identities, fostering intercultural dialogue, and implementing educational programs that emphasize shared values to mitigate ethnic divides. Strengthening inclusive policies and recognizing ethnic diversity within national frameworks are recommended to enhance social cohesion and unity in African societies.

The nature of ethnic identity is particularly apparent in multi-cultural societies, where communities or individuals often navigate multiple cultural frameworks (Alnaghaimshi & Pearson, 2023). In such contexts, individuals can encounter clashing cultural norms, which can lead to a reevaluation of what their ethnic identity means. This dynamic process can be empowering, allowing individuals to create a self-conception that draws from multiple cultural backgrounds. However, it can also be apprehensive, with potential for conflict and tension (Alruwaili, 2017). Interactions

with media representations, peers, and institutional structures play significant roles in constructing and reconstructing ethnic identity. These experiences can create inclusion and exclusion, as well as stereotypes and cultural celebration, which can impact individuals' perceptions of themselves and their ethnic group.

Furthermore, the exploration of ethnic identity is deeply personal and sometimes evolves over time. Individuals may engage in conscious efforts to reconnect with their origins, such as participating in cultural festivals, learning a heritage language, and studying the history of their ethnic group (Lluch, 2019). These activities foster a sense of identity and contribute to the revitalization and preservation of cultural heritage. On the other hand, some may decide to distance themselves from their ethnic identity due to discrimination, assimilation pressures, and personal preference. Thus, unpacking ethnic identity is a continuous process shaped by dialogue between the past, present, and future.

Ethnic identity is a multifaceted concept that encapsulates the sense of belonging individuals feel toward an ethnic group based on shared cultural traits, ancestry, language, religion, and traditions. It is both a personal and collective phenomenon, shaped by historical, social, and political contexts. At its core, ethnic identity involves a psychological attachment that fosters a sense of pride and solidarity among members of the group. This identity is not static but evolves over time, influenced by interactions with other groups, societal changes, and individual experiences (Michalopoulos & Papaioannou, 2013). For instance, in diverse societies, ethnic identity often serves as a means of cultural preservation, helping communities maintain their unique heritage amidst external pressures for assimilation or globalization (Gashaw, 2017).

Historically, ethnic identity has been both a unifying force and a source of division. In precolonial societies, it was a foundation for social organization and community solidarity, fostering cooperation in resource management and conflict resolution (Falola & Fleming, 2020). However, colonial interventions often exploited ethnic divisions to consolidate power, turning what were once flexible and functional group affiliations into rigid political constructs. This manipulation entrenched ethnic identities, making them markers of inclusion and exclusion within colonial and post-colonial states. For example, the Berlin Conference of 1884–1885 arbitrarily grouped diverse

ethnic groups into single political entities, sowing seeds of ethnic conflict that continue to affect modern governance in Africa (Gashaw, 2017).

In contemporary contexts, ethnic identity intersects with social, economic, and political dimensions. Politically, it influences voting patterns, leadership selection, and governance systems, often leading to challenges in fostering national unity. In many African countries, political alliances and rivalries are frequently framed along ethnic lines, as seen in Kenya's electoral processes, where tribal affiliations play a significant role in determining outcomes (Green, 2020). Economically, ethnic identity can create opportunities for community-driven development but also perpetuate inequalities. Within-group solidarity often facilitates informal networks that provide economic support, but these same networks can exclude others, reinforcing systemic disparities and fueling inter-ethnic competition (Ali et al., 2019). The psychological dimension of ethnic identity is equally significant. It provides individuals with a sense of belonging and self-esteem, especially in societies where ethnic minorities face discrimination or marginalization. This identity acts as a buffer against cultural alienation, offering a sense of stability in an ever-changing world. For example, in diasporic communities, ethnic identity helps preserve cultural practices and traditions, ensuring continuity across generations (Abdelrahim, 2023). However, this attachment can also lead to challenges when rigid notions of identity hinder integration and coexistence in multicultural societies, highlighting the tension between cultural preservation and social cohesion.

Parents play a vital role as the primary conveyors of ethnic-racial socialization (ERS) during the early stages of a child's development, but as adolescents' transition into the school environment, transmitters within the educational setting gain prominence (Saleem & Byrd, 2021). However, existing literature lacks comprehensive frameworks to elucidate the transmission of ERS within schools. To address this gap, Saleem and Byrd (2021) proposed a conceptual model delineating the agents, approaches, and content of school-based ERS, along with its potential impact on adolescent outcomes. While scholars have started to explore facets of school-based ERS, noting that no frameworks have systematically outlined its processes, content, and ramifications. Their study seeks to contribute to this emerging field by unpacking the dynamics of school-based ERS at both institutional and individual levels. Additionally, it discusses the implications for research

and practice, highlighting the potential of school-based ERS in mitigating racial disparities and fostering positive racial climates within educational settings from kindergarten through grade 12 (K-12).

As noted by Twumasi-Ankrah (2019), unpacking ethnic identity involves delving into the complex layers that define a person's sense of belonging and cultural identification within a particular ethnic group. Ethnic identity is a complex interaction of factors including genealogy, language, customs, traditions, and shared historical experiences. At its foundation, ethnic identification gives people a sense of rootedness and belonging in a group, which can lead to feelings of pride, solidarity, and cultural continuity (Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2012). However, ethnic identity evolves over time through interactions with varied social contexts, migratory experiences, globalization, and generational shifts. Understanding ethnic identity necessitates a careful assessment of the internal and external elements that influence its genesis and expression (King & Samii, 2020). Internally, people negotiate their ethnic identity through self-identification, cultural socialization, and reflection. Externally, institutional practices, societal attitudes, and socio-political dynamics influence how ethnic identity is recognized, validated, and occasionally contested. Furthermore, individuals may manage numerous ethnic identities, particularly in multi-cultural societies, resulting in complicated negotiations of identity markers and associations.

Tracing back how ethnic identity is unpacked, the framework reveals its dynamic character as well as the complexities that come with it (Henry, 2016). Saleem and Byrd (2021) emphasize that ethnic identity is not uniform between ethnic groups, but rather diverse by nature. It shows how individuals choose to selectively embrace elements of their ethnic heritage while also engaging with global cultures and identities, resulting in hybridized forms of belonging. Furthermore, ethnic identification interacts with other dimensions of identity such as class, gender, religion, and region. This impacts how people express their sense of self and belonging in different social circumstances and navigate social segregation. In today's interconnected world, deconstructing and reconstructing the concept of ethnic identity involves acknowledging the diversity and continued significance of community identities in shaping individuals.

Putra et al. (2021) assessed how the people of Kampung Dukuh and Kampung Banceuy in West Java, Indonesia uses social media to communicate their identities. The study challenged the assumption that indigenous people in these two villages are not adaptive to information and communication technology. Employing descriptive and qualitative methods, and drawing on identity theory, innovation diffusion, and new media theory, data was collected through observation at the research location. The findings indicated that the people of Kampung Dukuh and Kampung Banceuy were in fact adaptive and reliably using social media to strengthen and spread their identities, both locally and globally. The study concluded that the two villages have managed to break the stigma regarding social identity using social media and modern technology.

Alnaghaimshi and Pearson (2023) assessed the role of social media in communication among ethnic networks in the Gulf States. Through an inductive thematic analysis of 107 Twitter and Instagram accounts, they explored how these platforms are used to enhance social cohesion and ethnic power. The study argued that ethnic social media has played multiple simultaneous roles in enhancing ethnic power, including maintaining ethnic cohesion endangered by globalization and urbanization, and enabling social cohesion and mutual aid. The authors concluded that the flow of information and power facilitated by social media in the Gulf States is critical at both the individual level and in shaping broader political trends in the region. However, the study's sampling of 107 social media accounts may introduce bias if not representative of the broader population of users in the Gulf States.

Unpacking ethnic identity reveals its dual nature as both a source of strength and a potential driver of conflict. While it fosters cultural resilience and community solidarity, its politicization and association with exclusivity often result in societal divisions. Addressing these challenges requires inclusive policies that recognize and respect diversity while promoting shared identities that transcend ethnic boundaries. By understanding ethnic identity as a dynamic and evolving construct, societies can better navigate the complexities of multiculturalism and build frameworks that balance cultural preservation with unity and progress.

## **2.4 Ethnic Identity in the Globe**

Ellermann (2020) examined the challenges posed by global migration on social and ethnic identity. Based on the findings, global migration presents a distinct set of challenges for immigrants, host countries, and practitioners, necessitating careful consideration in practice. Perceptions of the consequences of human migration significantly shape the attitudes, policies, and programs of countries. The increasingly intricate global interconnectedness has transformed the dynamics among sending, receiving, and transit nations. While one part of the world is facing issues of aging populations and declining workforce, the other, with its youthful population and high birth-rate, can potentially fulfil this demand for a healthy and youthful labour force. However, this exchange poses various implications for both receiving and sending nations. The study of migration revolves around two fundamental dimensions: migration trends examining who migrates and for what reasons, as well as the scale and direction of migration flows; and the impact of migration exploring how migration reshapes receiving, transit, and sending countries. Receiving and transit nations are particularly concerned about whether immigrants meet their labour needs and how they affect available resources.

In the global context, understanding ethnic identity has provided a wide scope for integrating different necessities and complexities, which also provide a broader dimension of identity through class, gender, and religious factors. As noted by Museus and Saelua (2018), ethnic identity changes people's sense of self-belonging in given cultural circumstances, which in many cases are diverse. Furthermore, ethnic identification may be a source of strength and empowerment, allowing people to declare their cultural history while navigating situations of prejudice and marginalization. The global domain allows countries to recognize the diverse nature of self-belonging and ethnic identity, creating an inclusive environment that celebrates variety while also encouraging cultural knowledge and appreciation. Ethnic identity is a universal phenomenon that influences societies across the globe, manifesting in diverse ways depending on historical, cultural, and socio-political contexts. In essence, it is the shared sense of belonging among individuals who identify with a particular ethnic group based on common ancestry, language, traditions, or cultural practices. Ethnic identity plays a vital role in shaping personal and group identities, fostering a sense of unity and cultural continuity. However, its global expressions vary significantly, influenced by the

unique historical trajectories and current realities of different regions (Michalopoulos & Papaioannou, 2013).

In South Asia, ethnic identity frequently intersects with religion and caste, creating layered and complex social structures. For example, in India, the caste system has historically reinforced ethnic stratifications, influencing access to resources, political power, and social mobility (Sengupta & Bharadwaj, 2021). Similarly, ethnic identity in Pakistan is often linked to linguistic and regional affiliations, with tensions arising over perceived marginalization of minority groups. These identities are both a source of pride and division, as they foster cultural preservation while simultaneously contributing to exclusion and conflict (Hirsch & Lopes, 2020). In the Americas, ethnic identity is shaped by histories of colonization, migration, and cultural assimilation. Indigenous groups, such as Native Americans and First Nations, face ongoing struggles to preserve their cultural identities and rights amidst pressures of modernization and historical marginalization. Additionally, in countries like the United States, ethnic identity is deeply linked to immigrant experiences, where communities from diverse backgrounds navigate the dual pressures of assimilation and cultural preservation. The African-American community, for example, maintains a strong ethnic identity rooted in shared historical experiences of slavery and systemic discrimination, which continues to shape their social and political activism (Makana, 2023).

Europe presents another distinct context where ethnic identity plays a crucial role in the discourse on nationalism and integration. The continent's history of nation-state formation has often aligned ethnic identity with territorial boundaries, leading to conflicts over self-determination and autonomy. Examples include the struggles of Basques and Catalans in Spain and Kurds in the broader Middle East and Europe. Additionally, the rise of immigration has introduced new dynamics, with ethnic minorities negotiating their identities in multicultural settings. This negotiation often leads to hybrid identities that reflect both their heritage and their new cultural contexts, contributing to the evolving nature of ethnic identity in a globalized world (Abdelrahim, 2023). Globally, ethnic identity remains a dynamic and multifaceted construct that is both a source of cultural resilience and a potential driver of conflict. While it fosters community solidarity and cultural preservation, it can also be exploited to reinforce exclusion or provoke tensions.

Recognizing the universal and diverse expressions of ethnic identity is critical for developing inclusive policies and frameworks that promote harmony in multicultural societies. By understanding the interplay between local traditions and global influences, societies can better address the challenges and opportunities posed by ethnic diversity.

Kerr and Mandorff (2023) examined the relationship between ethnicity and entrepreneurs' occupational choices among Asian immigrants to the United States. The target population was immigrants from Korea and Gujarati-speaking India. Results revealed that 34 Koreans were found to concentrate on self-employment within the United States, conducting their private businesses in dry cleaning, which was mostly supported by Korean and other Asian ethnic groups. On the other hand, Gujarati-speaking Indian ethnic groups were found to concentrate on managing motels, mostly supported by Asian immigrants from their countries and surrounding Asian nations. This means that social and ethnic factors significantly influenced these businesses, with isolated ethnic groups displaying greater concentration in entrepreneurial business along ethnic lines.

Chang, et al., (2017) explored the measures to address the challenges encountered in quantifying tradition and modernity in China today. The aim was to measure identity among Chinese-Americans. The article employed a scale comprising 46 items and administered to 172 self-identified Chinese-Americans after careful review by expert panels and presentations at various conferences. Through exploratory factor analysis, a five-factor structure emerged, encompassing themes such as Family Relationships, Gender Roles within the Family, Indigenous Spiritual Practices, Image Management, and Cultural Adherence. The article further explores these new themes and analyses how the scale items contribute to a better understanding of traditionalism and modernity.

Globalization has been propelled by modernity, shaping a complex dynamic (Juhong, (2019). The process of modernization has been characterized by cultural industrialization, and pulling minority regions within the country experience towards cultural homogenization and uniqueness. This process emphasizes on diversity which adopts a standardized model, unintentionally contributing to cultural homogenization. However, in the face of modernity's challenges, the imperative for self-cultural reconstruction and the revaluation of identity inevitably strengthen local and ethnic identities. Modernity, being a pluralistic system, demands that ethnic cultures not only embrace

global influences while averting tribalism but also adapt to local nuances to give the local discourse global relevance. By contemplating globalization through a lens of locality, and prioritizing local action, ethnic regions can viably preserve and enrich their cultural heritage within the modern context.

Desmet, et al., (2017), investigated the relationship between ethnicity, culture and diversity. The study methodology was a vector of traits reflecting norms, attitudes and values. Based on survey data from 76 countries, the results indicated that ethnic identity strongly enhanced cultural values within ethnic groups are more significant than those between different ethnic groups. This challenges the widespread belief that ethnic and cultural diversity are directly correlated. Despite most cultural diversity occurring within groups rather than between them, the results showed that that when ethnicity and culture take it seriously and closely, various political and economic outcomes, like civil conflicts and the provision of public goods, tend to deteriorate.

Fujita et al. (2018) conducted research to investigate the role of university content strategies on student experiences in social media brand communities (SMBCs). The study was anchored on social identity theory (SIT). The study variables were individual narratives, identity cues, and marketer traits. The results revealed that the use of social media content significantly enhances sense-giving among the members' ability to feel distinctive, understand themselves, and positively describe feelings more connected and supported. Further, the results indicate an understanding of social media marketing and inspire marketing practices for individual experiences through social media. Despite the study focusing on essential aspects of the use of social media and individual identity, they failed to focus on cultural factors that may shape how students interpret and engage with university content on social media. The current study will therefore examine the motivation factors behind student's use of social media to construct their different social identities.

Singhmar (2023) explored the role of social media in promoting ethnic interests. The study was guided by research questions on the effect of social media on political, ethnic, socio-economic, and technological mobility. How social media platforms enable interest groups to expand their indigenous knowledge system on ethnic grounds. The study employed qualitative methods to examine how social media platforms influence an understanding of ethnicism, checking the

ontological reality resulting from rapid technological advancement. Results revealed that in the recent past, social media has become a major influence on social division with regard to ethnic issues. Additionally, social media platforms such as Facebook and WhatsApp form the major platforms leading to the spread of ethnic identity among young people in the current world.

Green (2020) assessed the process followed by individuals in their shift of allegiance from one ethnic group to another for national identities. The study applied Afrobarometer data in Uganda. The study highlighted that the key factors influencing national identification and shift of allegiance is membership of the ethnic core group, determined by the fact that whether that group is the one in power. Using the example of Uganda and, it demonstrates that when the core ethnic group is in power, as indicated by the president's ethnic identity, members of this group are more likely to identify with the nation. Conversely, when the group is out of power, its members tend to identify more strongly with their ethnic group. This finding has significant implications for the study of nationalism, ethnicity, and African politics.

Stahl and Maznevski (2021) examined the impact of ethnic affiliations on individual and group dynamics across various cultural contexts. The study explored the complexities of ethnic identity. The reviewed studies employed diverse methodological approaches, including qualitative methods such as interviews and participant observations, alongside quantitative approaches like surveys and demographic analyses, to capture the multifaceted nature of ethnic identity. The findings indicated that ethnic identity played a significant role in shaping social interactions, community engagement, and individual self-perception based on geographical, historical, and socio-economic factors. While ethnic identity fostered a sense of belonging and cultural pride, it also contributed to social divisions and conflicts within multi-cultural societies. The results recommended prioritizing policies that promoted multi-culturalism and inclusivity, as well as educational initiatives aimed at encouraging understanding and respect for diverse ethnic identities. By fostering dialogue and intercultural relationships, societies could mitigate ethnic tensions and enhance social cohesion in an increasingly globalized world.

McFarland et al. (2019) assert that ethnic identification has a significant influence on individual and collective identity experiences and interactions. It gives people a sense of belonging and cultural continuity within their ethnic communities, as well as encouraging shared heritage and

sense of unity. However, ethnic identity does not remain static; it evolves over time as a result of interactions with various social situations, migratory experiences, and encounters with global cultures. Individuals in multi-cultural situations frequently traverse many layers of ethnic identification, celebrating various aspects of their history while also participating with globalized forms of culture and identity.

Ethnic identification plays a crucial role in shaping both individual and collective identity, influencing how people experience belonging and interact within their communities. It provides a sense of cultural continuity and unity by connecting individuals to shared heritage, customs, and social practices. This connection fosters a collective identity that strengthens social bonds within ethnic groups. However, ethnic identity is not static; it continuously evolves in response to changing social contexts, such as migration, exposure to different cultural settings, and the broader forces of globalization. These factors can reshape the way individuals perceive and express their ethnic identity, leading to dynamic and sometimes complex transformations over time.

In multi-cultural and migration contexts, individuals often navigate multiple layers of ethnic identity, balancing the preservation of cultural traditions with the adoption of new cultural practices (Qumseya, 2018). Migration experiences, in particular, challenge people to adapt their sense of identity as they encounter diverse cultural influences. While individuals may continue to celebrate aspects of their cultural heritage, they also engage with globalized cultural forms, leading to hybrid identities that integrate elements from various backgrounds. This fluid approach to ethnic identity allows for greater flexibility in navigating social spaces, but it can also create tensions as people negotiate different cultural expectations and affiliations (Cohen & Kassan, 2018). Consequently, understanding the evolving nature of ethnic identity in multi-cultural settings is crucial for developing policies and practices that support social integration and cultural diversity. In today's interconnected world, globalization and migration by communities have transformed traditional concepts of ethnic identity (Segal, 2019). This has resulted in dynamic representations of cultural affinity and social identity. Individuals and communities cross boundaries, navigating complex processes of identity negotiation, adaptation, and preservation across varied cultural environments. Transnational linkages and the combination of numerous cultural influences are changing and impacting ethnic identity.

Chua and Wellman (2015) explored social media's role in social, ethnic, and political identification among Asian countries. Their study variables were the role of ethnic hierarchies, kinship, strong work ethics, and digital media. The results revealed that migrants remit their resources to their native family members. This has led to the creation of border networks in Thai villages. Additionally, immigrants from China originating from wealthy families and villages created a strong network of friendships among the big cities in Asian countries. However, in Hong Kong, cultural differences created social limitations affecting Hong Kong students and Mainland Chinese students. Further, in Singapore, the concept of population characteristics was found to widen inter-ethnic contact. All of these social interactions are propagated by social media networks, creating an authoritative contact that weakens ties among these Asian countries, thus reducing the personal well-being of their citizens.

According to Miah (2017), the use of social media has grown significantly in recent years. An increasing number of practitioners are incorporating social media into their teaching. From being limited to the whims of a few individuals, it has progressed to become a means of communal engagement. While the social media mainstream has existed for a long time, it appears to have fulfilled its ultimate potential and purpose in the new millennium only in the genuine spirit of democracy, as envisioned by Abraham Lincoln as an institution 'of the people, by the people, and for the people'. This was made possible by the rise of social media.

Allen (2022) examined the role of information, communication, and technology (ICT). The aim of the study was to assess how ICT is integrated within public education institutions. A desk study methodology was employed in carrying out the study by consulting empirical literature to explore the relevant themes, identify the applicable themes, and establish the research gaps. The results revealed that ICT enhances pedagogical outcomes and educational outcomes for both facilitators and students. The use of ICT promotes collective zeal, thus expressing communication. The study recommended that more funding be given to public schools for ICT development.

Talukdar and Mete (2021) investigated how social media usage influences cultural patterns among the residents of West Bengal and ethnic society in India. The study focused on four West Bengalese districts in western India. The target population was a total of 500 respondents, with a total of 115 households as the sample size. Data was collected using a self-made standardized questionnaire

through the survey method. The findings revealed that social media is a significant deterrent to an ethnic lifestyle. Social media enhances the tribal values, traditions, and norms of the tribe. Also, social media led to occupational displacement among the local respondents in West Bengal.

Evelina and Safitri (2021) studied the process of foundation of tribe communities and the benefits of ethnic membership in Indonesia. The virtual tribe concept and social interaction theory guided the study. Additionally, the ethnography method and participatory approach were the methodologies employed in carrying out the study. The researcher conducted a literature study and online observations as part of the process of data collection. The collected data was analyzed using the constant comparative technique. The findings revealed that digital community (tribe) utilization enhances social identification. Further, it was revealed that through social media, people congregate together despite their differences in demographics and geographical location. Also, social media enables one to learn more about ethnic lines. Thus, digital communities enable one to enhance his or her knowledge regarding ethnic identity.

Alruwaili (2017) examined how Saudi female international college students use social media to adjust to the culture of living and studying. The research was undertaken using qualitative interview methods. The target population consisted of 14 female students living in the United States originating from Saudi Arabia. The research themes used were marital status, gender, and religion. The results revealed that immediately upon the female students' arrival in the United States, their identity changes. Their use of social media to connect with their communities enhances their identity. They use social media to express their identity. There is a significant role played by communities of female international college students from Saudi Arabia. The study recommended that there is a need for university professors to understand their students, both male and female, and how religious and cultural factors impact their identities.

## **2.5 Ethnicity in the African Continent**

In Nigeria, Agundu (2020) explored how Popperian views tribalism, which Karl Popper (1902) sees as a nostalgic longing for an unreflective era of normativity. The study further examined the aspect of life as influenced by ethnicity, thereby making such individuals adversaries of the Open Society and forces of globalization. The paper elucidated the implications of Popper's ideas on the rise of ethnic chauvinism, religious bigotry, and regional activism in Nigeria's pluralistic society,

while critically assessing the challenges these issues pose to the country's quest for national integration and proposing potential solutions. The research found that ethnicity is widely propelled by tribalism; thus, the two concepts are linearly related.

Radwan (2022) assessed how social media usage enhances cultural identity in Egypt. The target population was a total of 360 respondents among the village people in Egypt. Data collection was conducted using a questionnaire for the year ended 2021. Further data analysis was undertaken using descriptive statistics, Chi-square, Pearson's correlation coefficient for checking linear relationships, and multiple correlation analysis for checking the strength and direction of the relationship. Based on the results, there is a significant relationship between social media usage and changes in cultural identity. The result has implications for practice, policy, and other research based on the development of thinking skills among university students in Egypt. Thus, there is a need to ensure that meaningful content is uploaded to the media to preserve societal values and support community integrity through public participation in shaping social media content. Further, there is a need for an increase in co-operation and co-ordination among the concerned parties, which include schools, civic institutions, media, and youth centres, to enhance the meaningful use of social media and mitigate its negative effects.

As noted by Griffin (2023), to leverage social media's positive impact while mitigating its negative effects, the study suggests that stakeholders, including schools, civic institutions, media, and youth centers, must collaborate to promote meaningful content that reinforces societal values and fosters community integrity. Public participation in shaping social media content can also enhance its role as a tool for cultural preservation. Therefore, co-ordinated efforts are necessary to ensure that social media serves as a platform for cultural engagement rather than a source of cultural erosion. This approach would support the thoughtful integration of social media in cultural and educational contexts, encouraging practices that enhance cultural identity while addressing challenges associated with social media's influence on youth and broader social norms.

Ethnicity in Africa is deeply ingrained in the continent's historical, social, and political fabric, reflecting its unparalleled diversity with over 3,000 ethnic groups and numerous languages and cultures. Historically, ethnic identity served as a foundation for social cohesion and resource management in precolonial societies, where groups coexisted through trade, alliances, and shared

governance structures (Falola & Fleming, 2020). However, the colonial era significantly disrupted these dynamics. European powers, through the Berlin Conference of 1884–1885, imposed artificial borders that ignored the existing ethnic and cultural landscapes, grouping disparate communities together while separating others, thus sowing discord that persists to this day (Gashaw, 2017). These colonial policies institutionalized ethnic divisions, turning what were once fluid identities into rigid markers of difference, often used to maintain control through divide-and-rule strategies (Michalopoulos & Papaioannou, 2016).

In the post-colonial period, ethnicity became a dominant factor in African politics, often at the expense of national unity. Many African political systems are shaped by ethnically driven patronage networks, where resources and opportunities are allocated based on ethnic affiliations rather than merit or need (Ali et al., 2019). This politicization of ethnicity has frequently resulted in inter-group tensions and violent conflicts. For example, in Kenya, political alliances are often formed along ethnic lines, and grievances over perceived marginalization or favoritism have led to electoral violence, as seen in the aftermath of the 2007 elections (Human Rights Watch, 1993). Similarly, in Nigeria, longstanding tensions between major ethnic groups such as the Igbo, Hausa, and Yoruba continue to challenge efforts at national integration and equitable governance (Akinola & Ramontja, 2023).

Economically, ethnicity intersects with access to resources, employment, and development opportunities, creating both challenges and opportunities. On one hand, ethnic favoritism often skews resource distribution, exacerbating inequalities and fueling resentment among marginalized groups (Makana, 2023). This practice undermines economic progress and perpetuates poverty, particularly in multi-ethnic states where competition for resources is fierce. On the other hand, ethnic solidarity can provide informal safety nets, as communities pool resources and support one another in times of need (Hirsch & Lopes, 2020). These dual effects underscore the complex interplay between ethnicity and economic development in Africa, where historical legacies continue to shape contemporary realities.

Culturally, ethnicity remains a source of pride and identity for African communities, preserving languages, traditions, and rituals despite the pressures of modernization and globalization. Ethnic festivals, oral histories, and traditional practices highlight the richness of Africa's cultural heritage

and its resilience in the face of change (Gashaw, 2017). However, cultural pride can also foster exclusionary attitudes, as groups strive to protect their identities against perceived threats, leading to tensions in multi-ethnic societies (Akinola & Ramontja, 2023). These dynamics illustrate how ethnicity can both unify communities within and exacerbate divisions between them, complicating efforts to foster inclusive national identities.

Ethnicity's role in conflict across Africa is undeniable, often intertwined with issues of resource access, political power, and historical grievances. In the Sahel, tribal rivalries over land and water resources have fueled persistent violence, while in Rwanda, ethnic tensions between the Hutu and Tutsi escalated into genocide in 1994, leaving a lasting scar on the nation (Human Rights Watch, 1993). Addressing these conflicts requires a multifaceted approach that promotes inclusive governance, equitable resource distribution, and reconciliation efforts. Rwanda's post-genocide policies aimed at fostering national unity provide a model for mitigating the divisive potential of ethnic identity while leveraging its strengths for cultural preservation and collective progress (Michalopoulos & Papaioannou, 2016).

Musitha and Mafukata (2020) examined how ethnic and tribal perceptions affected public administration in South Africa. The study scope was the 2016 protests by Vuwani communities against the re-demarcation of the Collins Chabane Municipality. Exploratory research designs and qualitative methods were utilized. Data were collected using key informant interviews and questionnaires for primary data. Results revealed that Vuwani communities feared being dominated by the Xitsonga-speaking community in the new municipality. The study further found that ethnicity and tribal perceptions had resulted in ineffective public administration, stopping service delivery to the people for several months. The study recommended that policymakers should eliminate the issue of majority representation to promote national unity. The study concluded that the creation of public institutions on the basis of ethnic homogeneity should be eliminated to avoid the potential for fostering instability in regions with ethnic disparities.

Yahaya (2019) aimed to establish a connection between ethnicity, tribalism, racism, and the resultant conflict and instability in Nigeria, arguing that ethnic diversity often led to instability rather than social and cultural peace and harmony. The study focused on issues of ethnicity, tribalism, and racism, alongside the related challenges of conflict and insecurity in the country.

Employing a qualitative method, primarily through a critical and systematic literature review, the paper concluded that ethnic and tribal diversity frequently contributed to instability and social inequality in Nigeria, exemplified by rivalries over natural resources and control, such as in the Niger Delta region. It recommended addressing ethnic and cultural rivalries and fostering peace to achieve stability, particularly in the southern, northern, and western regions of Nigeria.

The study by Arouri, Ben-Youssef, and Nguyen (2019) investigated whether racial and ethnic disparities exist in children's education in Ethiopia, India, Peru, and Vietnam. The researchers found that in all four countries, particularly in Vietnam, children from smaller ethnic groups had lower educational attainment and cognitive ability. They noted that the gap in educational attainment and cognitive ability among ethnic children was larger than the gap in school enrolment, and this gap tended to be wider for older children. It was revealed that in India, Peru, and Vietnam, the main contributor to the educational gap between children from small and large ethnic groups was the difference in endowments rather than the difference in the coefficients of endowments. However, in Ethiopia, the gap was more influenced by the difference in the coefficients than by the endowments. The study highlighted that child health, parental education, household expenditure, and an urban environment were significant factors in explaining the educational disparities between children from small and large ethnic groups.

Oucho (2021) assessed the determinants of ethnic identity among African countries. The study utilized data from a survey of fourteen African countries experiencing presidential transitions. The results revealed that the ruling party and their presidential candidate will face a change if the presidential ethnicity gets a higher percentage of respondents who identify themselves with the new ruling ethnic group in non-democracies, and this increase is associated with higher levels of autocracy. Further, the President's ethnic identity changes depending on an increasing proportion of people identifying with the ethnic group where the President originates. Additionally, in countries where citizens perceive greater ethnic favoritism, there are higher levels of ethnic switching. The surveys in Zambia revealed evidence supporting this narrative.

Mhlanga (2013) investigates the relationship between ethnicity and nationalism for national identity as well as the construction of national identity in Zimbabwe. The paper highlighted the fact that ethnicity propels and labels tribalism as propagating the vice, thus being seen as a factor

creating division in one nation. The research focused on how to criminalize ethnicity and the efforts made to suppress open discussion of the negative aspects of ethnicity as an identity. The target population was Zimbabwe's Shona-dominated community, which regularly adopted the social constructivist stance. The results showed that in many instances, these communities publicly deny the existence of ethnicity while simultaneously exploiting it for dubious political gain. Thus, this paper challenges the theoretical perspectives that view ethnicity in African countries in cultural and political contexts as a regressive factor that creates division among the masses. It is further highlighted that the absence of indigenous theoretical frameworks meant to explain the concept of ethnicity was not present, creating a combination of extreme forms of nationalism that perpetuates suppression of Zimbabwean ethnic minority voices and in other parts of Africa, leading to issues of marginalization. The paper concluded that the lack of proper expression has created a recurring trend of violent ethnic conflicts in Zimbabwe and other African countries within the continent.

## **2.6 Ethnic Identity in Kenya**

Francis et al. (2019) conducted extensive research examining social media's role in propagating hate speech in Kenya. The study established multiple dimensions of online hate content, including its presence, disclosure levels among users, nature of messages, and patterns of online diffusion. The research revealed social media's contradictory roles - while it served as a powerful tool for human rights advocacy and mobilization against atrocities like genocide and ethnic cleansing, it simultaneously facilitated the spread of harmful content. A significant finding was how social media challenged yet paradoxically strengthened conventional media's dominance. While mainstream media operated under self-regulation and specific hate speech legislation, social media's unrestricted nature, combined with unclear legal frameworks, created fertile ground for hate content proliferation. The study emphasized how this unregulated environment transformed hate speech into a potent instrument for inciting mass atrocities, ethnic hatred, tribalization, radicalization, and religious intolerance, highlighting the urgent need for intervention. This dual nature of social media - as both a tool for positive change and a platform for spreading hate - underscored the complex challenges facing Kenya's digital communication landscape.

Njeri (2021) analyzed social media's impact on ethnic othering within Kenya's context, focusing specifically on how Information, Communication and Technology (ICT) revolutionized traditional

organizational operations, particularly within public educational institutions. Using a desk study review methodology, the research systematically examined empirical literature to identify significant themes and knowledge gaps. The findings revealed a complex dynamic where ICT use in educational institutions simultaneously promoted collective ethnic identity while potentially intensifying political conflicts. This dual effect occurred because while ICT improved information access, shared resources, and creative communication. It also provided platforms for ethnic differentiation. The study's significance lay in its comprehensive examination of how digital technologies influenced ethnic identity formation and expression within educational settings. The research concluded with important recommendations for implementing regulations to control social media's role in spreading information that could fuel political and ethnic conflicts, emphasizing the need for balanced approaches to technology use in educational contexts that promote unity while respecting diversity.

In post-colonial Kenya, ethnic identity became a significant determinant of political and economic power, shaping alliances, governance structures, and resource distribution. Political parties have often formed along ethnic lines, with leaders mobilizing their communities to secure electoral support. This phenomenon was starkly evident during the 2007-2008 post-election violence, where ethnic tensions, fueled by accusations of electoral fraud and marginalization, escalated into widespread conflict between groups such as the Kikuyu, Luo, and Kalenjin (Human Rights Watch, 1993). Such episodes underscore how ethnic identity continues to influence political dynamics, often at the expense of national unity. The politicization of ethnicity has also reinforced inequalities, as regions associated with politically dominant groups often receive preferential treatment in terms of development and access to resources (Ali et al., 2019).

Economically, ethnic identity in Kenya intersects with patterns of resource allocation and employment opportunities. Ethnic favoritism, or "tribalism," is a persistent issue in public and private sectors, where individuals often prioritize their ethnic kin for jobs, contracts, and other opportunities. This practice exacerbates economic disparities, particularly for groups perceived as being outside the centers of power (Makana, 2023). For instance, regions such as northeastern Kenya, predominantly inhabited by Somali communities, have historically experienced marginalization in development and resource allocation, perpetuating cycles of poverty and

resentment (Akinola & Ramontja, 2023). However, ethnic networks also provide informal support systems, particularly in rural areas, where communities rely on shared resources and collective labor to navigate economic challenges (Hirsch & Lopes, 2020).

Ethnic identity in Kenya plays a significant role in shaping the country's socio-political and economic dynamics. With over 40 ethnic groups, each with unique languages, traditions, and cultural practices, the country reflects a rich tapestry of diversity. Historically, these communities functioned as cohesive units, organizing governance and resource management through localized systems (Falola & Fleming, 2020). However, the colonial era introduced a significant disruption. The British colonial administration manipulated ethnic identities to implement divide-and-rule strategies, fostering divisions and creating hierarchies among communities. For instance, the Kikuyu, due to their geographic proximity to colonial economic activities, gained relatively better access to resources, fueling tensions with other groups (Gashaw, 2017). These colonial legacies institutionalized ethnic identity as a determinant of access to resources and political influence, shaping Kenya's post-colonial trajectory.

Political leaders frequently mobilized ethnic identities to secure support, transforming elections into competitions among ethnic blocs. This was starkly evident during the 2007-2008 post-election violence, where disputes over electoral outcomes escalated into ethnic conflicts, particularly between the Kikuyu, Luo, and Kalenjin communities (Human Rights Watch, 1993). Such violence highlighted how politicized ethnic identities could destabilize national cohesion, especially when grievances over perceived marginalization and resource distribution are exploited by political elites (Ali et al., 2019). While ethnicity provides a sense of belonging and cultural identity, its instrumentalization for political gain has often deepened divisions and perpetuated cycles of mistrust among Kenya's diverse communities.

Economically, ethnic identity influences patterns of resource allocation and access to opportunities, often reinforcing inequality. Ethnic favoritism, commonly referred to as tribalism, is prevalent in Kenya, particularly in employment and resource distribution. Government resources and development initiatives are frequently channeled to regions aligned with ruling elites' ethnic groups, leaving other areas marginalized (Makana, 2023). This has led to significant disparities, particularly in historically underrepresented regions like northeastern Kenya, where Somali

communities face persistent socio-economic exclusion (Akinola & Ramontja, 2023). However, ethnic identity also functions as a source of resilience. Informal networks within ethnic groups provide social and economic support during crises, reflecting the communal nature of many Kenyan communities. While these networks can alleviate short-term challenges, their exclusivity often hinders broader collaboration across ethnic divides.

Communities continue to preserve their heritage through festivals, traditional ceremonies, and artistic expressions. Events like the Lamu Cultural Festival and the Isukuti dance of the Luhya underscore the vibrancy of Kenya's diverse cultures, celebrating unity through diversity (Gashaw, 2017). However, modernization and globalization exert pressures that sometimes challenge the preservation of these traditions, as younger generations navigate hybrid identities shaped by both their ethnic roots and contemporary influences (Ali et al., 2019). Efforts to address ethnic tensions and foster national unity include initiatives like the National Cohesion and Integration Commission (NCIC), which seeks to mitigate hate speech and promote reconciliation after periods of conflict (Human Rights Watch, 1993). Additionally, constitutional reforms, such as the 2010 introduction of devolution, aim to decentralize resources and reduce ethnic competition for power, offering a pathway toward more equitable governance and social cohesion.

Culturally, ethnic identity remains a source of pride and a means of preserving heritage for Kenya's communities. Traditional practices, festivals, and oral histories continue to thrive, serving as important links to the past and fostering community cohesion. For example, cultural events like the Lamu Cultural Festival celebrate the rich Swahili heritage of the coastal region, while the Isukuti dance of the Luhya highlights the artistic vibrancy of western Kenya (Gashaw, 2017). These cultural expressions not only preserve traditions but also promote Kenya's identity as a nation of diverse ethnic groups. However, this diversity can also lead to tensions, as groups strive to protect their cultural heritage amidst pressures from modernization and inter-ethnic competition for resources and recognition (Ali et al., 2019).

Efforts to address the challenges of ethnic identity in Kenya include initiatives aimed at fostering national cohesion and reducing ethnic divisions. The National Cohesion and Integration Commission (NCIC), established after the 2007-2008 violence, seeks to promote reconciliation and address hate speech and ethnic discrimination (Human Rights Watch, 1993). Additionally,

constitutional reforms, such as the 2010 Kenyan Constitution, aim to decentralize power and resources through devolution, ensuring more equitable representation and addressing historical grievances (Makana, 2023). Despite these efforts, the challenge remains in striking a balance between celebrating Kenya's ethnic diversity and fostering a unified national identity that transcends ethnic boundaries. By addressing the structural inequalities and historical grievances tied to ethnic identity, Kenya can harness its diversity as a strength rather than a source of division. Abdirashid (2020) and Kashara (2022) provided critical insights into social media's political implications in Kenya, particularly highlighting how anonymity and direct accessibility enabled political actors to promote hate and divisive agendas online. Their research revealed that while social media's capacity to shape political opinions had limitations, its ability to distribute campaign information and political content remained unlimited. The studies demonstrated how social media emerged as a powerful tool for political socialization and mobilization, partly due to public distrust in state-owned media outlets. However, this same platform became instrumental in fueling "tribal hate speech" during elections, as evidenced by subsequent research from Kaigwa (2017) and Wanjiru (2021). The studies collectively highlighted a concerning trend where social media, rather than serving as a watchdog against ethnic labeling, became compromised by politicians pursuing ethnically based political agendas. This was particularly evident during election periods, where social media played a significant role in perpetuating tribal hatred, even during relatively peaceful elections like those in 2013 and 2017. The research emphasized how social media's role in political discourse had evolved from a potential tool for democratic engagement to a platform that could be manipulated to reinforce ethnic divisions and political polarization.

## **2.7 Ethnicity and Colonialism**

According to Patel (2021), colonial modernity involves a condition resulting from the modernization process linked to the global expansion of Western powers. European colonization, in particular, aimed to integrate imperial subjects into the framework of modernity. However, this project faced varying degrees of success, encountering resistance from those opposed to Western influence despite its universalizing aims. Despite its lack of coherence, colonial modernity forged complex global relationships that transcended traditional boundaries like nation-states or civilizations, thus shaping the contemporary world. This concept raises important questions about

the origins of modernity, the nature of colonial governance, and the dynamics between colonies and the imperial centers. This section aims to delve into these questions, beginning with an exploration of the concept of modernity itself, and whether it should be understood as a singular or plural phenomenon.

Ali et al. (2019) analyzed African colonial history and indicated that British colonial governance may have hindered state centralization by perpetuating ethnic segregation and imposing stronger executive constraints. Utilizing micro-data from Anglophone and Francophone nations in sub-Saharan Africa, the research reveals that individuals in Anglophone countries are less inclined to identify themselves in national terms compared to ethnic terms. To mitigate concerns regarding endogeneity, the study employs regression discontinuity, focusing on observations near Anglophone–Francophone borders, both across countries and within Cameroon. Findings related to taxation, security, and the authority of tribal leaders further suggest diminished state capacity in Anglophone nations. These outcomes underscore the enduring impact of colonial rule on the process of state-building.

The economic impact of colonial manipulation of ethnicity further entrenched divisions and inequalities that persist in post-colonial societies. Colonial administrations often allocated resources and development projects based on ethnic favoritism, prioritizing groups that collaborated with their rule. Infrastructure development, education, and access to economic opportunities were concentrated in regions inhabited by favored ethnic groups, leaving others marginalized and underdeveloped (Makana, 2023). For example, in East Africa, the British concentrated development in areas where cash crops like coffee and tea were cultivated, benefiting communities such as the Kikuyu in Kenya. This uneven development not only created disparities in wealth and opportunity but also fueled resentment among marginalized ethnic groups, perpetuating cycles of poverty and exclusion that remain challenges in many post-colonial states.

Colonialism also disrupted cultural identities by imposing foreign values and undermining traditional practices. Missionary activities, for instance, often sought to "civilize" indigenous populations, labeling traditional customs and religions as backward. This cultural imposition created a sense of alienation for many ethnic groups, as their identities were devalued and their practices suppressed (Michalopoulos & Papaioannou, 2016). Additionally, the introduction of

European legal and administrative systems eroded indigenous governance structures, diminishing the roles of ethnic leaders and traditional councils. This disempowerment of local structures not only weakened ethnic cohesion but also paved the way for post-colonial struggles over identity and governance, as communities sought to reclaim their cultural and political autonomy in the wake of colonial domination (Gashaw, 2017).

The intersection of ethnicity and nationalism in the post-colonial era reflects the enduring impact of colonialism. Newly independent nations faced the challenge of uniting diverse ethnic groups within borders drawn by colonial powers. In many cases, political leaders sought to forge national identities that transcended ethnic divisions, but these efforts were often undermined by entrenched grievances and competition for power. In Nigeria, for instance, the failure to reconcile the interests of major ethnic groups such as the Igbo, Yoruba, and Hausa-Fulani led to the Biafran War in the 1960s, a devastating conflict rooted in ethnic and regional tensions (Ali et al., 2019). Similarly, in Sudan, colonial legacies of ethnic and religious stratification contributed to the protracted civil wars that eventually led to the secession of South Sudan in 2011. These examples underscore how colonial-era policies and boundaries continue to influence ethnic dynamics and national cohesion in the post-colonial world. Efforts to address these challenges require a nuanced understanding of how colonialism shaped ethnic identities, as well as the implementation of inclusive policies that promote equity and reconciliation.

Ethnicity and colonialism are deeply intertwined, with colonial powers often using ethnicity as a tool to maintain control and exploit resources in the regions they dominated. Before colonization, ethnic identities in many parts of the world were fluid and functioned primarily as markers of cultural affiliation, facilitating trade, alliances, and social cohesion (Falola & Fleming, 2020). However, the arrival of colonial powers significantly altered these dynamics. Colonial administrators redefined ethnic identities, creating rigid classifications to serve their own interests. In Africa, for instance, the Berlin Conference of 1884–1885 divided the continent into territories without regard for existing ethnic boundaries, forcing disparate groups into single political entities and splitting others across multiple colonies (Gashaw, 2017). This disregard for the social and cultural fabric of African societies laid the groundwork for ethnic conflicts and political instability that persist today.

The divide-and-rule strategies employed by colonial regimes were central to the manipulation of ethnicity. By granting privileges to certain groups while marginalizing others, colonial powers fostered resentment and competition among ethnic communities. In Kenya, the British administration favored the Kikuyu for their involvement in cash crop farming, while sidelining other groups, creating long-term grievances (Michalopoulos & Papaioannou, 2016). In Nigeria, the British manipulated ethnic divisions between the Igbo, Yoruba, and Hausa-Fulani, using ethnic leaders as intermediaries to enforce colonial policies. These practices entrenched ethnic divisions and made them a central factor in governance, setting the stage for post-independence struggles over power and resources (Ali et al., 2019). The colonial creation of ethnic hierarchies transformed flexible cultural identities into rigid political constructs, institutionalizing inequality and sowing discord.

Carney, (2021) studied how the location of the population influence constructing ethnicity and race. The study demonstrates how the location of a tribe enhances the understanding of human race, location and demography. The study employed quantitative analysis method. Results revealed how race is constructed through daily interactions across different locations. Building on demographers' work that examines how race changes over time and place, the study raised a challenge on the notion of race as a fixed category and instead explores its construction across various contexts, emphasizing subtleties often missed in quantitative research. For instance, a study on Haitian women and in Montreal and Boston showed that Haitian women experience race differently, influenced largely by the historical context of each location. The multi-sited ethnographic approach used in this study is particularly effective in uncovering the specificities of race and place. Haitians faced a lot of interracial tensions in Boston showing that African Americans were racially abused in the years 1960s and 1970s. This shaped their spatial and racial experiences. On the other hand, Haiti and Montreal, was found to be closely linked to European countries. The Haitian women in this study experienced race, gender, place, class, and ethnic experiences, which required an intersectional approach for one to understand the impact of race, and location on constructing ethnicity and race.

Eubank (2019) assessed the role of ethno-linguistic fractionalization (ELF) in influencing the political salience of ethnicity using social networks. The result revealed that social networks allow

ethnic parties to use built-in networks to share information and facilitate collective action, but ethnically dispersed groups struggle to hold politicians accountable. This research presents the first extensive empirical test of the assumption that underpins this reasoning. Using 9 million mobile subscribers and seven months of telecommunications data from Zambia, including records of nearly 2 billion calls and SMS messages, this paper discovers that electoral constituencies with high ELF have more fragmented social networks, particularly in rural areas. It also discovers that other possible cleavages that have not acquired political salience are not associated with network fragmentation, which supports the theory that ethnicity gains salience because it provides an organizational benefit that other cleavages do not.

Colonial policies not only politicized ethnicity but also disrupted traditional governance systems and social structures. Many precolonial societies operated through decentralized systems of governance that balanced power among ethnic groups. Colonial administrations dismantled these systems, replacing them with centralized structures that favored some groups over others. In Rwanda, for example, the Belgian colonizers classified the Hutu and Tutsi—previously socio-economic categories—into rigid ethnic identities, granting the Tutsi political and economic dominance. This artificial stratification fueled animosities that culminated in the 1994 genocide (Human Rights Watch, 1993). Similar patterns were seen across Africa, where colonial interventions fractured previously harmonious relationships among ethnic groups, deepening divides that would later erupt into conflict.

The legacies of colonialism continue to shape ethnic relations in the post-colonial era. In many countries, ethnicity remains a central axis of political competition and resource distribution. The colonial imposition of artificial borders and the manipulation of ethnic identities created conditions where ethnic tensions are exacerbated by struggles for political power and economic resources. In nations like Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo, conflicts over land, resources, and representation are often framed along ethnic lines, reflecting the enduring impact of colonial strategies (Akinola & Ramontja, 2023). Addressing these challenges requires acknowledging the colonial roots of ethnic divisions and implementing inclusive policies that promote reconciliation and equitable development. Recognizing ethnicity as a dynamic and historically influenced

construct can help societies move beyond the divisions entrenched by colonialism, fostering unity and collaboration in the face of shared challenges.

Young (2018) conducted an analysis of African international relations between ethnicity and the era of colonial heritage. The colonial system rapidly reshaped Africa's historical political geography within a short span, leaving a lasting impact marked by deep and pervasive alien influence over subordinated societies. In Latin America, while colonial administrative divisions influenced the state system, Spain and Portugal swiftly faded as major regional powers after the colonial elite's secured independence in the nineteenth century. Despite gaining sovereignty and independence, African colonial territories struggled to integrate into broader movements of unification, resulting in a state system resistant to consolidation. The colonial occupation of Africa, although relatively late compared to other imperial expansions, was remarkably dense and thorough. The imperative to break away from this colonial legacy stemmed from psychological, political, and economic motives. Consequently, remnants of the colonial past persistently intrude into post-independence African international relations in various forms.

## **2.8 Post-Colonialism and Ethnic Identity**

Postcolonial societies employed various strategies to sustain their ethnic identities and adapt to the challenges of the postcolonial era. One critical approach was the revival and promotion of indigenous languages as a means of reclaiming cultural identity. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o emphasized the centrality of language to identity, advocating for the use of native languages in literature and education to preserve cultural authenticity (Ngũgĩ, 1986). His works in Gikuyu symbolized a resistance to cultural imperialism and a reclamation of precolonial linguistic traditions. Similarly, authors like Buchi Emecheta integrated cultural references, traditional customs, and native terms into their narratives, using literature as a tool to preserve and transmit ethnic identity. For example, Emecheta's exploration of Igbo traditions in her novel *The Joys of Motherhood* highlights the interplay between cultural heritage and the influences of colonial modernity (Emecheta, 2008). This adaptation ensured that precolonial histories and knowledge systems remained relevant and accessible in postcolonial contexts (Bandia, 2003).

Another significant strategy involved integrating precolonial traditions into contemporary practices, particularly in education, religion, and governance. Postcolonial societies restructured

educational curricula to reflect indigenous knowledge systems, which had been marginalized during colonial rule. This shift aimed to foster a sense of national pride and cultural continuity (Quayson, 2012). Traditional spiritual practices were often preserved or blended with introduced religions, creating syncretic forms that reflected the resilience and adaptability of indigenous cultures. For instance, efforts to incorporate indigenous ecological knowledge into modern conservation practices demonstrate the ongoing relevance of ancestral traditions (Ens et al., 2021). Additionally, the concept of cultural hybridity, as articulated by thinkers like Homi Bhabha, provided a framework for understanding how postcolonial societies navigated the intersection of their precolonial heritage and the realities of the postcolonial world (Bhabha, 1994). Bhabha's idea of the third space emphasized the dynamic and fluid nature of identity, where cultures interact, overlap, and evolve. These efforts to sustain and adapt ethnic identities ensured that postcolonial societies could maintain their cultural distinctiveness while engaging with the globalized world.

Post-colonial societies have exhibited resilience in sustaining and adapting their precolonial ethnic identities despite the disruptions and dislocations caused by colonial rule (Schmidt, 2019; Tom, 2017; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2017). These societies have drawn on cultural, linguistic, and spiritual traditions to preserve their heritage and reassert their identities in the face of modern challenges (Schmidt, 2019; Tom, 2017; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2017; Smallwood et al., 2021). A significant approach to this sustenance has been the revival of traditional governance systems and cultural practices that existed prior to colonial interference (Tom, 2017; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2017; Schmidt, 2019). In many African nations, for instance, traditional leaders and systems of communal governance continue to play a vital role in mediating conflicts and preserving cultural heritage (Tom, 2017; Schmidt, 2019; Shalom, 2023; Smallwood et al., 2021). These practices have persisted alongside modern state systems, demonstrating how precolonial institutions were adapted to meet the needs of post-colonial realities (Schmidt, 2019; Tom, 2017; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2017; Smallwood et al., 2021; Shalom, 2023). In Ghana and South Africa, traditional chieftaincy systems remain integral to community cohesion and cultural expression, often bridging the gap between historical traditions and contemporary governance structures (Tom, 2017; Schmidt, 2019; Smallwood et al., 2021; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2017). These examples underscore how post-colonial societies have innovatively adapted their precolonial frameworks to sustain cultural identity and

ensure their relevance in a rapidly changing world (Schmidt, 2019; Tom, 2017; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2017; Shalom, 2023).

The role of language has also been central in sustaining ethnic identity. Indigenous languages, often suppressed during colonial rule, have become symbols of cultural pride and vehicles for preserving traditional knowledge. Countries such as South Africa and Nigeria have taken deliberate steps to promote local languages in education and media, ensuring their survival in the post-colonial era (Schmidt, 2019; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2017). In India, regional languages like Tamil, Kannada, and Bengali have similarly played a crucial role in reinforcing ethnic identity and sustaining precolonial cultural expressions, which are vital for both individual and collective identity (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2017; Schmidt, 2019). These efforts underscore how linguistic diversity has been embraced as a cornerstone of identity preservation, even in the face of globalizing pressures.

Kalasva, Dimpal Dhirubhai (2023) examines how post-colonial societies have sustained and adapted their precolonial ethnic identities, emphasizing the resilience of cultural practices and traditions amidst the disruptions of colonial rule. The author highlights the revival of traditional governance structures as a pivotal strategy for maintaining ethnic identity, where communities reintegrated precolonial leadership systems into modern frameworks to preserve cultural cohesion. This adaptability is further reflected in the reclamation of indigenous languages, which Dhirubhai identifies as essential tools for resisting cultural erasure and fostering identity formation in post-colonial contexts. The study underscores how spiritual and religious practices have evolved, blending precolonial beliefs with introduced religions to create syncretic systems that maintain their cultural relevance. Moreover, the representation of marginalized voices in postcolonial literature has played a significant role in sustaining these identities by documenting suppressed narratives and amplifying the experiences of subaltern communities. Dhirubhai also highlights the influence of globalization and diasporic experiences, noting that post-colonial societies have successfully navigated these challenges by adapting their cultural practices to modern realities while preserving their historical essence. This comprehensive analysis underscores the enduring significance of precolonial traditions in shaping the identities of post-colonial societies.

Moreover, Nigusie and Ivkina (2021) argues that the transition to independence involved more than a mere change in governance; it was a complex struggle that included colonial liberation movements, elite power dynamics, and the arbitrary creation of new state borders (Nigusie & Ivkina, 2021). Although African countries attained formal sovereignty, they often encountered continued influence from former colonial powers, which persisted under the guise of providing support for state-building and development. This neocolonialism led to uncertainty regarding the future of African states, shaped more by the interests of external actors than by the priorities of local populations. The emergence of a new political elite, often linked to military institutions, has complicated effective governance, leading to a precarious balance between traditional structures and the requirements of modernization. This dynamic has resulted in increased economic and political dependence on global institutions such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, thereby perpetuating cycles of underdevelopment and inequality. The authors emphasize the increase in ethno-religious tensions stemming from indistinct borders, leading to intricate challenges that require intervention from both regional and external entities for resolution (Nigusie & Ivkina, 2021).

Analyzing the economic conditions of post-colonial societies requires an understanding of the effects of economic disparity, cultural diversity, and the development processes influencing these nations. Goldthorpe asserts that the evaluation of economic inequality generally begins with income comparisons across different nations, predominantly employing measures such as Gross National Product and Gross Domestic Product (Goldthorpe, 2011). Gross National Product measures the total value of goods and services produced by a country, including income from abroad, while Gross Domestic Product focuses solely on domestic production. These measures, although frequently utilized, have inherent limitations, particularly in evaluating the complexities of post-colonial economies marked by substantial informal sectors and frequently uneven income distribution. The analysis of economic conditions in post-colonial contexts necessitates an examination of the historical legacies of colonialism, which have resulted in enduring inequalities and challenges to the formation of stable economic systems. The interplay between cultural diversity and economic practices complicates development initiatives, as distinct ethnic groups may encounter varying levels of access to resources and economic opportunities. Goldthorpe posits that understanding the complexities of economic indicators provides a fundamental basis for

assessing the ongoing issues of equitable development in post-colonial African states, where the remnants of colonial exploitation continue to influence contemporary economic dynamics (Goldthorpe, 2011).

The authors of "Politics in the Developing World" analyse the substantial impact of colonialism on political development in post-colonial nations, emphasizing how historical legacies shape contemporary governance and societal structures (Burnell, Randall, & Rakner, 2017). This chapter provides an overview of the post-colonial landscape, illustrating the significant influence of precolonial histories, colonial experiences, and independence movements on the political dynamics in developing nations. The authors analyse post-colonial theory, highlighting its importance in understanding the lasting effects of colonialism on the development trajectories of former colonies. The authors analyse the variations in state formation across different regions, such as Africa, Asia, and the Americas, which shaped the nature of colonisation encountered by these societies and the obstacles they confronted in their post-colonial development (Burnell, Randall, & Rakner, 2017). The analysis includes the processes of decolonisation and the enduring colonial patterns that continue to affect governance and social structures in post-colonial settings. The authors assert that the colonial legacy significantly influences the political landscape of post-colonial states, impacting their capacity for sustainable development and democratic governance (Burnell, Randall, & Rakner, 2017).

Indigenous tribes in North America delineated economic boundaries according to access to hunting grounds, fishing areas, and fertile land (Carlos, Feir, & Redish, 2022). The Iroquois tribes established specific territories where resources were collectively utilized by community members, with limitations on external sharing. The system of reciprocity within the tribe reinforced social bonds. The defined boundaries formed a self-sustaining economic unit, improving the tribe's sustainability, as community welfare depended on resource management within these parameters. Akampurira (2023) asserts that economic boundaries significantly contribute to maintaining societal balance, strengthening resilience, and reducing internal conflicts.

In Zimbabwe and South Africa, post-colonial societies were organised around livestock ownership, particularly cattle, which symbolised wealth and social status (Kamau, 2021). Cattle ownership influenced an individual's economic status and social hierarchy position. The economic

disparity between large herd owners and non-owners created a distinct social hierarchy, with influential families often occupying leadership roles due to their financial power. This system allowed the community to prioritize resource allocation and establish stable social boundaries, thus diminishing rivalry and competition for power.

Economic boundaries in the Arabian Peninsula were determined by control of trade routes, access to water sources, and livestock ownership, often leading to political influence within tribes (Khalili, 2021). Wealthy families controlled vital resources like wells and trade, thus solidifying social divisions between the affluent and the less fortunate in society. In post-colonial Arab societies, social and economic boundaries were interrelated, with economic power affecting social status and leadership roles, thereby influencing the overall structure of tribal communities.

Post-colonial societies demonstrated complex structures for delineating social and economic boundaries, often utilizing shared cultural or religious practices to reinforce these distinctions. In Bosnian tribal communities, religious affiliation played a crucial role in determining social and economic status. Catholic, Orthodox, and Muslim identities structured access to particular resources, with religious leaders playing a crucial role in economic decision-making within each community (Becker, Rubin, & Woessmann, 2021). This intricate social boundary-maintained cohesion within religious communities while delineating economic roles among groups, leading to a pluralistic yet distinctly segregated social structure.

The caste system in India clearly defined social boundaries in the post-colonial era, governing access to resources, occupations, and societal roles. This system solidified social and economic boundaries by designating specific economic roles to each caste, including farming, trade, and spiritual responsibilities (Sengupta & Bharadwaj, 2021). Economic mobility was limited, and inter-caste marriage or economic transactions were discouraged, thus perpetuating social hierarchy across generations. Post-colonial Indian society maintained economic stability and continuity by reinforcing roles within the caste structure, leading to social rigidity and limited upward mobility for lower castes.

Religious and spiritual practices rooted in precolonial traditions have also experienced a renaissance in many post-colonial societies. Indigenous belief systems, which were marginalized or replaced by Christianity and Islam during colonial rule, have been revived and adapted to coexist

with modern religions. This phenomenon is evident in Latin America, where indigenous spiritual practices are increasingly recognized as integral to cultural identity (Schmidt, 2019; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2017). Similarly, in Africa, syncretic religious practices reflect the blending of precolonial traditions with introduced faiths, enabling communities to navigate their historical legacies while addressing contemporary spiritual needs (Tom, 2017; Schmidt, 2019). These practices highlight how post-colonial societies have preserved their spiritual heritage by adapting it to modern contexts.

Kalogeras, Kardux, Mueller, and Nyman (2021) examine how post-colonial societies sustained their ethnic identities by conceptualizing these identities as palimpsestic, where layers of cultural practices, histories, and traditions coexist and interact despite colonial erasures. In this section, they highlight how societies adapted their precolonial identities by resurfacing suppressed narratives through literature, cultural artifacts, and urban spaces. For example, the authors illustrate how post-colonial literature reclaims marginalized voices and indigenous traditions, weaving them into contemporary narratives to challenge colonial frameworks. Cities like Johannesburg and Rio de Janeiro are explored as urban palimpsests, where the spatial and cultural imprints of precolonial and colonial eras remain visible and actively shape modern identities. Moreover, the volume emphasizes the integration of mythologies, oral histories, and indigenous religious practices, which persist as cultural anchors, adapting to modern contexts without losing their foundational essence. This adaptability is seen as a critical strategy for maintaining ethnic identity, as communities reinterpret their traditions to align with current realities while resisting cultural homogenization. By focusing on intertextuality and memory, Kalogeras, Kardux, Mueller, and Nyman argue that post-colonial societies not only preserve but also transform their ethnic identities, ensuring their relevance in a globalized world.

Grassroots movements and scholarly efforts to document and celebrate indigenous histories have been instrumental in sustaining ethnic identities. Across the globe, post-colonial societies have undertaken initiatives to decolonize historical narratives, challenge Eurocentric perspectives, and restore indigenous voices to their rightful place in history. Cultural festivals, oral history projects, and ethnographic research have played a pivotal role in preserving and promoting ethnic identities. For example, in Africa, pan-Africanist movements and indigenous knowledge systems have gained

prominence as tools for reclaiming and sustaining precolonial identities (Tom, 2017; Schmidt, 2019). The work of scholars like Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2017) emphasizes the importance of decolonizing African knowledge systems and integrating them into educational and policy frameworks to ensure their survival.

Additionally, international platforms and movements advocating for indigenous and ethnic rights have supported post-colonial societies in preserving their precolonial identities. Organizations such as the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues provide a global stage for marginalized communities to advocate for the recognition of their cultural and ethnic heritage. This international support has reinforced local efforts to sustain traditions and adapt them to contemporary realities (Schmidt, 2019; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2017). The increasing global appreciation of cultural diversity and indigenous knowledge systems has further motivated post-colonial societies to preserve their ethnic identities as a vital part of their heritage. Post-colonial societies have demonstrated a remarkable capacity to adapt their precolonial identities to contemporary challenges while preserving their core traditions. By reviving traditional governance, promoting linguistic and spiritual heritage, and leveraging both local and international platforms, these societies have ensured the survival and dynamism of their ethnic identities. Their efforts reflect a profound commitment to reclaiming their history and cultural autonomy in the face of enduring colonial legacies (Tom, 2017; Schmidt, 2019; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2017).

Bandia (2018) examines how post-colonial societies have sustained their ethnic identities through the interplay of orality, literacy, and translation, emphasizing their role in bridging tradition and modernity. In this section, Bandia highlights how translation functions as a medium to adapt and sustain precolonial identities by enabling the transmission of indigenous oral traditions into written forms, thus preserving cultural heritage while enhancing global visibility. He challenges the colonial perspective that relegates orality to primitiveness, proposing instead that the fusion of oral and written traditions fosters creative expression, asserting identity and cultural difference within the global literary marketplace. By translating indigenous narratives, Bandia argues that post-colonial societies reclaim and amplify their voices, showcasing their resilience against cultural homogenization. The transformative process of translation not only sustains precolonial identities but also allows for their evolution, positioning them as integral components of contemporary world

literature. This synthesis between orality, writing, and translation underscores how post-colonial societies adapt their historical traditions to modern realities, ensuring their survival and relevance in a globalized context.

Rangan and Chow (2013) explore how post-colonial societies sustained their ethnic identities in the context of persistent racism and colonial legacies, focusing on the interplay between race, cultural memory, and biopolitics. In this section, they emphasize that race, often imposed as a repressive colonial construct, was adapted and redefined by post-colonial societies to reclaim identity and resist domination. Drawing on anti-colonial theorists like Frantz Fanon and Albert Memmi, the chapter highlights how post-colonial societies utilized race not as a negative marker but as a generative force to affirm cultural difference and identity in the post-colonial era. Through cultural practices, ethnic communities reclaimed racialized stereotypes imposed during colonial rule, transforming them into symbols of resilience and autonomy. The discussion further integrates insights from poststructuralist thinkers such as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Homi Bhabha, demonstrating how hybridity and mimicry became tools for sustaining precolonial identities within new global frameworks. Rangan and Chow argue that biopolitical frameworks, which historically marginalized ethnic communities, were reconfigured by post-colonial societies to assert self-governance and reimagine community belonging. These adaptive strategies underscore the persistence of cultural memory in resisting neo-racism and maintaining ethnic identities amidst ongoing challenges of globalization and inequality.

Quayson (2012) emphasizes the significance of postcolonial studies in addressing the preservation and adaptation of ethnic identities within formerly colonized societies. By situating cultural representation and indigenous narratives as central to postcolonial literary history, Quayson outlines how such literature resists the marginalization imposed by colonial powers. The text highlights the role of postcolonial literature in sustaining precolonial identities by reviving indigenous storytelling methods and integrating them into modern frameworks. The nuanced incorporation of orality and local traditions within these narratives underscores their resilience in adapting to postcolonial realities. Additionally, Quayson discusses the thematic importance of marginalization and cultural hybridity, arguing that postcolonial literature not only sustains ethnic identities but also redefines them in light of historical disruptions and contemporary global

influences. This scholarly work provides an essential foundation for understanding how literature has been used as a medium to navigate and reconcile the complexities of cultural identity in the postcolonial context.

Febles (2018) explores the intricate interplay of language and cultural identity in postcolonial African literature. The study underscores how language serves as a repository of cultural memory and identity, reflecting the socio-cultural realities of the Igbo community and broader African experience. Febles highlights the challenges translators face in preserving the "hybrid language" of postcolonial texts, which often amalgamate colonial languages with indigenous linguistic elements. Postcolonial African societies adapted and sustained their precolonial identity by embedding traditional cultural references, such as proper names, rituals, and social customs, into literary narratives. By doing so, they reasserted their indigenous worldviews and countered colonial cultural hegemony.

McLeod (2013) explores how post-colonial societies sustained their ethnic identities through the development and innovation of postcolonial literature, which serves as a platform to represent colonized peoples, places, and cultures from their own perspectives. In this section, McLeod highlights the challenges postcolonial writers faced in transforming their unique experiences into literary forms that resist colonial narratives and reclaim cultural agency. By reshaping literary conventions, postcolonial authors have borne witness to the complexities of colonial and postcolonial relations, integrating indigenous storytelling techniques and cultural symbolism to sustain precolonial identities. These innovations have enabled postcolonial societies to preserve their histories and adapt their ethnic identities within modern literary frameworks. McLeod also critiques the scholarly institutionalization of postcolonial literature, emphasizing its role in perpetuating marginalized voices while cautioning against the commodification of these narratives through what he terms "marketing the margins." Despite these challenges, McLeod underscores the enduring value of postcolonial literature as a revolutionary force that continues to adapt and sustain cultural identities in the twenty-first century.

In summary, the postcolonial era marked a dynamic period where formerly colonized societies sought to reclaim, sustain, and adapt their ethnic identities in the face of colonial legacies and modern global influences. These societies demonstrated resilience and innovation by

reinvigorating indigenous languages, traditions, and knowledge systems that had been marginalized during colonial rule. The promotion of native languages, as advocated by Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, and the integration of cultural references into literature, as seen in the works of Buchi Emecheta, were pivotal in reasserting cultural authenticity. These efforts were not only acts of resistance against cultural imperialism but also strategies to ensure continuity with precolonial heritage. Moreover, the application of indigenous knowledge in fields such as conservation, as highlighted by Ens et al., reinforced the relevance and practicality of ancestral wisdom in addressing contemporary challenges. Through education, art, and religion, postcolonial societies found ways to blend traditional practices with modernity, fostering hybrid identities that honored their past while adapting to their present realities.

Ultimately, the sustained efforts of postcolonial societies to preserve and adapt their ethnic identities underscore the enduring importance of cultural heritage in shaping individual and collective identities. The concept of cultural hybridity, as articulated by Homi Bhabha, illuminates the transformative space where precolonial, colonial, and postcolonial influences converge, creating new expressions of identity. These strategies ensured that even amidst globalization and cultural homogenization, the unique histories, traditions, and languages of these societies were not lost but reimagined in ways that resonate with the modern world. By engaging with their heritage critically and creatively, postcolonial societies have demonstrated that cultural identity is not static but a dynamic and evolving force, essential for navigating the complexities of the postcolonial era and beyond.

## **2.9 Ethnic Identity in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

Ethnic identity in the 21st century continues to serve as a vital marker of individual and collective identities across societies. It is deeply rooted in shared heritage, traditions, and cultural expressions, providing people with a sense of belonging and continuity. Despite the homogenizing effects of globalization and modern governance, ethnic identity persists due to its intrinsic role in shaping societal dynamics (Kamau, 2017). Particularly in Africa, the emphasis on ethnicity shapes political and social interactions, underscoring its relevance in a globalized world (Bosire & Fiseha, 2022). In Kenya, the interplay of ethnicity and politics demonstrates the enduring importance of ethnic identity in governance and daily life, as electoral patterns often reflect ethnic affiliations

(Njoroge, 2013). This persistence underscores the complexity of ethnic identity as it adapts to modern contexts (Abdelrahim, 2023). The historical context of ethnic identity demonstrates its adaptability and resilience. In many societies, colonialism shaped the way ethnic identities were defined and politicized, often emphasizing divisions for administrative convenience (Tikumah, 2023). This legacy is particularly evident in Sudan, where colonial policies entrenched ethnic distinctions, creating a foundation for ongoing conflicts (Abdelrahim, 2023). Similarly, in Kenya, colonial divide-and-rule strategies exacerbated ethnic tensions, influencing modern political and economic structures (Bosire & Fiseha, 2022). While globalization has created opportunities for cross-cultural exchange, it has also brought challenges to maintaining distinct ethnic identities in the face of modernization and homogenization (Kamau, 2017).

Ethnic identity persists as a significant force in modern governance, influencing resource allocation, political representation, and policy-making. In Nigeria, ethnic identities shape political alliances and resource distribution, often leading to tensions between major ethnic groups (Kamau, 2017). Similarly, in Rwanda, ethnic identity has been a central issue in governance, particularly in the aftermath of the 1994 genocide. Despite efforts to promote national unity, ethnic tensions remain a subtle but powerful undercurrent in Rwandan society (Tikumah, 2023). These examples illustrate how ethnic identities continue to shape governance structures and influence social cohesion. Secular governance systems often aim to neutralize ethnic and religious affiliations to promote equality and inclusivity. However, in practice, these systems frequently clash with the realities of ethnically diverse societies. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, governance structures institutionalize ethnic representation, leading to inefficiencies and perpetuating divisions. Similarly, in Kenya, the 2010 Constitution attempted to address ethnic inequalities by devolving power to county governments, yet ethnic favoritism in politics persists (Kamau, 2017). Secular governance frameworks require careful balancing to integrate ethnic identities without exacerbating divisions or marginalizing specific groups.

Zavella, (2018) assessed how social identity and culture are fundamental components of ethnicity. By constructing identity and culture, individuals and groups address the complexities of ethnic boundaries and significance. Ethnicity should be seen as a dynamic and ever-changing aspect of both individual identity and group organization. The creation of ethnic identity and culture results

from a dialectical interaction between structure and agency, involving both ethnic groups and the broader society. Ethnicity emerges from the actions of ethnic groups as they continuously redefine their identity and culture, but it is also shaped by external social, economic, and political influences. This paper outlines various ways in which ethnic identity and culture are formed and reformed in contemporary societies. It focuses particularly on the processes of ethnic identity formation and transformation, and on the purposes of cultural production, such as creating collective meaning, building community through mythology and history, and establishing symbolic foundations for ethnic mobilization.

Kolås (2017) assessed how students frame ethnic conflict' using social media in India. The units of analysis were university students, militant group community members in Assam's mountainous districts, as well as a type of political violence termed locally 'ethnic clashes'. According to the article by Balcells, and Stanton, (2021, p-45-69), ethnic confrontations have become an institutionalized type of armed violence in the region, while 'ethnic rivalry' is a major diagnostic frame for conflict. As enactments and imaginaries of institutionalized violence, 'ethnic clashes' are the product of actors with vested interests in representing armed political violence as a result of 'ethnic conflict' between competing ethnic communities. The paper examines how causes of conflict are represented, as well as how acts of violence are framed as major locations of contestation and hence integral components of the conflict. This raises doubts regarding the feasibility of scholarly efforts to make sense of specific occurrences of conflict via generic concepts such as ethnic conflict.

Olatunji and Abiodun (2023), in their research, analyzed the influence of media and ethnic supremacy in causing ethnic conflicts in Africa with the goal of proposing potential solutions to the problem. Secondary data was employed in the study, while the data was analyzed using the content analysis method. The conflict theory proposed by Karl Marx anchored the study. This theory heights the fact that the society can be classified into two major social groups: the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. The study contends that Africa will be conflict-free provided the media are monitored to avoid agitating one ethnic group against another and the correct structure is followed to avoid the perceived behavior of an ethnic group supremacy.

Rong, (2010), studied the relationship between the two concepts of nation and ethnic group in the 21st century. The study revealed that there is a relationship between social status and educational situations where people experience stereotype threat which propagate ethnic of minorities. According to Kowalewski, (1981, p-279-306), within the Soviet Model the concept of nationality, is a strong and significant influence of nationality on the ethnic group. The best framework that deals with ethnic relations that has been in place since 1950s. The framework is different from the traditional Chinese framework that has been in place in the last 2000 years. The difference has been brought about by the disintegration of Soviet Union took place between 1989 and 1991. Thus, China should rethink on how to deal with the Soviet model in comparison that is different from Chinese tradition. The politicization of the concept of ethnicity' in China may lead to the new direction affecting the construction of a harmonious society.

Triandafyllidou, (2020) focused on Nationalism and Neo-tribalism in 21st century. The research aimed at providing a new analytical perspective that will help in understanding the resurgence of nationalism among the global community in the 21st century. The study noted that many nations nowadays have a set of challenges comprising social and economic challenges this has resulted from the economic globalization which has intensified, creating a heightened phase of political interdependence and cultural interconnectedness. Nations and states have found that their personalized sovereign powers are diminishing and it is being transformed into post-national states. Despite this, some nations still remain powerful as a result of legitimacy through ethnic identity. Resurgence of nationalism is being witnessed globally but concentrating in European countries. Moreover, there is a manifestation of aggressiveness, populist forms and nativism. In this century there is a critical discussion on ethnicity and criticism. Triandafyllidou (2020) highlights the importance of new analytical framework aimed at distinguishing between plural nationalism and neo-tribal nationalism, showing interaction between permeability and diversity in the 21st century.

The digital revolution has transformed how ethnic identities are expressed, negotiated, and mobilized. Social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter have become virtual spaces where ethnic communities connect, share cultural practices, and advocate for their rights (Kamau, 2017). In Kenya, university students use these platforms to assert their ethnic identities and engage

in discussions about cultural heritage. However, the same platforms have also amplified ethnic tensions, particularly during politically sensitive periods, such as Kenya's 2007–2008 post-election violence. This duality highlights the need for responsible digital engagement to harness the potential of social media for cultural preservation and conflict resolution (Tikumah, 2023). Ethnic identity often becomes a focal point in conflict zones, shaping the dynamics of resource allocation, governance, and intergroup relations. In Sudan, ethnic divisions have fueled prolonged conflicts, with governance structures failing to address the grievances of marginalized groups. In Bosnia, the post-conflict governance model institutionalizes ethnic representation to ensure inclusivity but also entrenches divisions and inefficiencies (Bosire & Fiseha, 2022). Nigeria's resource disputes in the Niger Delta further demonstrate how ethnic identities intersect with economic and political struggles, exacerbating tensions and conflicts. These cases highlight the challenges of managing ethnic diversity in conflict-prone societies, where governance must navigate historical grievances and competing interests.

Identity Globalization presents both opportunities and challenges for ethnic identity. On the one hand, it facilitates cultural exchange and the global spread of ethnic traditions. On the other, it risks eroding traditional practices through homogenization. Migrant communities often navigate dual identities, balancing integration into host societies with the preservation of their cultural heritage (Njoroge, 2013). Social media has become a critical tool in this process, enabling diaspora communities to maintain connections with their ethnic roots while engaging with global audiences (Bosire & Fiseha, 2022). However, the pressures of assimilation and exposure to stereotypes can complicate these efforts, highlighting the need for policies that support cultural diversity in a globalized world. Modernization in Kenya has brought significant social and economic changes, yet ethnic identity remains a persistent force shaping political and social interactions. The country's multi-ethnic composition has led to political mobilization along ethnic lines, with communities often voting based on ethnic affiliations (Kamau, 2017). The 2010 Constitution attempted to address these issues by devolving power to local governments, aiming to ensure more equitable resource distribution and reduce ethnic favoritism. However, despite these reforms, ethnicity remains a key factor in national politics, as evidenced by electoral disputes and resource allocation controversies.

Modernization has therefore not eroded ethnic identity but rather reshaped its expression in contemporary governance (Tikumah, 2023). Social media has become a critical tool for ethnic identity expression, allowing individuals and communities to share their cultural practices and connect with like-minded groups. Platforms like WhatsApp and Facebook are widely used in Kenya to celebrate ethnic heritage and promote cultural events. At the same time, social media has exacerbated ethnic tensions, especially during politically sensitive periods, such as elections. In the 2007–2008 post-election violence, inflammatory messages spread through social media fueled ethnic divisions and led to widespread conflict. These examples underscore the dual nature of social media, which can both unite and divide ethnic communities, depending on how it is used (Tikumah, 2023). Sudan's ethnic diversity has long influenced its governance structures and conflicts, with tensions often arising from unequal resource distribution and political exclusion. Ethnic divisions between the Arab-dominated north and the marginalized southern communities were central to the country's civil wars (Abdelrahim, 2023). Even after South Sudan's independence, ethnic conflicts persist in both nations, fueled by grievances over land, resources, and governance (Tikumah, 2023). These ongoing challenges highlight the role of ethnic identity in shaping Sudan's political landscape and underscore the need for inclusive governance frameworks that address the root causes of ethnic tensions.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the post-war governance structure institutionalized ethnic representation to prevent further conflict. While this model has ensured a degree of stability, it has also entrenched divisions between the country's three main ethnic groups—Bosniaks, Croats, and Serbs. These divisions often lead to political gridlock and hinder efforts to build a cohesive national identity (Tikumah, 2023). Furthermore, ethnic identity remains a central factor in governance, with communities prioritizing their group's interests over national unity. This case underscores the challenges of balancing ethnic representation with the need for effective governance. Nigeria's ethnic diversity has significantly shaped its political and economic landscape, particularly in resource-rich regions like the Niger Delta. Ethnic communities in these areas have long demanded greater control over their resources, leading to tensions with the central government (Kamau, 2017). The country's power-sharing arrangements, which aim to balance ethnic representation, have been criticized for perpetuating divisions rather than fostering unity. Despite these challenges, Nigeria's ethnic communities continue to assert their identities through cultural

practices, advocacy, and political mobilization, highlighting the resilience of ethnic identity in the face of modernization.

In response to modernization, many ethnic communities have embraced cultural revival initiatives to preserve their heritage. In Rwanda, for example, traditional dances, crafts, and languages are being revitalized as symbols of cultural identity (Tikumah, 2023). Similarly, in Kenya, ethnic groups celebrate their heritage through festivals, literature, and music, ensuring that younger generations remain connected to their roots (Njoroge, 2013). These efforts demonstrate that modernization does not necessarily erode ethnic identity; instead, it can inspire communities to adapt and assert their cultural distinctiveness. Secular governance seeks to promote equality and inclusivity by de-emphasising ethnic and religious differences. However, in practice, this often clashes with the realities of diverse societies. In Kenya, efforts to integrate ethnic identities into governance through devolution have had mixed results, with ethnic favoritism persisting in politics (Kamau, 2017). In Bosnia, the institutionalization of ethnic representation has prevented large-scale conflicts but has also perpetuated divisions (Bosire & Fiseha, 2022). These examples highlight the complexity of managing ethnic diversity within secular frameworks, where inclusive policies are essential for fostering unity.

Ethnic identity plays a pivotal role in post-conflict reconciliation, as it often becomes a focal point for both healing and further division. In Rwanda, the government has sought to suppress ethnic distinctions in favor of a unified national identity. This approach, while effective in reducing overt ethnic conflicts, has faced criticism for marginalizing cultural expressions and erasing certain historical narratives (Bosire & Fiseha, 2022). Similarly, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the institutionalization of ethnic representation aimed at preventing future conflict has entrenched divisions between ethnic groups, creating challenges for long-term unity (Tikumah, 2023). Effective reconciliation requires balancing the acknowledgment of ethnic identities with the promotion of shared values and national cohesion. Electoral politics in Kenya vividly illustrates the enduring influence of ethnic identity in modern governance. Political campaigns and voting patterns often align with ethnic affiliations, as communities prioritize their representation in government (Kamau, 2017). The 2007–2008 post-election violence, fueled by ethnic divisions and resource disputes, highlighted the dangers of politicizing ethnic identity. Although the 2010

Constitution introduced devolution to address these issues, ethnic favoritism and tensions remain significant challenges, emphasizing the need for policies that promote inclusivity and reduce the politicization of ethnicity (Njoroge, 2013).

Social media offers both opportunities and challenges for mitigating ethnic conflicts. Platforms like Facebook and Twitter have been used to spread hate speech and mobilize ethnic divisions during politically sensitive periods, as seen in Kenya's electoral violence (Bosire & Fiseha, 2022). However, these platforms also provide opportunities for promoting intercultural dialogue and advocating for peace. In Rwanda, social media campaigns have been used to promote national unity and educate the public on the dangers of ethnic division (Tikumah, 2023). These examples highlight the dual nature of social media in shaping ethnic identity and its potential role in fostering social cohesion. The intersection of ethnic identity and economic resource allocation is a source of tension in many societies. In Nigeria, resource-rich regions such as the Niger Delta have long demanded greater control over their resources, citing ethnic marginalization as a key grievance (Kamau, 2017). Similar dynamics are evident in Sudan, where ethnic groups have clashed over access to land and natural resources (Abdelrahim, 2023). These conflicts underscore the importance of equitable resource distribution and inclusive economic policies to address the grievances of marginalized ethnic communities and prevent further divisions.

Efforts to promote cultural revival through traditional dances, crafts, and languages reflect the resilience of ethnic identity, even in the face of state policies aimed at homogenization (Tikumah, 2023). These dynamics highlight the complexity of balancing national unity with the preservation of ethnic diversity. Education plays a crucial role in preserving ethnic identity, particularly in diverse societies. In Kenya, cultural education initiatives emphasize the importance of teaching traditional practices, languages, and histories to younger generations (Kamau, 2017). These efforts are complemented by digital platforms, where ethnic communities share educational content and resources (Njoroge, 2013). In Rwanda, similar initiatives aim to promote cultural pride while fostering national unity, demonstrating the potential of education as a tool for sustaining ethnic identity.

Grassroots mobilization often leverages ethnic identity to advocate for social and political change. In Kenya, community-based organizations use cultural practices and traditions to engage local

populations and address issues such as poverty and inequality. Similarly, in Sudan, grassroots movements have emerged to demand greater recognition and representation for marginalized ethnic groups (Abdelrahim, 2023). These initiatives highlight the potential of ethnic identity as a unifying force for collective action, even in the face of systemic challenges (Tikumah, 2023). Globalization has brought both challenges and opportunities for ethnic identity in Africa. While the spread of global culture risks homogenizing traditional practices, digital platforms have enabled communities to preserve and share their heritage on a global scale (Kamau, 2017). In Kenya, for example, ethnic groups use social media to showcase their traditions and connect with the diaspora, highlighting the adaptability of ethnic identity in the modern era (Njoroge, 2013). These dynamics underscore the resilience of ethnic identity in navigating the complexities of globalization. Ethnic identity is often preserved through intergenerational transmission, where older generations pass down traditions, languages, and values to younger members of the community. In Kenya, families and community elders play a crucial role in teaching younger generations about cultural heritage and ethnic practices. This process is further supported by educational initiatives and social media platforms, which provide spaces for sharing cultural knowledge (Njoroge, 2013). In Rwanda, cultural revival programs emphasize intergenerational dialogue to sustain ethnic identity while promoting national unity. These efforts highlight the importance of preserving ethnic traditions in the face of modernizing influences, ensuring that cultural continuity is maintained (Bosire & Fiseha, 2022).

Social media platforms have revolutionized how ethnic communities mobilize for social and political causes. In Nigeria, ethnic groups use platforms like Twitter and WhatsApp to advocate for resource control and political representation, amplifying their voices in national discourse (Kamau, 2017). Similarly, in Kenya, social media has been instrumental in organizing cultural events and campaigns promoting ethnic pride. However, these platforms have also been used to spread misinformation and fuel ethnic tensions, as seen during Kenya's 2007–2008 post-election violence. This duality underscores the need for responsible digital engagement to harness the potential of social media for positive outcomes (Tikumah, 2023). Urbanization presents unique challenges and opportunities for ethnic identity. In rapidly growing cities, individuals from diverse ethnic backgrounds interact, often blending cultural practices and creating hybrid identities. In Kenya, urban areas like Nairobi serve as melting pots where ethnic traditions are both preserved

and transformed (Kamau, 2017). Social media plays a significant role in this process, allowing urban residents to stay connected to their rural communities and cultural roots (Njoroge, 2013). However, urbanization also brings assimilation pressures, particularly for younger generations, who may prioritize modern lifestyles over traditional practices (Bosire & Fiseha, 2022). Balancing cultural preservation with the realities of urban life is therefore a critical challenge for ethnic communities.

Women often play a central role in preserving and transmitting ethnic identity through cultural practices, education, and family traditions. In Kenya, women are key custodians of cultural heritage, teaching traditional songs, dances, and rituals to younger generations (Kamau, 2017). Social media has further empowered women to share their knowledge and connect with broader audiences, fostering a sense of community and cultural pride. In Rwanda, women's participation in cultural revival initiatives highlights their contributions to sustaining ethnic identity while promoting national unity (Tikumah, 2023). Recognizing the role of women is essential for understanding how ethnic identity is maintained and adapted over time (Bosire & Fiseha, 2022). Ethnic identity often includes a deep connection to the environment, with traditional practices emphasizing sustainable resource use and conservation. In Sudan, ethnic communities rely on indigenous knowledge systems to manage natural resources, reflecting their cultural values and environmental stewardship (Abdelrahim, 2023). Similarly, in Kenya, ethnic groups incorporate environmental practices into their rituals and agricultural systems, demonstrating the interplay between culture and sustainability. However, modern development projects often disregard these practices, leading to tensions over land use and resource allocation (Bosire & Fiseha, 2022). Integrating indigenous knowledge into environmental policies could strengthen both cultural preservation and sustainable development (Tikumah, 2023).

Moreover, economic pressures, such as migration and urbanization, often reshape ethnic identities as individuals adapt to new environments. In Nigeria, internal migration has led to the blending of cultural practices, with ethnic communities maintaining their traditions while integrating new influences (Kamau, 2017). In Kenya, young people in urban areas face challenges in balancing their ethnic identities with the demands of modern life, including education and employment (Njoroge, 2013). Social media provides a space for navigating these pressures, allowing

individuals to celebrate their heritage while engaging with global cultures (Bosire & Fiseha, 2022). These dynamics highlight the resilience and adaptability of ethnic identity in a changing economic landscape (Tikumah, 2023). Education systems can play a critical role in fostering ethnic identity by incorporating cultural knowledge and practices into curricula.

In Kenya, schools increasingly emphasize the importance of teaching indigenous languages and traditions to preserve ethnic heritage (Kamau, 2017). These efforts are complemented by digital platforms that provide educational resources and connect students with their cultural roots (Njoroge, 2013). In Rwanda, cultural education programs aim to promote both national unity and ethnic pride, reflecting the dual goals of reconciliation and cultural preservation (Tikumah, 2023). Integrating ethnic knowledge into education systems is essential for ensuring the continuity of cultural practices (Bosire & Fiseha, 2022). Leadership in Africa is often shaped by ethnic affiliations, influencing governance and policy decisions. In Sudan, ethnic identity plays a central role in determining political alliances and resource distribution, often leading to tensions between groups. In Kenya, political leaders frequently mobilize support along ethnic lines, reflecting the deep-rooted influence of ethnicity in governance. Social media has further amplified this dynamic, providing a platform for ethnic communities to advocate for their leaders and interests (Njoroge, 2013). Addressing these challenges requires inclusive leadership that prioritizes national unity while respecting ethnic diversity.

In summary, ethnic identity remains a defining force in the 21st century, shaping individual and collective experiences across diverse contexts. Despite the pressures of globalization and modernization, ethnic identity continues to thrive, adapting to new environments and challenges. In countries like Kenya, Sudan, and Rwanda, ethnic identity influences political alignments, resource allocation, and social cohesion. While governance structures, such as Kenya's 2010 Constitution, have attempted to address ethnic inequalities through mechanisms like devolution, ethnic divisions remain deeply entrenched in societal and political frameworks. Similarly, post-conflict strategies in Rwanda and Bosnia and Herzegovina have sought to reconcile ethnic divisions with varying degrees of success. These examples illustrate that ethnic identity is not static; it evolves and persists, influencing governance, social interactions, and cultural preservation efforts (Kamau, 2017; Bosire & Fiseha, 2022; Abdelrahim, 2023; Tikumah, 2023).

Furthermore, the rise of digital platforms has transformed the ways in which ethnic identity is expressed and mobilized. Social media provides spaces for cultural revival, interethnic dialogue, and grassroots mobilization, empowering communities to connect with their heritage and advocate for their rights. However, the same platforms also pose challenges, as they can amplify ethnic tensions and disseminate divisive narratives, particularly during politically sensitive periods such as elections. In Kenya, social media has been both a unifying and divisive tool, illustrating the dual potential of digital spaces in shaping ethnic identity. Globally, migrant communities leverage social media to navigate dual identities, blending cultural preservation with adaptation to host societies. These dynamics highlight the adaptability and resilience of ethnic identity in a rapidly changing world (Njoroge, 2013; Kamau, 2017; Bosire & Fiseha, 2022; Tikumah, 2023).

Overall, the persistence of ethnic identity underscores its centrality in human societies, even as modernization and globalization challenge traditional cultural frameworks. From urbanizing societies in Kenya to conflict zones in Sudan and Bosnia, ethnic identity continues to shape social, political, and economic landscapes. Efforts to preserve ethnic heritage through education, cultural revival, and governance reforms demonstrate the enduring relevance of ethnicity in a globalized era. However, these efforts must be complemented by inclusive policies and responsible use of digital platforms to mitigate tensions and promote intercultural understanding. The case studies discussed reveal that while ethnic identity is a source of cultural richness and unity, it can also perpetuate divisions when mismanaged. A nuanced approach that respects diversity while fostering social cohesion is essential for navigating the complexities of ethnic identity in the 21st century (Kamau, 2017; Abdelrahim, 2023; Bosire & Fiseha, 2022; Tikumah, 2023).

## **2.10 Ethnic Identity and the De-Colonisation Debacle in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

Ethnic identity in the 21st century remains a critical focal point in the discourse on decolonization, as the effects of colonialism continue to shape the socio-political and cultural dynamics of post-colonial nations. Colonial powers employed strategies like divide and rule to create and institutionalize ethnic divisions, a legacy that persists in contemporary governance and societal structures (Michalopoulos & Papaioannou, 2016). These strategies were instrumental in establishing hierarchies and inequalities that have since been inherited by post-colonial states, where ethnic identity frequently influences political representation, resource allocation, and social

cohesion. This legacy underscores the broader challenges of dismantling colonial frameworks and fostering inclusive governance in multi-ethnic societies. Ali et al. (2015) emphasizes that colonial hierarchies not only fractured communities but also fostered dependencies that have evolved into subtler forms of neocolonialism, complicating efforts to achieve genuine decolonization.

In addition to governance and political representation, the cultural impacts of colonialism on ethnic identity remain profound. Colonial powers often dismissed indigenous knowledge and traditions, replacing them with Western norms and practices that continue to dominate education, media, and public life in post-colonial societies (Konya, 2014). The persistence of these cultural impositions has led to ongoing debates about the marginalization of indigenous languages, religions, and epistemologies. Abdelrahim (2023) highlights that this marginalization contributes to the erosion of ethnic identities while reinforcing neo-colonial dynamics in which the values and ideologies of former colonial powers remain hegemonic. These debates are further complicated by modern challenges such as globalization and digital technologies, which can amplify both the reclamation and erosion of ethnic identities. As such, the discourse on decolonizing ethnic identity in the 21st century is intrinsically tied to broader efforts to address historical injustices and reclaim autonomy in governance, culture, and economic systems.

Ethnic identity in the 21st century is deeply tied to the enduring legacies of colonialism, which continue to shape societal and political structures in formerly colonized countries. Colonial policies such as “divide and rule” fractured indigenous populations along ethnic lines, creating divisions that persist in modern governance and social dynamics. As noted by Michalopoulos and Papaioannou (2016), the artificial borders drawn during the colonial era grouped disparate communities together while splitting cohesive ones, fostering tensions that hinder national unity. This has led to the entrenchment of ethnic identity as a central factor in political representation, resource allocation, and social cohesion in post-colonial states. The salience of ethnicity in post-colonial nations often mirrors the systems of exploitation and control established during the colonial period. Ali et al. (2015) argue that colonial authorities institutionalized ethnic hierarchies to create dependent ruling classes and marginalized communities, ensuring easier control. These systems remain evident in modern state-building processes, where ethnic favoritism and exclusionary politics perpetuate inequalities. In Kenya, for instance, the colonial strategy of

privileging certain ethnic groups over others has been carried forward, influencing electoral dynamics and resource distribution (Human Rights Watch, 1993).

The debate on decolonization emphasizes that colonialism has not been entirely eradicated but has evolved into subtler forms of subjugation. This is particularly evident in the persistence of neo-colonial practices that exploit ethnic divisions for economic and political gain. Tharoor (2017) notes that colonial-era policies continue to shape global trade and governance systems, keeping formerly colonized nations economically dependent on their former rulers. The maintenance of these structures underscores the difficulties in achieving genuine decolonization, as economic power remains concentrated in the hands of the Global North. Culturally, colonialism disrupted indigenous practices and imposed Western norms that continue to dominate public life in post-colonial societies. Educational systems established during colonial rule often prioritized Western languages, histories, and values, sidelining indigenous knowledge and traditions. This cultural erasure has left many communities struggling to reclaim their identities. Abdelrahim (2023) highlights how tribalism, often viewed as a negative legacy of colonialism, is both a source of identity and a challenge to national unity. Efforts to decolonize education by integrating indigenous perspectives face resistance from entrenched Western-centric frameworks.

The role of social media in shaping ethnic identity and fostering decolonization efforts in the 21st century cannot be understated. Platforms such as Facebook and Twitter have become spaces for ethnic communities to express pride in their heritage and mobilize for cultural and political causes. However, these platforms have also been weaponized to spread ethnic hate and misinformation. Abdirashid (2020) demonstrates how social media was used as a tool for incitement during Kenya's 2017 elections, illustrating the double-edged nature of digital spaces in ethnic mobilization. Colonial legacies also manifest in land ownership systems, which remain a major source of ethnic conflict in post-colonial nations. Gashaw (2017) argues that colonial land policies, which often displaced indigenous populations in favor of settlers or elites, have left a lasting impact on land tenure in Africa. These policies entrenched inequalities that are yet to be fully addressed. Land reforms, while essential for decolonization, face significant opposition from powerful vested interests, complicating efforts to achieve equitable resource distribution.

Efforts to reclaim indigenous governance systems often collide with the centralized bureaucratic structures established during colonial rule. Christopher (1988) notes that colonial administrations dismantled traditional systems of leadership and replaced them with centralized governance frameworks designed for control rather than representation. These systems have been inherited by post-colonial states, where they often exacerbate corruption and inefficiency. Decentralizing power and restoring traditional governance practices are seen as critical steps in decolonizing political systems. The global economic system perpetuates neo-colonial dependencies that undermine efforts to decolonize ethnic identities and ways of life. Michalopoulos and Papaioannou (2011) highlight how the exploitation of natural resources in Africa often benefits multinational corporations more than local communities, perpetuating the economic patterns established during colonial rule. This economic dependency ensures that post-colonial nations remain subject to external control, limiting their capacity to develop autonomous and equitable systems.

Ethnic identity is also shaped by the continued use of colonial languages as official languages in many post-colonial states. While these languages are often seen as tools for national unity and global engagement, they also marginalize indigenous languages and cultural expressions. Sibanda (2019) argues that promoting local languages in education and governance is essential for fostering pride and cohesion within ethnic communities. However, the dominance of colonial languages reflects the broader challenge of dismantling cultural hierarchies established during colonial rule. The persistence of colonialism's legacy in the 21st century is also evident in the marginalization of indigenous knowledge systems. Colonial powers often dismissed indigenous ways of knowing as primitive or inferior, prioritizing Western scientific paradigms in governance, education, and resource management. This epistemological hierarchy continues to undermine the decolonization of ethnic identities and practices. Konya (2014) highlights how indigenous knowledge, particularly in agricultural and environmental management, remains excluded from mainstream policy frameworks despite its relevance and sustainability. Efforts to integrate these knowledge systems into national policies require a paradigm shift that challenges the dominance of Western epistemologies.

Religion has played a significant role in shaping ethnic identity under colonial rule and continues to influence post-colonial dynamics. During colonization, Christian missionaries often worked in

tandem with colonial administrations to impose new religious practices that undermined indigenous spiritual systems. These efforts reshaped cultural practices and ethnic identities, creating divisions that persist in the modern era. Sibanda (2019) observes that the replacement of indigenous religions with Christianity disrupted traditional rites of passage and communal values, contributing to the erosion of ethnic cohesion. Reclaiming indigenous spiritual practices is seen as a vital component of decolonizing ethnic identity, but it faces resistance from communities now deeply rooted in imported religious systems. The intersection of ethnicity and gender in the context of decolonization highlights the compounded effects of colonialism on marginalized groups. Colonial administrations often imposed patriarchal systems that diminished the roles and statuses of women in traditional governance and society. In precolonial African communities, women played prominent roles as leaders, mediators, and custodians of cultural practices. However, colonial systems relegated women to subordinate positions, a legacy that persists in many post-colonial societies. Bouka (2020) emphasizes the need to address this intersecting oppression by incorporating feminist perspectives into decolonization efforts. Reclaiming the historical contributions of women to ethnic identity is critical for achieving a more inclusive understanding of cultural heritage.

Urbanization presents unique challenges to ethnic identity in post-colonial nations. Rapid migration to cities often brings individuals from diverse ethnic backgrounds into close contact, fostering cultural exchange but also creating tensions. While urban centers can act as melting pots, blending traditions and producing hybrid identities, they also dilute traditional practices, particularly for younger generations. Abdelrahim (2023) notes that urbanization often pressures ethnic minorities to assimilate into dominant cultural norms, weakening ties to their ancestral practices. Social media, however, has emerged as a tool for maintaining connections to rural communities, enabling urban residents to participate in cultural activities and preserve their ethnic heritage even in cosmopolitan settings. Media and communication technologies have become critical arenas for the negotiation of ethnic identity in the 21st century. Colonial powers used media to propagate stereotypes and control narratives about ethnic groups, and the remnants of these portrayals persist in modern representations. Alakwe and Ogbu (2017) argue that contemporary media still privileges Western perspectives, marginalizing indigenous voices in national and global discourses. However, digital platforms offer opportunities to challenge these narratives by

amplifying ethnic pride and fostering cross-cultural understanding. Efforts to decolonize ethnic identity must include strategies to ensure diverse representation in media and to empower marginalized communities to tell their own stories.

Education continues to be a battleground for decolonizing ethnic identity. Colonial education systems often prioritized Western histories and values, erasing the contributions and achievements of indigenous societies. In post-colonial contexts, these curricula remain dominant, perpetuating a sense of inferiority among indigenous populations. Sibanda (2019) advocates for the inclusion of indigenous histories and cultural practices in school curricula to foster pride and resilience in ethnic identities. Decolonizing education requires not only revising content but also rethinking pedagogical approaches to reflect indigenous ways of learning and knowing. This transformation is essential for creating a future where ethnic identity is celebrated rather than suppressed.

In conclusion, the persistence of colonial legacies in the 21st century has made ethnic identity a central focus in the ongoing debate on decolonization. Colonial policies of division, exploitation, and cultural erasure have left deep scars that continue to shape the social, political, and economic landscapes of formerly colonized nations. These legacies manifest in the form of entrenched ethnic hierarchies, exclusionary governance systems, and the marginalization of indigenous knowledge and practices. Despite the formal end of colonial rule, the structures and ideologies imposed during this period continue to subjugate post-colonial societies through mechanisms of neocolonialism. The challenge of addressing these entrenched systems underscores the complexity of the decolonization process, particularly in nations where ethnic identity remains a potent and often polarizing factor.

The implications of these enduring colonial effects are profound, as they influence not only national cohesion but also the broader pursuit of justice and equity in post-colonial societies. The failure to dismantle colonial frameworks perpetuates inequalities that fuel ethnic tensions, restrict development, and undermine national unity. This has serious consequences for governance, as exclusionary practices rooted in colonial hierarchies hinder the establishment of inclusive and representative systems. Economically, the persistence of neo-colonial dependencies limits the capacity of post-colonial nations to achieve self-reliance, deepening disparities between the Global North and South. Culturally, the dominance of Western norms and languages marginalizes

indigenous traditions, eroding the richness of ethnic diversity that should be celebrated and preserved. Addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach that integrates cultural revival, governance reform, and economic restructuring.

Ultimately, the decolonization of ethnic identity is not just a matter of addressing historical injustices but also of redefining the future of post-colonial societies in a way that prioritizes inclusivity, equity, and autonomy. The inclusion of indigenous knowledge in education, policy-making, and governance is essential for reclaiming cultural pride and fostering resilience within ethnic communities. Similarly, reforms in land ownership, resource management, and digital governance are necessary to ensure that the benefits of development are equitably shared. These efforts must be supported by a global commitment to dismantling neo-colonial structures and empowering post-colonial nations to determine their own paths. The journey toward decolonization is both complex and imperative, with the potential to transform ethnic identity from a source of division into a cornerstone of unity and progress in the 21st century.

### **2.11 Cultural Assimilation with Ethnic Groups**

Cultural assimilation among ethnic groups refers to the process through which distinct cultural groups interact and progressively adopt one another's characteristics, resulting in the integration of languages, traditions, values, and social norms. This phenomenon manifests in multiple contexts, including migration, trade, intermarriage, and political unification. In precolonial Africa, interactions among ethnic groups within centralized political systems resulted in shared identities and practices under a unified governance structure, promoting a distinctive cultural assimilation across communities. Ray (2019) argues that centralized political structures facilitated the coexistence of diverse groups under a unified authority, fostering shared linguistic and cultural elements while preserving ethnic distinctiveness. Conversely, in certain instances, decentralized regions characterized by minimal central governance maintained a more distinct separation of cultural identities, thereby restricting the degree of assimilation. The dynamics demonstrate the significant influence of political, social, and environmental factors on the extent and manner of cultural assimilation among ethnic groups.

The degree and characteristics of cultural assimilation are significantly shaped by historical and external factors, particularly in colonial contexts. Reid (2011) examines the tendency to neglect

precolonial African histories and interactions, prioritising colonial and post-colonial narratives, which have occasionally skewed our comprehension of cultural assimilation. Colonialism established new cultural norms, displacing indigenous practices and altering the identities of ethnic groups subjected to foreign influence. In the Philippines, Cruz (2019) notes that colonial powers emphasized their cultural practices, leading to the erasure or replacement of local traditions. The imposed neglect, referred to by Cruz as a “culture of neglect,” resulted in a legacy that influenced local perceptions of heritage and conservation. The examples illustrate that cultural assimilation is often neither voluntary nor harmonious; it is frequently influenced by power dynamics that can result in the loss or alteration of cultural practices. Understanding cultural assimilation necessitates recognising the complex interactions in which cooperation, conflict, and external pressures converge to influence the evolving identities of ethnic groups.

Cultural assimilation occurs when members of one ethnic group adopt the cultural practices, values, and norms of another, often as a result of prolonged interaction or external pressures. Within multi-ethnic societies, cultural assimilation can arise naturally through intermarriage, trade, or migration, fostering mutual understanding and hybrid cultural forms. For instance, the Swahili Coast of East Africa represents a historical example where African, Arab, and Persian influences merged, creating a distinct cultural identity rooted in shared economic and social exchanges (Falola & Fleming, 2020). However, assimilation is not always voluntary or equitable; it can be driven by coercive mechanisms, such as colonial policies aimed at erasing indigenous identities. In many parts of Africa, colonial administrations and missionary activities sought to replace traditional practices with European cultural norms, often framing indigenous customs as inferior (Makana, 2023). This imposed assimilation disrupted local cultural frameworks, eroded ethnic identities, and created lasting tensions between traditional and adopted practices.

Members of minority ethnic groups may feel compelled to abandon their heritage to gain social acceptance or access economic opportunities in dominant cultural settings. This dynamic can lead to the erosion of languages, rituals, and traditional knowledge systems that are vital for preserving ethnic identity (Gashaw, 2017). However, in some cases, assimilation has led to the emergence of hybrid identities that reflect the blending of diverse cultural influences. For example, the African diaspora in the Americas has created new cultural expressions that incorporate elements from

African, European, and Indigenous traditions, showcasing resilience and adaptability in the face of forced assimilation (Michalopoulos & Papaioannou, 2013). These hybrid identities highlight the complexity of cultural assimilation, where the loss of certain traditions is balanced by the creation of new, enriched forms of cultural expression. Recognizing the nuanced impacts of assimilation is critical for fostering inclusive societies that respect and celebrate cultural diversity.

Cultural assimilation with ethnic groups in precolonial Cameroon was characterized by a complex interplay of identities and relationships among the diverse populations inhabiting the country. Cameroon, known for its rich ethnic diversity, has historically been a site of settlement for various groups, leading to both the blending of cultures and occasional conflicts. This process of assimilation involved the incorporation of customs, languages, and practices from different ethnic groups, allowing for a shared cultural landscape while also giving rise to identity crises. The dynamics of inter-ethnic relationships were influenced by factors such as economic opportunities and the hospitable nature of indigenous populations, which facilitated interactions and exchanges among settlers and locals (Musah, 2021). This nuanced assimilation process reflects how precolonial societies navigated their differences, fostering a sense of community while grappling with the complexities of identity and belonging. Ultimately, the country's historical context underscores the importance of understanding cultural assimilation as a means of fostering social cohesion amidst diversity (Musah, 2021).

Cultural assimilation among ethnic groups in precolonial Nigeria involved complex intergroup dynamics that influenced social and political structures. Scholars have re-evaluated the historical narrative concerning intergroup relations, contending that the historiography has largely concentrated on economic interactions, neglecting political contexts (Okpevra, 2014). This oversight disregards the important political relationships that were present among different ethnic groups prior to 1800. Okpevra underscores the significance of political factors, illustrating how power dynamics, alliances, and conflicts were pivotal in influencing intergroup relations. The relationships encompassed not only economic factors but also negotiations of power, territory, and identity, indicating a sophisticated comprehension of cultural assimilation. The interaction among various ethnic identities frequently resulted in both cooperation and discord, highlighting the complexities inherent in community development within the region. Recognising the political

dimensions of cultural assimilation offers a comprehensive perspective on the complexities of precolonial Nigerian history.

Cultural assimilation among ethnic groups in precolonial Africa was significantly influenced by the political structures that shaped intergroup relations. Ray (2019) posits that the extent of precolonial centralization impacted both governance and the level of cultural assimilation among ethnic groups. Centralized societies employed political institutions to enhance interactions and integration among ethnic groups under a singular authority, promoting a collective identity while preserving unique cultural characteristics. This integration promoted collaboration and intergroup marriages, facilitating the assimilation of cultural practices, language, and social norms. Decentralized societies permitted ethnic groups to preserve a greater degree of their distinct cultural practices, as the lack of a unifying authority led to less stringent cultural integration.

Cultural assimilation among ethnic groups in precolonial southern Africa, especially among foragers, herders, and farmers, entailed intricate negotiations and interactions. Denbow (2017) examines the impact of food production technologies, including cattle domestication and crop cultivation, on the interactions between indigenous foragers and incoming agro-pastoralists in southern Africa. As herder-foragers migrated southward, they interacted with local populations, leading to cultural exchanges and the integration of languages, beliefs, and subsistence practices. In certain instances, these interactions resulted in the total assimilation of forager groups, leading to the decline of their languages and cultural practices. Conversely, in other cases, more enduring frontiers of interaction developed. The interactions resulted in dynamic and diverse societies, as hybrid cultures emerged through the adaptation of groups to novel technological and ecological conditions, facilitating extensive genetic and cultural integration. Denbow's analysis illustrates that precolonial cultural assimilation in southern Africa exhibited significant regional variation, leading to a complex and multifaceted social landscape characterized by fluid and adaptable cultural and genetic boundaries (Denbow, 2017).

The concepts of cultural assimilation in precolonial African societies is crucial for comprehending the historical underpinnings of social and ethnic dynamics. Reid (2011) examines the tendency within Africanist scholarship to neglect the precolonial era, contending that this oversight diminishes the complex intergroup dynamics that influenced African societies prior to colonial

interventions. Reid's concept of "foreshortening" indicates that important processes, like the gradual assimilation of ethnic groups, are frequently overlooked in favour of colonial and postcolonial narratives. Reid highlights the significance of acknowledging precolonial social interactions—such as trade, migration, and cultural exchange—that facilitated assimilation among various ethnic groups, thereby laying a groundwork for subsequent advancements in African societies. Revisiting these overlooked precolonial dynamics allows scholars to achieve a more comprehensive understanding of Africa's past, thereby illuminating contemporary issues related to ethnicity and social cohesion (Reid, 2011).

The colonial period in the Philippines significantly shaped the nation's strategies for cultural heritage conservation. Cruz (2019) posits in *A Review of How Philippine Colonial Experience Influenced the Country's Approaches to Conservation of Cultural Heritage* that the colonial legacy has significantly shaped perceptions and valuations of heritage. The continuous influence of foreign powers significantly altered the cultural and social dynamics of the Philippines, leading to a devaluation of indigenous heritage practices in preference for external norms and frameworks. This resulted in a culture of neglect concerning heritage conservation, with local traditions and historical landmarks frequently supplanted by symbols of the colonial order. Cruz asserts that this neglect of heritage continues in contemporary society, as historical artefacts and sites are frequently ignored unless they have a direct economic benefit. The colonial experience altered cultural practices and influenced societal attitudes towards heritage preservation. Cruz posits that reversing this legacy necessitates the cultivation of a culture that prioritises conservation and acknowledges the significance of cultural heritage as a vital asset for identity and development (Cruz, 2019).

## **2.12 Effects of Globalization, Urbanization and Technological Progress**

Human changes among ethnic groups due to modernity denotes the process through which traditional communities adjust and evolve in reaction to contemporary factors, including globalization, technological progress, and urbanization. This adaptation frequently leads to the integration of traditional customs with contemporary practices, thereby transforming ethnic identities and social structures. Arnedo-Gómez (2022) elucidates this dynamic via the concept of transculturation, as articulated by anthropologist Fernando Ortiz, to characterise cultural blending

in Latin America. Transculturation involves a reciprocal cultural exchange, where traditional and modern elements mutually influence one another, resulting in hybrid cultural identities instead of a mere replacement of one culture by another. In Latin America, indigenous African, and European cultural elements have converged over time, resulting in distinct expressions of language, art, and social norms that embody both historical origins and modern influences. The process of acculturation illustrates the manner in which ethnic groups preserve their heritage while selectively integrating elements of modernity that correspond with their developing identities.

Ethnic communities, facing new economic, social, and technological realities, may adopt elements of modernity to achieve social mobility or economic benefits, while simultaneously adapting these influences to align with their cultural frameworks. Arnedo-Gómez (2022) elucidates that this mode of cultural adaptation challenges the colonial perspective of acculturation as a unilateral erosion of identity. It illustrates resilience, as ethnic groups actively engage in shaping the integration of modern practices while maintaining aspects of their traditions. This process illustrates the intricacies of acculturation in contemporary society, highlighting that cultural adaptation is an active and creative endeavour, not merely passive assimilation. Transculturation, as suggested by Arnedo-Gómez, offers insight into the processes through which ethnic groups in diverse societies construct identities that effectively integrate tradition and modernity.

Ismail et al. (2015) explore how the Sama-Bajau, an ethnic group widely dispersed across coastal areas of the Philippines, Malaysia, and Indonesia, have adapted their cultural practices and identities in response to socio-political shifts and modernization. The Sama-Bajau traditionally lived as maritime people, often in boat-dwelling communities, and maintained a lifestyle centered on fishing and mobility. However, colonialism and subsequent modernization policies, especially in coastal areas of Sabah, influenced the integration of the Sama-Bajau into sedentary settlements, reshaping their cultural landscape and social structures. This process of acculturation, facilitated by inter-ethnic marriages and social mobility, has led to a blending of traditional Sama-Bajau customs with the influences of surrounding communities, creating hybrid cultural identities and modifying their built environments. As modern governance systems and socio-economic pressures reshaped their communities, the Sama-Bajau adjusted their dwellings and social organization to

align with these new realities, demonstrating how acculturation moulds ethnic identities under the influence of regional and global forces (Ismail, Ahmad, & Ibrahim, 2015).

Acculturation among African ethnic groups as a result of modernity is a complex process influenced by historical and external factors. Falola and Fleming (2011) describe how African societies integrated elements from Islam, European colonialism, and the transatlantic slave trade into their indigenous cultures. The spread of Islam introduced new governance and educational systems, integrating Islamic practices with African traditions, thereby transforming local identities. Colonialism exacerbated this process by implementing Western education, Christianity, and economic structures that frequently clashed with traditional African systems. The outcome was a multifaceted cultural negotiation, wherein African societies adjusted to external influences while striving to maintain their heritage. The legacy of acculturation is evident in the hybrid cultural identities present in African nations, where contemporary economic and technological pressures persistently affect traditional practices. This integration highlights the resilience of African civilisations, which have consistently adapted to external influences while preserving fundamental elements of their identity (Falola & Fleming, 2011).

Acculturation among ethnic groups due to modernity is evident in the adaptation and integration of traditional music with contemporary genres, demonstrating the evolution of cultural identities. Kunnuji (2017) examines the Badagry-Ogu ethnic group's adaptation to cultural transformations in Lagos' postcolonial modernity through the integration of traditional music and American jazz elements in "Guided Syncretism: Repackaging Badagry-Ogu Music." This method, referred to as "guided syncretism," entails the deliberate integration of contemporary musical forms with indigenous styles, thereby enhancing the accessibility of the music for younger generations familiar with Western music. This integration revitalises traditional Ogu music and allows the community to affirm its cultural identity in a global context. This syncretism illustrates the difficulties of maintaining indigenous heritage in a swiftly modernising society, where younger generations frequently undervalue traditional practices. The incorporation of jazz into Ogu music exemplifies a trend where ethnic groups reinterpret their cultural heritage to appeal to contemporary audiences, navigating the tension between authenticity and adaptation within a postcolonial context (Kunnuji, 2017).

Arnedo-Gómez (2022) asserts that acculturation among ethnic groups in modern contexts is significantly influenced by the notion of transculturation, a term introduced by Cuban anthropologist Fernando Ortiz to describe the intricate fusion of cultures in Latin America. Transculturation differs from traditional acculturation by highlighting a reciprocal exchange rather than a one-way process in which a minority culture assimilates elements of a dominant culture. This dynamic is particularly evident in Latin American societies, where indigenous, African, and European influences converge to form hybrid identities, notably through *mestizaje*—the amalgamation of races and cultures. Arnedo-Gómez asserts that transculturation contests the colonial narrative of cultural hierarchy by indicating that, in contemporary contexts, cultural adaptation entails reciprocal influence and the emergence of new, distinct cultural forms rather than simple assimilation. This acculturation approach illustrates the adaptation and transformation of ethnic identities in modern contexts, highlighting the negotiation of heritage alongside the integration of global cultural elements. Transculturation serves as a framework for comprehending cultural adaptation in postcolonial societies, highlighting that it is not merely a passive acceptance of dominant practices but rather a dynamic process that reconfigures both traditional and modern elements (Arnedo-Gómez, 2022).

### **2.13 Implications of Digital Divide**

The digital divide is a critical concept when discussing the impact of social media on ethnic identity, particularly within the context of the African continent. In many parts of Africa, there exists a significant gap between those who have access to modern communication technologies, such as the internet and social media platforms, and those who do not. This divide is shaped by a variety of factors, including economic disparity, geographical isolation, and infrastructure deficiencies. These disparities in access have profound implications for the way ethnic identity is formed, expressed, and negotiated in the digital realm. For those with access to digital tools and social media, these platforms provide a means to engage in identity construction and cultural expression, allowing individuals to share their ethnic affiliations, engage in cross-cultural dialogue, and participate in a global conversation about identity. However, for those who lack access, their ethnic identity remains largely confined to offline spaces, and they are excluded from

the digital landscape where much of the modern identity negotiation takes place (Nugroho et al., 2021).

The economic divide is one of the most significant factors contributing to the digital divide in Africa. In many African countries, the cost of internet access and digital devices remains prohibitively high for large sections of the population, particularly in rural areas. Access to technology is typically concentrated in urban centers, where infrastructure is more developed, and individuals from affluent communities are more likely to afford smartphones and stable internet connections (Ombui, 2021). This leads to a digital exclusion of those in poorer, rural regions, where individuals often lack the means to access the internet or engage with social media platforms. In these areas, traditional forms of cultural expression and ethnic identity formation—such as oral storytelling, communal rituals, and cultural practices—continue to persist, but they remain disconnected from the digital spaces where many contemporary identity negotiations are occurring. As a result, these communities are at risk of being marginalized in the global digital discourse on ethnic identity and cultural representation, which is increasingly taking place on social media (Goerke & Anderson, 2020).

The lack of infrastructure further complicates efforts to bridge the digital divide in Africa. The continent's infrastructure is often outdated or insufficient to meet the demands of a growing digital population. Many African countries still struggle with providing consistent electricity supply, which is essential for the functioning of digital devices and internet services (Hilary & Dumebi, 2021). Moreover, many areas suffer from poor or non-existent internet service due to the high cost of connectivity, limited broadband infrastructure, and slow network speeds. In Kenya, for instance, urban universities may have access to state-of-the-art digital resources that facilitate learning, engagement, and identity expression on social media. However, students in rural areas often face difficulties in accessing these platforms due to limited connectivity and financial barriers (Owidi & Njoroge, 2021). This digital exclusion creates a two-tiered society in which certain ethnic groups, particularly those based in urban centers, are able to use social media to shape their identities, while rural communities are left out of these conversations and unable to influence the public discourse on their cultural identity.

The implications of the digital divide on ethnic identity are profound. In an era where social media is increasingly the platform of choice for cultural expression and identity negotiation, those without access are excluded from the global conversation on their ethnic heritage. Ethnic groups in marginalized areas are unable to share their stories, traditions, and cultural practices in the same way that urban communities with access to digital platforms can (Mishra, 2020). This exclusion means that ethnic identities from rural areas are often invisible in the digital realm, reinforcing the marginalization of these groups in the broader societal narrative. This digital exclusion further deepens the social divide, as ethnic communities with limited access to technology are not able to respond to, challenge, or redefine the narratives about their identity that are often shaped by those with more access to social media platforms. The lack of representation in these digital spaces leads to a situation where urban ethnic identities dominate, and rural ethnic identities remain voiceless and unrepresented in the online discourse.

The digital divide also affects how social media platforms are used to address intergroup relations and ethnic conflict. As seen in numerous cases, such as the Kenyan 2007-2008 post-election violence, social media has played a significant role in both mobilizing communities and in exacerbating ethnic tensions (Rafi et al., 2020). Social media can be a tool for ethnic solidarity and social justice in times of crisis, but for those who lack access, misinformation and hate speech can spread without opposition or counter-narratives from excluded communities. For example, online hate speech has been used in the past to incite violence and division between ethnic groups, and the digital divide amplifies this issue by leaving underrepresented groups unable to combat misinformation or dispute negative stereotypes about their ethnic identities (Hilary & Dumebi, 2021). This exclusion creates an environment where misrepresentation and ethnic stereotyping go unchallenged, further entrenching ethnic conflict and prejudices in the digital space.

Additionally, the digital divide has significant implications for digital literacy and the ability of marginalized communities to use social media effectively to preserve and promote their ethnic identities. Without adequate training and access to resources, communities without digital access may struggle to engage with social media platforms in a meaningful way. This lack of digital literacy further isolates these communities, making it difficult for them to not only navigate social media but also to use these platforms to advocate for their rights, preserve cultural heritage, and

negotiate their ethnic identities in the public eye (Matamoros-Fernández & Farkas, 2021). In contrast, those with better access to education, digital tools, and internet services are able to leverage social media to promote their ethnic causes, share their stories, and influence public perceptions of their ethnic identity, thereby shaping the discourse on ethnicity and cultural representation in ways that marginalized groups cannot.

In addressing the digital divide, African nations must prioritize the expansion of digital infrastructure in rural and underserved regions. Government investment in affordable internet services, the expansion of broadband networks, and mobile data access is crucial for ensuring that all ethnic communities have equal opportunities to participate in the digital economy and digital discourse (Ngethe et al., 2021). Moreover, digital literacy programs that teach young people in marginalized areas how to use social media for cultural preservation, identity formation, and political mobilization can help ensure that ethnic groups who are currently excluded from the digital conversation have the tools to shape their own ethnic narratives. This investment in inclusive technology is vital for ensuring that the digital age is equitable and that all ethnic identities have a place in the global digital conversation about identity, culture, and heritage.

Thus, the integration of indigenous knowledge systems into the digital space can also play a role in bridging the digital divide and promoting ethnic inclusion. Social media platforms can serve as spaces for the digital transmission of IKS, ensuring that cultural knowledge and heritage are not lost but rather preserved and shared with the world. However, the digital divide must first be addressed to ensure that marginalized communities have the access and capacity to utilize these tools for cultural expression and ethnic representation (Goerke & Anderson, 2020). Therefore, efforts to bridge the digital divide should also focus on creating inclusive spaces for the transmission of IKS, ensuring that ethnic identities can be represented authentically in the digital age.

#### **2.14 Social Cohesion Within Ethnic Group**

Social cohesion within ethnic groups has historically served as a cornerstone for identity and collective well-being (Michalopoulos & Papaioannou, 2013). In precolonial societies, this cohesion was deeply embedded in shared traditions, cultural practices, and governance systems that emphasized unity while preserving distinct ethnic identities. Centralized political systems,

such as the Ashanti Kingdom, provided frameworks for ethnic integration under unified leadership, allowing for coexistence and mutual cooperation. However, the disruption caused by colonialism redefined ethnic relations, as policies such as "divide and rule" fragmented previously cohesive communities and introduced artificial divisions (Christopher, 1988). These disruptions eroded traditional forms of cohesion, setting the stage for inter-ethnic tensions and conflicts that continue to influence social and political dynamics in the postcolonial period.

In contemporary times, globalization and technological advancements have played a dual role in shaping ethnic identity (Alakwe & Ogbu, 2017). On one hand, digital platforms enable communities to preserve and celebrate their cultural heritage, providing opportunities for younger generations to connect with their roots. On the other hand, globalization often promotes cultural homogenization, threatening the distinctiveness of ethnic traditions. Hybrid identities have emerged as individuals navigate the intersection of traditional and global cultures, reflecting both the resilience and transformation of ethnic groups in the modern era (Kamau, 2022). Moreover, the politicization of ethnicity remains a driver of social conflict, with leaders exploiting ethnic allegiances to consolidate power, as seen in land disputes and electoral violence (Obala & Mattingly, 2014). These dynamics highlight the complexity of sustaining ethnic cohesion while balancing the demands of modernization and global interconnectedness.

Social cohesion within ethnic groups represents the unity and shared purpose derived from common traditions, language, and social practices. This cohesion has undergone significant transformation from the precolonial period to the 21st century, shaped by historical, political, and socio-economic forces. In precolonial societies, ethnic identity was deeply embedded in kinship networks, communal governance, and shared rituals that fostered a collective sense of belonging. Centralized political systems such as the Ashanti and Buganda Kingdoms facilitated interactions and mutual coexistence among diverse ethnic groups under unified governance, promoting shared practices while preserving unique traditions. Michalopoulos and Papaioannou (2013) argue that these precolonial institutions provided a stable framework for cohesion by integrating cultural practices into the political and economic structures of society. Conversely, decentralized regions maintained sharper ethnic boundaries, emphasizing local autonomy over regional integration and limiting the extent of broader inter-ethnic cohesion.

The advent of colonialism disrupted the organic development of ethnic identities, introducing artificial boundaries and manipulating social structures to serve administrative interests. Colonial authorities, particularly through policies such as “divide and rule,” exploited ethnic distinctions to consolidate control, often fostering competition and distrust among groups that had previously coexisted peacefully. Christopher (1988) highlights how these strategies institutionalized ethnic divisions, turning them into political tools that undermined social cohesion. Moreover, colonial borders often divided cohesive ethnic communities or grouped disparate ones, creating fragmented identities and tensions that continue to influence intergroup relations in contemporary societies. The introduction of Western education and religious systems further marginalized indigenous knowledge and practices, accelerating the erosion of traditional ethnic cohesion.

Alakwe and Ogbu (2017) assert that social cohesion among ethnic groups is essential for maintaining identity, promoting unity, and strengthening shared values, particularly in situations involving cultural assimilation with larger or dominant groups. Social cohesion denotes the connections that unify communities, evident through shared identity, collective objectives, mutual respect, and a sense of belonging. Jeremiah (2021) indicates that within ethnic groups, bonds are frequently founded on shared heritage, language, religion, customs, and traditions. As members of ethnic communities engage with modernity and external cultural influences, social cohesion experiences both opportunities and challenges. Cultural assimilation, wherein minority or ethnic groups incorporate elements of the dominant culture, may generate tensions within these communities as they strive to balance their heritage with the pressures to conform. The resilience of social cohesion in an ethnic group influences its capacity to maintain a distinct identity while existing within a larger societal context.

Intergenerational solidarity is a vital component of social cohesion among ethnic groups, characterized by the robust connections between various age cohorts within a community (Nyamweno, 2024). Elders serve as custodians of cultural heritage, transmitting stories, beliefs, practices, and values to subsequent generations. The intergenerational transfer fosters a profound sense of identity and pride in the community's origins and accomplishments. As younger members engage with and assimilate into a dominant or contemporary culture, the attractiveness of traditional practices may diminish. This shift may result in a generational divide, with older

individuals perceiving assimilation as a risk to cultural preservation, whereas younger individuals regard it as a means to achieve greater acceptance or success. Effective intergenerational solidarity necessitates open communication, mutual respect, and the flexible adaptation of cultural practices. These elements allow young individuals to connect with their heritage while avoiding feelings of restriction.

Ondigi (2023) highlights that shared language is fundamental to social cohesion among ethnic groups, functioning as a significant medium for the transmission of traditions, customs, and values. Shared language among members of an ethnic group creates a distinct code that enhances connections and fosters unity. Language encodes cultural nuances, humour, proverbs, and expressions that are fundamental to ethnic identity. As ethnic communities experience cultural assimilation, language frequently emerges as a primary element of change, leading to bilingualism or the replacement of native languages with the dominant language. Bilingualism may facilitate greater social mobility; however, the decline of a group's native language can weaken its cohesion, as younger generations may experience diminished connections to the cultural significance inherent in their ancestral language.

Berman and Takahashi (2019) investigated the intricate interplay among ethnicity, development, and social cohesion in Africa, emphasizing the contemporary political and economic context influenced by historical and global factors. They posited that ethnicity serves as both a malleable historical construct and a persistent reality that profoundly impacts political dynamics and economic results in African states. The study observed that ethnic identity frequently intersects with political and economic competition, resulting in exclusionary ethnic alliances and political tribalism, which may undermine social cohesion. Within the framework of globalisation, African societies encounter distinct challenges, such as heightened migration, diminished state trust attributable to corruption, and adverse consequences stemming from unregulated markets. The forces have intensified inequality and impeded governments' capacities to respond effectively to crises. Berman and Takahashi identified five critical areas that have significant socio-political implications: democratic institution building, constitutional governance, media and education reform, land and territorial management, and the regulation of natural resources and foreign investment. The authors concluded that achieving equitable growth and fostering social cohesion

in the face of these challenges is essential not only for Africa but also increasingly pertinent on a global scale.

The research conducted by the National Cohesion and Integration Commission (NCIC) and the Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis (KIPPRA) in 2013 assessed the state of social cohesion in Kenya. It evaluated elements including trust, peace, diversity, equity, prosperity, and national identity to create a Social Cohesion Index (SCI) for the nation. This study emphasized the enduring effects of colonial policies and inequalities in post-independence development, which have created disparities in infrastructure, resource access, and public services, especially between high-potential agricultural regions and arid and semi-arid lands (ASALs). The report, based on a nationwide survey, focus groups, and interviews, identified issues including disparities in regional resource allocation, ethnic tensions, and the unequal distribution of public jobs, all of which contribute to a diminished sense of social cohesion nationwide. The SCI findings highlighted the necessity for equitable policy implementation and development strategies aimed at addressing socio-economic disparities, enhancing inclusivity, and reinforcing trust and community relations to cultivate a cohesive national identity and social stability in Kenya (NCIC & KIPPRA, 2013).

Rituals and communal practices play a vital role in fostering social cohesion among ethnic groups (Ossai, 2024). The activities encompass religious ceremonies, holiday celebrations, and rites of passage, including weddings, funerals, and coming-of-age ceremonies. Rituals foster shared experiences that unite individuals, enhancing a sense of belonging and collective identity. In response to cultural assimilation, the characteristics and occurrence of these rituals may alter, resulting in some rituals being shortened, secularised, or modified to align with the prevailing culture. A community that traditionally celebrates harvest festivals may modify the timing or nature of these celebrations to accommodate contemporary work schedules or urban settings (Sulzer, 2024). These adaptations may yield both beneficial and detrimental effects on social cohesion. Some changes may facilitate the continuation of rituals in a modernised context, while others may diminish their cultural significance, resulting in a weakened communal bond.

Tom (2017) analyzed Africa's historical development from precolonial to post-colonial periods, highlighting the impact of colonial governance on African political structures and the subsequent challenges faced in the post-colonial era. Tom examined the structured political systems of

precolonial African societies that upheld social cohesion and order, which were subsequently undermined by colonial powers imposing European governance models. Externally engineered institutions frequently did not align with African socio-political realities, resulting in instability and conflict. Post-Cold War, Africa experienced a rise in international peace support operations designed to implement a "liberal peace" framework throughout the continent. This chapter examines African agency within hybrid political orders, characterized by the coexistence of traditional and modern governance, with a focus on societies such as Sierra Leone. It emphasizes the significance of customary law in promoting social order and stability. This historical analysis highlights the complexity of African governance and emphasizes the necessity of acknowledging local customs and structures in peacebuilding initiatives (Tom, 2017).

The research conducted by TK Seife (2021) analyzed the dynamics of being, belonging, and becoming in the African postcolonial context, emphasizing the intricate relationships between identity and belonging within Africa's diverse ethnic, linguistic, and cultural environments. Seife examined the intersection of ethnic and national identities, which frequently results in contested notions of belonging within postcolonial African societies. This study identified belonging as an essential factor influencing individuals' identity and social placement, while also highlighting a conceptual gap in the adequate definition of belonging within this context. Seife posited that belonging encompasses both communal attachment and individual agency, asserting that identity is dynamic and perpetually influenced by cultural, political, and social forces. Seife analyzed theoretical frameworks regarding identity as a personal and collective construct, highlighting its nature as a continuous negotiation influenced by internal perceptions and external societal factors. He emphasized that identity includes both a "core self" and aspirational dimensions shaped by social, political, and historical contexts (Seife, 2021).

Economic interdependence among members of an ethnic group is a crucial element of social cohesion (Akampurira, 2023). Numerous ethnic communities exhibit robust traditions of mutual assistance and economic cooperation, including cooperative savings groups, collective land ownership, and support networks for family-owned enterprises. This economic interdependence cultivates trust, solidarity, and mutual responsibility, thereby establishing a supportive community network. As individuals assimilate into the wider economy and embrace the prevailing cultural

values of individualism and personal advancement, traditional forms of economic interdependence may diminish (Becker, Rubin, & Woessmann, 2021). The migration of younger generations from traditional economic practices or their departure from the community in pursuit of improved economic opportunities can diminish the sense of solidarity within the ethnic group, resulting in a reorientation of priorities that favours individual success over communal well-being.

Sheikh (2017) asserts that marriage customs among ethnic groups foster social cohesion, perceiving marriage as a union not solely between individuals but also among families and communities. Traditional marriage practices, including arranged marriages, dowry exchanges, and cultural rites, reinforce ethnic identity and strengthen familial bonds. As ethnic groups assimilate into the dominant culture, marriage customs frequently undergo change, particularly as younger generations adopt more individualistic approaches that reflect contemporary values. Intermarriages involving individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds can complicate social cohesion, necessitating a blending or compromise of cultural practices. Intermarriage can expand social networks and enhance community diversity; however, it may also weaken specific cultural practices and pose difficulties in preserving a unified ethnic identity.

Helly, Barsky, and Foxen (2003) investigated the concept of social cohesion, defining it as the ideal of an inclusive, modern society founded on shared communality and responsibility. The authors critiqued the presentation of social cohesion, highlighting its tendency to overlook structural factors that sustain inequality, thereby constraining the concept of social capital. The analysis contended that although social cohesion highlights essential participation in public life, the labour force, and societal belonging, it frequently neglects to address the mechanisms through which inequalities are generated and perpetuated within society. This perspective particularly impacts ethnic minorities, as the framework typically presumes uniform participation while failing to acknowledge the barriers created by social inequalities. The authors concluded that genuine social cohesion necessitates addressing structural issues and legitimising movements that contest existing power relations, rather than merely fostering allegiance and shared values within society (Helly et al., 2003).

The impact of religion and spirituality significantly contributes to the enhancement of social cohesion among ethnic groups (Camara, 2019). Religion frequently offers moral direction, a

common belief framework, and a sense of purpose, contributing to the cohesion of group members. Religious institutions function as venues for gathering, worship, and community activities within numerous ethnic communities. As ethnic groups assimilate into the dominant culture, younger generations may adopt secular views or alternative religious practices that diverge from traditional beliefs. Assanful (2017) indicates that this shift may result in a decline in the group's social cohesion, as religious values that previously acted as a unifying force may no longer be widely accepted. To sustain social cohesion, it may be necessary for religious leaders and elders to modify rituals and practices to ensure their relevance to the younger generation, while simultaneously upholding core values.

Caprar, Walker, and Ashforth (2022) assert that community-based organisations and support networks play a crucial role in fostering social cohesion among ethnic groups. These organisations offer assistance in cultural preservation, social services, and community advocacy, aiding group members in addressing the challenges associated with cultural assimilation. Community-based organisations facilitate a secure environment for individuals to engage with others who share similar heritage, thereby strengthening a sense of belonging. They serve as intermediaries between the ethnic group and the broader society, facilitating the management of assimilation pressures. Nevertheless, as assimilation into the dominant culture increases, participation in these organisations may diminish, particularly among younger members who are more integrated into mainstream society. The decrease in engagement may undermine social cohesion, given that these organisations are essential for nurturing community connections and offering resources that uphold cultural identity.

Chugh and Ruhi (2018) assert that educational institutions function as both a challenge and a support mechanism for social cohesion among ethnic groups. Schools significantly contribute to acculturation by exposing children to the language, values, and norms of the dominant culture. Ethnic groups that integrate elements of their cultural heritage into educational environments via language classes, cultural programs, or traditional holiday celebrations can enhance social cohesion. The preservation of cultural elements in education enables children to sustain a connection to their origins and promotes pride in their ethnic identity. In the absence of such integration, children risk becoming estranged from their heritage, as the pressure to assimilate

within educational institutions may contribute to cultural erosion. It is essential to balance the advantages of educational integration with the necessity of cultural preservation to maintain social cohesion among ethnic groups.

Collective memory contributes to social cohesion, as ethnic groups share narratives and engage in local storytelling (Jeremiah, 2021). Ethnic groups frequently possess common histories, narratives, or experiences that influence their identity and foster unity among members. Collective memories are maintained via narratives, music, dance, and oral traditions that honour the group's origins, challenges, and accomplishments (Hogg, 2021). As individuals assimilate into the dominant culture, the significance of these collective memories may decline, particularly if perceived as irrelevant to contemporary life. To ensure the persistence of social cohesion, it is crucial for ethnic groups to maintain their collective memories through community events, cultural festivals, or digital platforms. The preservation of collective memory enables a group to sustain unity, despite individual interactions with wider cultural influences.

Mechanisms for conflict resolution among ethnic groups contribute to the preservation of harmony and order within the community (Ikelegbe, 2005). Traditional conflict resolution typically engages community elders, religious leaders, or esteemed individuals who facilitate mediation and uphold justice in accordance with cultural norms. The mechanisms are founded on principles of respect, reconciliation, and collective well-being, thereby fostering peace within the group. As ethnic groups assimilate, traditional methods of conflict resolution may be supplanted by formal legal systems or individualistic approaches to justice, potentially diminishing the communal focus inherent in traditional practices. This transition has the potential to undermine social cohesion, as individuals may lose confidence in the group's capacity for self-regulation and the preservation of harmony. Adapting traditional conflict resolution mechanisms to align with contemporary legal frameworks can enhance social cohesion within the group.

Mulcahy (2016) examined the role of cultural policy in post-colonial societies, focusing on the significance of public culture and identity formation in the context of colonial legacy. Mulcahy contended that comprehending a nation's cultural policy requires recognising the role of public culture in cultivating a sense of belonging and identity in post-colonial states. Cultural policy in these contexts frequently transcends the arts, reflecting collective values and group identities,

while underscoring the importance of loyalty and commitment to cultural identity. This intricate relationship illustrates the manner in which post-colonial societies manage the competing demands of preserving traditional identities and adapting to contemporary political and social frameworks. Mulcahy posited that cultural policy in post-colonial states entails the strategic delineation and reinforcement of identities, highlighting the political dimensions embedded in cultural expression and policy development (Mulcahy, 2016).

Abramitzky, Boustan, and Eriksson (2018) assert that cultural assimilation can result in the adoption of symbols from the dominant culture, potentially overshadowing or replacing traditional symbols. Cultural symbols and icons, including flags, emblems, clothing, and music, play a crucial role in fostering social cohesion by visually and emotionally articulating the identity of an ethnic group. The symbols serve as reminders of the group's collective heritage and values, fostering a sense of pride and belonging among members. Members of an ethnic group may adopt the fashion styles, music, or art forms of the dominant culture, resulting in a gradual shift away from their own cultural expressions. Ethnic groups often must actively celebrate and promote their symbols to maintain social cohesion, utilizing community gatherings, media representation, or educational programs. This approach strengthens a shared identity that remains robust against external cultural influences.

Muiu (2010) analyzed the colonial and postcolonial state structures in Africa, focusing on the influence of colonial frameworks on African development and governance after independence. Muiu contended that colonial authorities established administrative and economic frameworks intended to benefit external interests, frequently compromising indigenous African governance systems. In the postcolonial era, numerous African states-maintained aspects of colonial structures, impeding independent development initiatives and perpetuating cycles of political instability. Muiu emphasized that dependence on these inherited systems has established obstacles to meeting the distinct needs of African societies, frequently resulting in underdevelopment and insufficient accountability. The research examined the ongoing impact of colonial legacies on Africa's socio-political landscape, indicating the necessity for a developmental strategy grounded in African values and systems to effectively address the continent's interests (Muiu, 2010).

Ethnic pride and collective self-esteem are essential for maintaining social cohesion (Kamau, 2022). A robust pride in ethnic identity can motivate individuals to maintain ties to their heritage while engaging in cultural assimilation. Ethnic pride is frequently cultivated by community leaders, cultural events, and educational programs that emphasize the group's history, accomplishments, and societal contributions. When members of an ethnic group express pride in their heritage, they are more inclined to engage in communal activities and provide mutual support, thereby strengthening social cohesion.

In the postcolonial period, globalization emerged as a double-edged sword for ethnic identity preservation. While globalization facilitated cultural exchange, it also exposed ethnic communities to dominant global norms that often-overshadowed local traditions. Digital platforms, for example, have provided opportunities for ethnic groups to document, share, and celebrate their heritage with a global audience. Alakwe and Ogbu (2017) argue that social media enables communities to sustain their traditions, fostering a sense of pride and unity. However, the same platforms can lead to cultural homogenization, where global lifestyles and values, particularly appealing to younger generations, gradually replace traditional practices. This tension between preservation and adaptation underscores the challenges posed by globalization in maintaining ethnic cohesion.

Technological advancements have further amplified these dynamics, shaping the interaction between ethnic identity and social cohesion. Digital tools have empowered ethnic groups to archive their histories and promote their cultural narratives. Yet, as Njeri (2021) observes, these platforms can also be weaponized to spread stereotypes and deepen inter-ethnic grievances. In politically volatile contexts, social media has been used to incite ethnic-based violence, undermining efforts to promote unity and understanding. Conversely, when utilized constructively, technology has the potential to foster inter-ethnic dialogue and collaboration, highlighting its dual impact on identity and cohesion. This paradox reflects the complexity of technology's role in shaping the trajectory of ethnic identity in modern societies.

The emergence of hybrid identities represents another significant shift, demonstrating the adaptability of ethnic communities in response to modern challenges. These hybrid identities blend traditional cultural elements with contemporary global influences, creating new forms of affiliation that are particularly prevalent among urban populations and diaspora communities. Kamau (2022)

notes that hybrid identities allow individuals to navigate diverse cultural spaces, balancing their ethnic heritage with the demands of modernity. While this adaptability underscores the resilience of ethnic identity, it also raises concerns about the sustainability of traditional practices as younger generations increasingly prioritize broader affiliations over localized identities. This shift requires a balance that respects cultural heritage while embracing the opportunities of globalization.

Ethnic identity continues to play a significant role in shaping social and political dynamics, often acting as both a unifying and divisive force. In many postcolonial societies, the politicization of ethnicity has exacerbated inequalities and fueled conflict. Ali et al. (2019) argues that ethnic identity, when exploited for political gain, can deepen social fractures and perpetuate cycles of violence. Electoral violence, resource-based disputes, and social exclusion often stem from the manipulation of ethnic allegiances by political elites. Obala and Mattingly (2014) highlight how urban land conflicts in Kenya, framed through ethnic lenses, intensify tensions and complicate resolution efforts. Such instances illustrate the need for inclusive governance frameworks that address structural inequalities and promote equitable representation, ensuring that ethnic diversity serves as a source of strength rather than division.

In conclusion, the trajectory of social cohesion within ethnic groups from precolonial times to the 21st century reveals a complex interplay of continuity, adaptation, and erosion. While globalization and technological advancements provide tools for preserving ethnic traditions, they also introduce pressures that threaten their sustainability. Balancing the preservation of ethnic identity with the demands of a rapidly changing world is essential for fostering social cohesion and mitigating the risks of conflict in diverse societies. By promoting inclusivity and intercultural understanding, societies can harness the positive aspects of ethnic identity while addressing the challenges it poses in an interconnected and globalized world. Precolonial societies exhibited robust systems of ethnic cohesion grounded in shared governance, cultural practices, and communal interdependence. These systems not only sustained unique ethnic identities but also fostered coexistence and collaboration across diverse groups. However, colonial rule disrupted these organic structures, introducing divisions that undermined traditional unity and reshaped ethnic identities. The legacy of these disruptions persists, influencing inter-ethnic relations and national cohesion in postcolonial states. Despite this, many ethnic communities have retained a

strong sense of identity, showcasing their ability to adapt to external pressures and sustain their cultural heritage.

Globalization and technological advancements have further complicated the preservation of ethnic identity in the modern era. On one hand, they provide unprecedented opportunities for ethnic groups to document, share, and celebrate their traditions on a global scale. Digital platforms, for example, allow for the preservation of oral histories, rituals, and other cultural expressions, ensuring their transmission to future generations. On the other hand, these same forces introduce homogenizing pressures that threaten the distinctiveness of ethnic traditions. Younger generations, exposed to global lifestyles and values, often prioritize modern affiliations over traditional practices, leading to the emergence of hybrid identities that blend ethnic heritage with contemporary influences. While these hybrid identities reflect the adaptability of ethnic groups, they also underscore the ongoing challenge of sustaining traditional cohesion in a rapidly changing world.

The continued relevance of ethnic identity in shaping social and political dynamics underscores its complex role in fostering both unity and conflict. In many contemporary societies, ethnic identity serves as a source of pride and belonging, strengthening social cohesion within communities. However, when politicized or manipulated, it can exacerbate inequalities and fuel inter-ethnic tensions. This duality highlights the need for inclusive policies and governance frameworks that balance the preservation of ethnic heritage with the promotion of inter-ethnic dialogue and equitable development. Addressing these challenges requires a nuanced approach that recognizes the value of ethnic diversity while fostering national and global unity. By embracing both tradition and modernity, societies can build cohesive communities that celebrate their unique identities while contributing to a more inclusive and interconnected world.

### **2.15 Cultural Assimilation among Ethnic Groups**

Cultural assimilation with ethnic groups in postcolonial contexts represents a complex interplay between minority and dominant cultures, where individuals or communities adopt the customs, values, and behaviors of the prevailing society, often leading to significant transformations of their original identities. This process can manifest as voluntary adaptation or enforced integration, creating a dynamic tension between the desire to preserve one's ethnic heritage and the pressures

to conform to the dominant culture's norms. Scholars argue that this negotiation of identity is not merely a linear process but a multifaceted struggle, where cultural elements from both sides intermingle, resulting in hybrid identities (Iqbal, Khan, & Abbasi, 2023). For instance, the postcolonial experience often reveals how historical power dynamics and colonial legacies shape cultural interactions, resulting in marginalized groups striving to maintain their cultural practices while also navigating the expectations imposed by the dominant culture (Belmessous, 2013; Statham & Foner, 2024). This analysis underscores the ongoing relevance of cultural assimilation in understanding the complexities of identity formation in contemporary societies, where the impacts of assimilation can lead to both the erosion and revitalization of cultural identities (Iqbal, Khan, & Abbasi, 2023).

Furthermore, the implications of cultural assimilation extend beyond individual identity to influence community cohesion and intergroup relations in multicultural settings. The pressures of assimilation can often dilute ethnic identities, making it challenging for marginalized groups to assert their cultural heritage amid dominant narratives. Yet, this process can also foster the emergence of hybrid identities that creatively blend aspects of both minority and majority cultures, producing new cultural expressions that challenge simplistic binaries of identity (Iqbal, Khan, & Abbasi, 2023). For instance, in contexts where individuals navigate multiple cultural frameworks, they may develop unique identities that reflect both their ethnic origins and the influences of the dominant culture. This hybridization illustrates that cultural assimilation does not necessarily equate to the complete erasure of original cultural elements; instead, it can lead to enriched identities that embody a complex negotiation of belonging and identity politics in postcolonial societies (Anwar et al., 2021; Berny, 2022).

The arrival of colonial powers disrupted these precolonial identities, leading to significant transformations in social structures, belief systems, and economic practices. Colonizers often imposed their own cultures and ideologies, which resulted in the marginalization of local customs and identities. As Nasser (2019) notes, colonization strips the colonized of their cultural identity, replacing it with the colonizer's values. This process created a duality within the colonized societies, where traditional practices were often viewed as inferior to European norms. The impact

of colonization was not only immediate but also deeply ingrained in the psyche of the colonized, leading to internal conflicts regarding identity and self-worth.

precolonial African societies demonstrated significant adaptability and structural diversity, which were crucial for their sustainability in diverse environmental and social contexts. These societies varied from mobile hunter-gatherer communities, exemplified by the San people of Southern Africa, to more settled agrarian groups (Falola & Fleming, 2020). Hunter-gatherer communities operated in smaller, adaptable groups that responded to changes in resources and environmental conditions. In contrast, agrarian societies engaged in agriculture and animal husbandry, resulting in permanent settlements and increased social complexity. Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) were essential in these societies, incorporating diverse traditional ecological knowledge, medicinal practices, and social norms that facilitated sustainable resource management (Falola & Fleming, 2020). This understanding enabled African communities to endure and prosper in various ecosystems, with Africa's environments—ranging from deserts to rain forests—informing the unique adaptations within its societies (Falola & Fleming, 2020).

Ethnic groups were defined by shared languages, customs, and traditions, but their boundaries were not rigid; they were shaped by interactions through trade, migration, and intermarriage (Falola & Fleming, 2020). Governance in this period was often decentralized, with clans and ethnic groups maintaining autonomy while cooperating with neighboring communities through systems of reciprocity and mutual respect. For instance, the Buganda Kingdom in East Africa exemplified centralized governance based on ethnic cohesion, while the Somali clan systems showcased a decentralized yet effective form of social organization (Makana, 2023). The trans-Saharan trade routes, linking diverse communities across North and West Africa, further illustrate how ethnic identity facilitated cooperation and cultural exchange, enabling groups to thrive economically while preserving their unique identities (Gashaw, 2017). Despite occasional conflicts over resources and territory, these disputes were typically resolved through traditional mechanisms like mediation by elders or alliances through marriage, reflecting the dynamic and adaptive nature of ethnic identities at the time (Michalopoulos & Papaioannou, 2013).

Cultural traditions played a central role in reinforcing precolonial ethnic identity, acting as both a source of group cohesion and a means of transmitting knowledge across generations. Language

and oral histories were particularly significant, serving not only as communication tools but also as repositories of collective memory and cultural values (Falola & Fleming, 2020). Festivals, dances, and rituals, such as the Isukuti dances of the Luhya in East Africa, celebrated ethnic heritage and strengthened communal ties, offering moments of unity and reflection within the group (Gashaw, 2017). These cultural markers also acted as identifiers during interactions with other groups, fostering mutual recognition and respect in multi-ethnic settings. However, the fluid nature of these identities allowed for assimilation, as individuals and families could integrate into other groups through marriage or prolonged coexistence (Makana, 2023). This adaptability underscores how precolonial ethnic identities were inclusive and dynamic, unlike the rigid constructs imposed during the colonial era (Michalopoulos & Papaioannou, 2013).

Economic activities further reinforced ethnic identity in precolonial Africa, where trade networks connected diverse groups, fostering interdependence and cultural exchange. For example, the Hausa in West Africa thrived as traders, linking communities across vast regions, while the Swahili coast became a melting pot of African, Arab, and Persian influences due to its prominence in Indian Ocean trade (Falola & Fleming, 2020). These economic interactions were often underpinned by trust and mutual benefit, enabling ethnic groups to coexist and cooperate despite their differences. The sharing of goods, technologies, and ideas through these networks enriched the cultural and economic life of the continent, demonstrating how ethnic identity could serve as a bridge rather than a barrier (Makana, 2023). However, competition for valuable resources like land and water sometimes led to conflicts, although these were generally localized and managed within culturally recognized frameworks (Gashaw, 2017). The coexistence of cooperation and competition in precolonial ethnic relations highlights their complexity and the sophisticated systems that communities developed to navigate them (Michalopoulos & Papaioannou, 2013).

The organization of these societies—socially, economically, and politically—was shaped by resource competition, territorial expansion, and the quest for political dominance. Communities often experienced rivalries due to competition for fertile land, water resources, and advantageous trade routes. Shaka Zulu's expansionist policies illustrate this dynamic, as his pursuit of territory resulted in the Mfecane, a period marked by upheaval and warfare in Southern Africa (Osuiigwe, 2023). In West Africa, the Asante Empire often engaged in conflicts with neighbouring states

regarding trade and territorial control, highlighting the importance of resource management and territoriality in precolonial political dynamics (Osuigwe, 2023).

In numerous African societies, social and economic boundaries were distinctly delineated, with kinship and clan affiliations serving as the foundation for community interactions and hierarchies. Social structures frequently incorporated age-set systems, wherein age groups assumed designated roles and were assigned community responsibilities, thereby preserving order and ensuring continuity (Osuigwe, 2023). Various communities participated in specialized economic activities such as farming, herding, and trading, resulting in interdependence among diverse groups. Trade networks enabled exchanges among various groups, fostering economic interdependence and cultural cohesion across regions, thereby strengthening connections between isolated communities and promoting a shared identity (Osuigwe, 2023).

In precolonial societies, marriage functioned as both a social institution and a political mechanism, facilitating the integration of various clans and tribes, which promoted unity and social cohesion. The practice of bride wealth, or lobola, highlights the significance of marriage in uniting families and facilitating the transfer of social roles across generations. Inter-marriage among tribes was prevalent, contributing to the reduction of intergroup tensions, the enhancement of political alliances, and the promotion of social harmony (Falola & Fleming, 2020). Many African societies utilized councils of elders to manage conflicts and rivalries, serving as mediators and custodians of customary laws. Gerontocratic councils played a pivotal role in conflict resolution, employing restorative justice principles that prioritized reconciliation and community harmony. Traditional rituals and ceremonies significantly contributed to the restoration of social equilibrium, emphasizing the importance of cohesion rather than punitive measures in African societies (Adewale & Schepers, 2023).

In precolonial Africa, gender roles exhibited significant variation, with many communities characterized by prevailing patriarchal structures. Notable exceptions existed where women held significant power and leadership roles, exemplified by the Rain Queen Modjadji among the Lovedu and Queen Nzinga Mbande of Ndongo. The data illustrate the intricate and dynamic characteristics of gender roles within African societies, highlighting the significant influence women can exert in governance and cultural spheres (Falola & Fleming, 2020).

The centralization of political power in precolonial African societies resulted in the establishment of monarchs and a distinct aristocracy. Kingdoms such as Buganda, Bunyoro, and Dahomey established intricate political frameworks characterized by centralized governance of political, economic, and military matters. Monarchies and aristocracies exerted considerable influence, consolidating power within a ruling elite that upheld the authority of the monarchs. Hierarchical governance structures were typically well-defined, reinforcing the monarch's role in ensuring stability and continuity within the kingdom (Osuigwe, 2023).

precolonial African societies exhibited social stratification characterized by distinct classes, including nobles, commoners, and, in certain instances, slaves. The Kingdom of Dahomey exhibited a structured hierarchy, with the king at the apex, succeeded by nobles, commoners, and slaves. In these societies, slavery frequently arose from warfare, debt, or punitive measures; however, there were instances where slaves could assimilate into society or attain freedom. Social stratification and serfdom illustrate the intricate labour systems and hierarchical structures present in African societies (Falola & Fleming, 2020).

The onset of colonialism in Africa disrupted established structures and led to substantial transformations within African societies. Colonial policies frequently prioritized certain ethnic groups, intensifying existing social and economic disparities and weakening indigenous governance systems. Urbanization has led to the emergence of new social dynamics, which challenge communal ties and reshape identity. The imposition of colonial economic systems disrupted traditional economic practices, exacerbating existing divisions. Akinola and Ramontja examine the significant influence of colonialism on African societies identity, asserting that its legacy persists in shaping the contemporary socio-political landscape of Africa (Akinola & Ramontja, 2023).

Conflicts and rivalries between groups were managed through well-defined mechanisms aimed at minimizing violence and fostering long-term stability. Ritual diplomacy, for instance, played a crucial role in dispute resolution, wherein rival leaders engaged in symbolic exchanges to diffuse tensions (Adewale & Schepers, 2023). Elders often presided over conflicts, using a combination of moral authority, communal wisdom, and the threat of supernatural consequences to enforce decisions (Neubert & Neubert, 2019). These councils encouraged conflict resolution through

negotiation and restitution, rather than violence, recognizing that social cohesion was integral to communal survival. Additionally, intermarriage and clan alliances served as preventive measures against hostilities by intertwining the fates of previously antagonistic groups. By managing conflicts through these peaceful and systematic means, precolonial societies could maintain intergroup stability while preserving their cultural and territorial integrity.

Rituals and symbolic acts of reconciliation were central to rivalry management, where symbolic exchanges and ritual sacrifices often marked the end of a conflict. For instance, rival groups might exchange gifts or perform ceremonial dances as a sign of goodwill, showcasing their intention to restore harmony (Blyth, 2021). Additionally, in many societies, the breaking of a ritual bond was believed to result in misfortune, discouraging breaches of peace and deterring recurrent rivalries. Leaders sometimes enacted peace pacts with rival groups to formalize relations, backed by religious or supernatural beliefs that bound parties to their commitments. These rituals not only preserved peace but also reinforced the idea of collective well-being, prioritizing the community's stability over individual conflicts. This reliance on symbolic reconciliation demonstrated a deep understanding of conflict's social costs, promoting long-term coexistence and cooperation.

In post-colonial societies, the concept of assimilation is a significant and contentious issue, as illustrated by Belmessous (2013) in the examination of assimilationist policies enacted by European empires. The research indicates that, despite the historical shortcomings of colonial powers in completely assimilating colonized populations, the ideology of assimilation remains a fundamental principle in Western democracies, illustrating a wider inclination towards uniformity. This desire is frequently bolstered by modern political narratives that stress adherence to fundamental values and behaviors, particularly following events like the September 11 attacks. The drive for conformity in contemporary states is intricately associated with concepts of legitimacy and the quest for an ideal societal order, suggesting that the legacy of colonial assimilation persists in shaping current debates on multiculturalism, globalization, and phenomena such as Islamophobia. The implications of assimilationist ideologies are significant for ethnic minorities and marginalized groups, as the pressure to conform may result in the erosion of cultural identities and practices. Although these assimilationist policies were initially rationalized as efforts to civilize colonized populations, they frequently elicited resistance and strengthened ethnic

identities. This dynamic illustrates the tension between the state's pursuit of a homogeneous society and the realities of cultural diversity, emphasizing the need for critical examination of assimilation in post-colonial discourse and advocating for approaches that celebrate cultural pluralism rather than suppress it (Belmessous, 2013).

Cultural assimilation among ethnic groups in postcolonial contexts is an intricate endeavor that reflects the impacts of colonial histories and contemporary social dynamics. Statham and Foner (2024) highlight the ongoing significance of assimilation and integration frameworks in analyzing social change in the context of growing ethno-racial diversity within societies. The study examines the assimilation processes that frequently require minority groups to adapt to the dominant culture, resulting in the potential erosion of cultural identities and the emergence of hybrid identities that embody a mixture of cultural influences. This phenomenon is especially evident in postcolonial societies, where the legacies of colonial rule continue to influence social interactions and power dynamics. The authors emphasize the significance of ethno-racial self-identification, indicating that individuals' perceptions of their identity substantially affect integration outcomes and social processes. The relationship between assimilation and racism is emphasized, as societal attitudes towards immigrant populations can complicate their integration experiences. The study advocates for a deeper comprehension of these processes, especially concerning the diverse historical and cultural contexts that shape the experience of assimilation. Postcolonial societies face ongoing challenges related to diversity, making the themes of cultural assimilation and integration essential for future research agendas. It is crucial to acknowledge and value the voices and experiences of minority groups within the broader context of social cohesion and cultural exchange (Statham & Foner, 2024).

Colonial powers systematically manipulated ethnic identities to implement policies of divide and rule, ensuring their dominance by exploiting and exacerbating ethnic divisions in the societies they controlled. By favoring certain ethnic groups over others in access to education, employment, and political privileges, colonizers created social hierarchies that entrenched competition and mistrust. For example, in Rwanda, Belgian authorities elevated the Tutsi minority as administrative elites while marginalizing the Hutu majority, creating ethnic tensions that persisted long after independence (Michalopoulos & Papaioannou, 2016). In Nigeria, British colonialists

institutionalized ethnic divisions through indirect rule, assigning administrative responsibilities to selected ethnic elites who became proxies of colonial power, thereby alienating them from their communities and fueling interethnic resentment (Konya, 2014). Similarly, in Sudan, British administrators deliberately fostered divisions between the predominantly Muslim Arab north and the animist and Christian south, using these distinctions to justify differential governance and prevent collective resistance (Ashton, 2011). Such practices eroded indigenous solidarity and ensured that local populations remained divided, facilitating the maintenance of colonial control with minimal resources (Langton, 2012). These tactics institutionalized ethnic identities as political categories, turning them into tools of colonial administration and control.

In addition to fostering divisions, colonial powers redrew territorial boundaries with little regard for the existing ethnic, cultural, or geographic realities, further weakening indigenous governance structures. At the Berlin Conference of 1885-1886, European powers carved up Africa into arbitrary territories, often splitting cohesive ethnic groups across multiple colonies, which fragmented their political and cultural coherence (Moran, 2019). For example, 28 percent of precolonial ethnic homelands were divided across colonial borders, significantly weakening traditional leadership and governance (Michalopoulos & Papaioannou, 2016). The imposition of these artificial boundaries forced rival ethnic groups to coexist within new political entities, generating tensions that colonial powers exploited to suppress collective resistance (Shalom, 2023). Furthermore, the integration of indigenous leaders into colonial administrative systems often undermined their traditional authority. In Botswana, for instance, colonial co-governance practices involved incorporating Tswana elites into British administrative frameworks, which disrupted traditional decision-making processes and reduced the autonomy of ethnic leadership (Mwale, 2018). This approach not only subordinated indigenous communities but also destabilized traditional governance structures, making ethnic leadership weak and dependent on colonial authorities. These strategies of manipulation, territorial reconfiguration, and subjugation of ethnic communities entrenched divisions and weakened resistance to colonial rule while creating enduring legacies of instability and mistrust among ethnic groups (Kaur & Qian, 2021).

Ethnic identity during the colonial period was deliberately manipulated by colonial powers as a tool to divide and control indigenous populations. The British, for instance, institutionalized a

"divide-and-rule" strategy that fostered and exacerbated ethnic divisions, often inventing new ethnic groups or granting privileges to select communities to act as intermediaries (Ali et al., 2015; Khapoya, 2010). These intermediaries collected taxes and maintained order on behalf of the colonizers, entrenching their own power while fostering resentment among other groups (Mamdani, 1996). Such strategies not only prevented collective resistance but also weakened traditional leadership structures and undermined social cohesion. Furthermore, the redrawing of territorial boundaries by colonialists often merged disparate ethnic communities or divided cohesive ones, destabilizing pre-existing political and social systems (Ali et al., 2015). These practices left enduring legacies of ethnic fragmentation, weak state institutions, and challenges to national identity in post-colonial societies (Ali et al., 2015; Mamdani, 1996).

Ethnic identities were strategically manipulated to serve the interests of colonial powers, enabling effective control over colonized societies. Colonialists institutionalized ethnic divisions, creating hierarchies and pitting groups against one another to foster mistrust and prevent unified resistance (Human Rights Watch, 1993). This divide-and-rule strategy often involved granting privileges to selected ethnic groups, who were co-opted into systems of co-governance and used as intermediaries between the colonial administration and the local populace. Such groups, frequently portrayed as collaborators, were alienated from their peers and contributed to the enforcement of colonial authority (Human Rights Watch, 1993). Additionally, colonial powers redrew territorial boundaries, merging distinct ethnic communities or fragmenting cohesive ones, further destabilizing traditional governance structures (Human Rights Watch, 1993). This deliberate reconfiguration of territorial and ethnic identities weakened indigenous leadership and undermined the social cohesion necessary for collective action against colonial rule (Human Rights Watch, 1993). By leveraging ethnic identities in this manner, colonial regimes maintained their dominance while deepening divisions that have had lasting effects on post-colonial societies.

Colonialists exploited ethnic identities as a key strategy to dominate African societies, systematically dividing and ruling indigenous populations. By arbitrarily redrawing territorial boundaries during the Scramble for Africa, they split cohesive ethnic groups and merged others with little regard for cultural or social realities, undermining traditional structures of leadership and governance (Gashaw, 2017). This fragmentation fostered mistrust and competition among

communities, which the colonial powers actively encouraged to prevent unified resistance. Additionally, colonialists co-opted certain ethnic groups into roles of co-governance, granting them limited authority and privileges while using them to enforce colonial policies. This preferential treatment alienated the chosen groups from others, deepening divisions and exacerbating conflicts. In Kenya, for instance, some communities were elevated to administrative roles, reinforcing inter-ethnic tensions and weakening collective resistance against colonial oppression (Human Rights Watch, 1993). These manipulations of ethnic identities not only ensured the colonialists' dominance but also left lasting legacies of division and instability.

Ethnic identities were manipulated to entrench the control of African societies. Colonial powers arbitrarily imposed territorial boundaries without regard for ethnic, cultural, or historical contexts, creating fragmented communities and fostering divisions that weakened indigenous unity (Mukisa, 1997). These artificial boundaries often divided cohesive ethnic groups across multiple colonies while forcing unrelated groups into shared territories, disrupting traditional governance and cultural cohesion. Such fragmentation was compounded by the colonialists' strategy of co-opting select ethnic groups into governance roles, granting them limited privileges to enforce colonial policies, and alienating them from other groups. This "divide and rule" approach exacerbated mistrust and competition among ethnic communities, reducing their capacity to resist colonial domination effectively. Leaders like Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana recognized the long-term disruptive potential of these boundaries, emphasizing the need for unity to mitigate their adverse effects (Mukisa, 1997).

In Malaya, ethnic identities were strategically manipulated by British colonialists to enforce their "divide and rule" policies, maintaining control over the population and resources. Ethnic groups were segregated into distinct occupational roles—Chinese workers were largely confined to commerce and tin mining, Indians to rubber plantations, and Malays to traditional farming and fishing activities (Tharoor, 2017). This deliberate economic and social stratification deepened divisions along ethnic lines, creating a lack of cohesion that weakened the potential for unified resistance against colonial rule. To further solidify their dominance, the British co-opted elites from all ethnic groups into collaborative roles within the colonial administration, ensuring their compliance while reinforcing hierarchies and widening the gap between these elites and the

broader population (Shah, 2017). The redrawing of territorial boundaries and the establishment of governance structures like the British Resident system further fragmented local leadership and undermined traditional governance systems, leaving ethnic communities disempowered and dependent on colonial authorities (Tharoor, 2017; Shah, 2017).

British colonial policies were fundamentally divisive, often prioritizing separation over integration to maintain control over diverse populations. The strategy of "divide and rule" was implemented through the geographic and political segregation of ethnic groups, ensuring that they remained fragmented and unable to unify against colonial authority (Christopher, 1988). In many cases, this entailed the delineation of territories along ethnic lines, as seen in urban zoning, rural settlements, and even state partitions. By isolating communities, colonialists fostered inter-ethnic competition and mistrust, which diminished the possibility of collective resistance. Furthermore, ethnic elites were frequently co-opted into roles of governance, creating a small, compliant leadership class that served colonial interests while alienating the majority. These policies not only weakened traditional governance systems but also entrenched divisions that have persisted into the post-colonial era, contributing to ongoing political crises in many former colonies (Christopher, 1988).

During the colonial period in South Asia, British policies of "divide and rule" systematically exploited ethnic and religious identities to maintain their dominance. The British redefined the subcontinent's social fabric by classifying communities based on religion, language, and ethnicity through mechanisms such as censuses and administrative divisions (Khanum, 2020). This strategy accentuated existing divisions and manufactured new ones, fostering distrust and competition between groups. For instance, communal tensions between Hindus and Muslims were fueled by sensationalized and often false colonial narratives, such as misinterpreting cultural practices like Muharram processions to portray Muslims as antagonistic to Hindus. These distortions solidified communal divides and framed the British as necessary mediators (Khanum, 2020). The co-optation of select elites into governance roles further entrenched divisions, as these individuals acted as intermediaries for the colonial administration, often alienating them from the broader populace. This fragmentation undermined any unified resistance and left lasting legacies, including the partition of India and Pakistan in 1947, which institutionalized ethnic and religious divisions as foundational to the post-colonial states (Khanum, 2020).

Moran (2019) discusses how indigenous identities have been shaped and reshaped through the lens of colonialism and post-colonialism, highlighting their deep-rooted connection to oral cultures and traditions. Indigenous communities have leveraged ethnographic and anthropological research to reconstruct and adapt their traditions, reclaiming their identities from the impositions of colonial powers. This process is intertwined with the broader history of colonization, spanning from the "discovery" of the Americas in the fifteenth century to the decolonization movements of the mid-twentieth century. Indigenous identity politics often involve resisting colonial narratives and striving to restore authentic indigenous worldviews and self-identities. Moran (2019) emphasizes that self-determination represents both the greatest challenge for indigenous peoples and a central unifying goal of the global indigenous movement. Moran underscores the pivotal role of anthropologists in advancing indigenous studies and facilitating the renegotiation of these identities.

Moreover, during the colonial period, European powers drew arbitrary borders across Africa during the Scramble for Africa, with little regard for the continent's ethnic, cultural, or geographical realities. These borders frequently split cohesive ethnic groups, leaving 28% of precolonial ethnic homelands divided across multiple countries (Michalopoulos & Papaioannou, 2016). This fragmentation not only weakened traditional governance structures but also created lasting instability, as divided ethnic communities faced heightened political violence, discrimination, and economic marginalization. The study by Michalopoulos and Papaioannou (2016) highlights that partitioned homelands experience 57% more political violence than non-partitioned ones, underscoring the destructive impact of colonial-era border-making. Moreover, divided ethnic groups often suffer from worse access to public goods and lower living standards compared to their non-divided counterparts, perpetuating inequalities introduced during colonial rule. These arbitrary boundaries continue to fuel cross-border tensions, with some governments leveraging co-ethnic groups in neighboring countries to destabilize rivals, further entrenching the legacy of colonial fragmentation.

Precolonial Hindu-Muslim conflict in India challenges the narrative that colonialism solely created ethnic divisions, as evidence suggests significant religious violence and identity formation long before British rule. The Mughal emperor Aurangzeb's repressive policies against Hindus in the

late 17th century, such as reintroducing the *jizyah* tax, provoked widespread resistance, particularly from the Marathas, who used Hindu religious symbols to consolidate their uprising (Verghese & Foa, 2018). This marked a shift from earlier ecumenical Mughal policies and laid the foundation for Hindu nationalism, as districts with intense Mughal-Maratha conflicts now exhibit higher incidences of postcolonial communal violence. The authors argue that colonial policies, while significant, reinforced rather than originated these divisions, as Hindu-Muslim identities and conflicts were already entrenched through centuries of political and religious rivalry. By linking contemporary riots to precolonial violence, the study highlights the enduring impact of ethnic counter-mobilization, with regions historically involved in such conflicts disproportionately prone to modern sectarian violence.

Sibanda (2019) critically examines Zimbabwe's Education for All (EFA) policy as a post-colonial initiative aimed at addressing the inequalities entrenched by colonial educational systems. While EFA led to significant achievements, including expanded access to education and higher literacy rates, the study identifies critical shortcomings in its ability to foster social justice through an Ubuntu lens. Sibanda argues that the policy, though founded on principles of education as a human right, failed to dismantle the colonial legacy of individualism and Eurocentric frameworks. Instead, it perpetuated elements of colonial education structures, emphasizing quantity over the relational and communal aspects of learning central to Ubuntu philosophy. The analysis highlights that while EFA achieved notable progress in terms of access, it lacked the transformative scope necessary to create an education system grounded in Ubuntu's principles of relationality, respect for individuality, and community belonging. Sibanda's recommendations include a comprehensive review of Zimbabwe's education system to align it more closely with Ubuntu's holistic and inclusive values, addressing funding models, gender imbalances, and curriculum relevance to achieve true social justice.

Michalopoulos and Papaioannou (2011) argue that colonial-era border-making in Africa has left lasting economic and social scars by dividing ethnic groups across multiple countries, disrupting traditional governance systems. Their study reveals that while contemporary state institutions show minimal influence on regional disparities within these partitioned groups, precolonial ethnic institutional traits play a crucial role in shaping modern regional development. Using satellite night

light density as a proxy for economic performance, they demonstrate that these historical legacies, rather than current national policies, explain the persistent inequalities within partitioned ethnic communities. This evidence underscores the enduring consequences of colonial border-making, highlighting how the division of ethnic groups has perpetuated economic marginalization and hindered equitable development across the continent. Michalopoulos and Papaioannou (2011) thus call attention to the need for nuanced approaches to address these deeply rooted inequalities and the role of historical institutions in Africa's present-day economic realities.

Colonial powers frequently used ethnic identities as tools to reinforce their dominance by instituting a "divide and rule" system. In the context of post-colonial workplaces, such as the Nigerian oil and gas sector, this legacy is evident in the dynamics of identity processes and power struggles. Konya (2014) explores how social identity theory and post-colonialism intersect to reveal how group identification and power dynamics persist in these settings. Social identity theory highlights the emphasis on group cohesion, solidarity, and harmony, showing how workers in Nigeria derive self-concept and stability from group belonging. However, the thesis also identifies gaps in social identity theory, particularly its inability to fully address power imbalances and identity struggles stemming from historical colonial systems. Post-colonial theory fills this gap by analyzing the "colonized mind" and the dominance of foreign workers in senior positions, which perpetuates colonial hierarchies and fosters a sense of disenfranchisement among indigenous professionals. By integrating these frameworks, the research provides a nuanced understanding of how colonial subjugation of ethnic identities continues to shape power relations and identity processes in the post-colonial work environment of developing countries like Nigeria.

Mwale (2018) explores how the architecture and urban spaces of Botswana reflect the interplay of national and ethnic identity formation in the postcolonial context. Gaborone, Botswana's capital city, was designed during the transition to independence as a symbol of national unity, mirroring the aspirations of a newly self-ruling nation. This process involved negotiations among design professionals, Tswana political elites, and colonial administrators, revealing the complexities of creating spaces that embody a national identity while addressing colonial legacies. Mwale's study contrasts this national identity-building in urban spaces with the ethnic cultural consciousness emerging among communities like the Bakgatla, who use historical and cultural landscapes, such

as the Phuthadikobo and Moruleng cultural precincts, to construct and assert their own ethnic identities. The analysis situates architecture and urbanism within broader socio-political dynamics, showing how these spaces are not only sites of cultural representation but also platforms for identity negotiation and contestation. This work advances the literature on postcolonial architecture by highlighting the nuanced interactions between colonial histories, nation-building efforts, and ethnic identity formation in the built environment.

In summary, colonial administrations effectively weaponized ethnic identities to enforce their divide-and-rule strategies, ensuring sustained dominance over their territories. By accentuating ethnic differences and fostering competition for resources and power, colonialists dismantled pre-existing social cohesion, creating societies rife with mistrust and conflict. Ethnic groups were strategically pitted against one another, with colonial authorities selectively granting privileges to certain groups, which sowed resentment and dependency (Michalopoulos & Papaioannou, 2016; Ali et al., 2015). In many cases, these privileged groups were elevated to administrative positions, allowing colonial powers to govern indirectly while creating deep-seated divisions that undermined collective resistance (Khanum, 2020). Simultaneously, marginalized groups were excluded from decision-making and resources, further embedding structural inequalities and perpetuating inter-ethnic hostilities (Human Rights Watch, 1993). This dynamic not only fragmented societies but also entrenched ethnic hierarchies that outlasted colonial rule, contributing to enduring socio-political instability.

Colonialists further subjugated ethnic communities by co-opting traditional leaders into governance frameworks that prioritized colonial interests over indigenous autonomy (Konya, 2014; Moran, 2019). This often eroded the legitimacy of traditional leadership, as these leaders were viewed as collaborators rather than protectors of their communities. The redrawing of territorial boundaries amplified these fractures, as colonial borders often split ethnic groups or forcibly merged rival groups into artificial political entities (Gashaw, 2017; Michalopoulos & Papaioannou, 2011). These arbitrary demarcations weakened ethnic leadership structures, which were ill-suited to navigate the newly imposed political realities, leading to fragmented governance and heightened tensions (Christopher, 1988). The long-term consequences of these policies are evident in the persistent ethnic conflicts and governance challenges faced by post-colonial states.

Ultimately, colonial manipulation of ethnic identities not only facilitated immediate control but also left a legacy of fragmented societies and weakened leadership that continues to hinder socio-political cohesion and development in many former colonies.

Cultural assimilation in postcolonial contexts frequently manifests as hybridity, a concept that is particularly pertinent for analyzing the interactions between colonizers and the colonized. Anwar et al. (2021) examine the theme in Hanif Kureishi's short story "My Son the Fanatic," analyzing the characters Parvez and Ali to demonstrate the influence of postcolonial cultural dynamics on identity and belonging. The study employs Homi K. Bhabha's concept of hybridity to demonstrate that the relationship between these characters exemplifies the complexities stemming from cultural interactions shaped by colonial power dynamics. Parvez exemplifies mimicry, illustrating a conflicted compliance with colonial standards while concurrently negotiating his cultural identity. Ali, his son, exhibits ambivalence as he navigates the consequences of colonialism and confronts the difficulties of forming his identity within a postcolonial context that frequently undermines his heritage. The interaction between mimicry and ambivalence underscores the contradictory aspects of cultural assimilation, wherein individuals may embrace elements of the dominant culture while simultaneously facing confusion and resistance concerning their original identities. The findings indicate that hybrid identities arise not only from cultural blending but are also fundamentally influenced by historical and social contexts shaped by colonial dynamics. This underscores the necessity of understanding postcolonial assimilation as a complex and multifaceted process (Anwar et al., 2021).

Berny (2022) examines the historical role of assimilation as a means of integrating conquered populations into the sociocultural and economic structures of imperial powers. This process, marked by differing levels of force and influence, illustrates the attempts of empires—such as the Spanish, British, and French—to impose their cultural norms on colonized societies. The research delineates two main types of assimilation: voluntary and involuntary. Voluntary assimilation may arise organically via cultural diffusion, whereas involuntary assimilation typically entails coercive strategies. The complexities of these interactions are emphasized by the distinction between cultural assimilation and acculturation, with the former frequently regarded as a stage within the latter process. The renewed focus on imperial and colonial studies has enhanced comprehension

of the ways in which assimilation processes have influenced modern societies. The implications of cultural assimilation are substantial, leading to the erosion of minority identities and the emergence of hybrid cultural forms that integrate elements from both dominant and minority cultures. This tension illustrates wider societal issues, particularly the difficulties faced by ethnic minorities in preserving their cultural heritage amid prevailing cultural influences. Berny's analysis highlights the necessity for continued research on the impacts of historical assimilation practices and their modern implications, especially in light of the ongoing influence of global migration on cultural landscapes. This study indicates that assimilation may enhance integration but can also incite resistance and reinforce unique cultural identities, highlighting the intricate relationship between dominance and diversity in postcolonial contexts (Berny, 2022).

Iqbal, Khan, and Abbasi (2023) assert that cultural assimilation in postcolonial contexts is a multifaceted process that frequently results in the formation of hybrid identities, highlighting the persistent tension between assimilation and the preservation of cultural heritage. This study argues that the observed tension mirrors the larger societal context of identity formation, indicating that identity is a dynamic construct influenced by multiple social and political factors. This viewpoint corresponds with postcolonial theories articulated by theorists like Homi K. Bhabha, who presents the notion of the “Third Space,” wherein cultural identities undergo hybridization and negotiation. The analysis of cultural assimilation highlights its significance in comprehending the complexities of identity formation in postcolonial societies, where individuals frequently navigate multiple cultural influences and societal expectations (Iqbal, Khan, & Abbasi, 2023). The findings indicate that cultural assimilation does not inherently lead to the erasure of heritage; rather, it can promote a more complex identity that incorporates both the dominant culture and indigenous cultural elements, thereby enhancing resilience and adaptability in an increasingly interconnected world.

### **2.16 Acculturation from Ethnic Group Due to Modernity**

Yau, Marder, and O'Donohoe (2020) define acculturation in the context of ethnic groups as a process in which individuals from different cultural backgrounds assimilate aspects of another culture, typically the dominant or more contemporary one. This phenomenon is particularly important in the context of cultural assimilation, wherein minority or ethnic groups progressively adopt the cultural practices, values, and norms of a dominant or more influential group, typically

influenced by modernity. Modernity, in this context, denotes the transition towards contemporary, urbanized and frequently Westernized societal norms, technologies, and lifestyle choices. Acculturation for ethnic communities is a complex process involving negotiation, wherein they may selectively adopt new cultural elements while attempting to preserve their cultural identity. The dynamics of this process vary significantly based on historical context, geographic setting, socioeconomic pressures, and the attitudes of individuals or communities towards change and tradition.

Astolfo and Allsopp (2023) investigated the coloniality inherent in migration and integration discourses, particularly in the policy frameworks of the European Union, through an analysis of critiques from decolonial perspectives (Astolfo & Allsopp, 2023). In response to Schinkel's (2018) assertion that "integration" sustains neocolonial power structures and functions as a secretarial mechanism, Astolfo and Allsopp examined decolonial scholarship, highlighting the significance of southern urban theories. Mainstream integration frameworks frequently perpetuate exclusionary practices, resulting in the marginalization of migrants through prevailing knowledge structures. The study utilized insights from two funded research projects to critique and "de-link" migrant integration frameworks from colonial legacies. It proposed that alternative, decolonized approaches could provide more inclusive and critically informed strategies in migration studies. The authors reference Latin American scholars such as Mignolo (2007) to assert that the decolonial project is crucial for transforming the production and reproduction of migration-related knowledge. This shift has significant practical and pedagogical implications for redefining integration narratives and teaching migration studies (Astolfo & Allsopp, 2023).

Patel (2021) discusses the impact of modernity on ethnic groups through acculturation, highlighting changes in language use and preservation. Language constitutes a fundamental element of cultural identity and functions as a vehicle for the transmission of cultural heritage through generations. As ethnic communities interact more closely with dominant or modern cultures, there frequently occurs a transition towards bilingualism or a total substitution of native languages with the dominant language (Ondigi, 2023). The language shift may be driven by practical considerations, including enhanced economic and social opportunities, alongside the necessity for educational and technological adaptation in a modernized society. Bilingualism

provides the benefit of engaging with two cultures; however, the gradual decline of native languages, stemming from insufficient use or emphasis in educational systems, presents a significant risk to the enduring preservation of ethnic identities.

The influence of acculturation among ethnic groups in modern contexts is evidenced by alterations in dress and fashion (Safdar, Goh, & Choubak, 2020). Traditional attire frequently embodies significant symbolic meaning within ethnic communities, representing cultural values, historical narratives, and social roles. As contemporary urban styles gain prominence, younger generations may be inclined to adopt these trends, perceiving traditional attire as obsolete or unsuitable for contemporary living. This transition may not completely eliminate traditional clothing styles; however, it frequently confines them to ceremonial events rather than routine use, consequently diminishing their significance in daily cultural expression. The globalization of fashion has led to a homogenization of appearance, wherein ethnic variations in dress are diminished in favor of widely accepted Western or urban aesthetics, resulting in a broader trend of cultural conformity.

In the study by Osorio et al. (2022), the influence of modernity is particularly evident in dietary and culinary practices, as traditional ethnic diets are increasingly adapted to incorporate modern, frequently Westernized, foods. Urbanization, convenience, and exposure to global food chains have led ethnic communities to replace or supplement traditional diets with processed and fast foods characteristic of contemporary lifestyles. The alteration in dietary habits can impact family dynamics, as traditional meals, which necessitate communal preparation, are supplanted by quicker, individually packaged alternatives. The nutritional implications of this shift are substantial. Ethnic foods typically possess high nutritional value and are culturally specific; however, contemporary dietary trends favoring high-fat and high-sugar options have contributed to increasing incidences of lifestyle diseases in these populations, highlighting the significant health consequences of acculturation influenced by modern eating habits.

Kołodziejczyk and Huigen (2023) analyzed the intricate status of East Central Europe using a postcolonial framework, suggesting a comparative model to understand its "in-between" position within the cultural, historical, and political contexts of Europe (Kołodziejczyk & Huigen, 2023). The authors critically analyze existing theoretical frameworks, arguing that postcolonial theory offers valuable hermeneutical tools for situating East Central Europe within global colonial

modernity, yet also reveals limitations in directly applying postcolonial status to the region. This approach elucidates the unique dynamics of East Central Europe, where historical interactions with colonial and postcolonial forces foster distinct identities and conditions that contest conventional colonial models. Kołodziejczyk and Huigen's study encourages further investigation of regional identity in East Central Europe within the context of postcolonial discourse, highlighting the necessity of flexible frameworks to address the unique characteristics of this region.

Bond (2022) analyzed migrant incorporation through two primary frameworks: assimilation and multiculturalism, highlighting both differences and similarities between the two approaches (Bond, 2022). Bond characterized assimilation as a reciprocal process that entails adaptation from both migrants and established populations. He observed that this incorporation may differ across various social domains and is influenced by particular characteristics of migrant groups and host societies. Multiculturalism offers a unique viewpoint that highlights the importance of preserving cultural diversity within a cohesive social framework, while also exhibiting some traits of assimilation, including the promotion of social cohesion. Bond demonstrated this via "ideal types" of incorporation, facilitating a comparative analysis between assimilation and multiculturalism, while also providing real-world examples of multiculturalism that highlight its beneficial effects. This study enhances the comprehension of migrant incorporation, demonstrating that both frameworks can foster more inclusive societies while contesting the unilateral views frequently present in public discourse.

Assanful (2017) asserts that religious practices and spiritual beliefs experience significant transformation due to the impact of modernity. Exposure to new ideas, media, and ideologies can lead ethnic groups to question, modify, or abandon traditional beliefs in favor of contemporary perspectives. Globalization has facilitated the dissemination of secular ideologies, leading younger members of ethnic groups to disengage from traditional spiritual practices that may appear incongruent with contemporary perspectives. Moreover, certain contemporary societies demonstrate religious pluralism and syncretism, prompting ethnic groups to merge or modify their religious beliefs to conform to prevailing ideologies (Camara, 2019). This may result in the enhancement or weakening of traditional practices, contingent upon individuals' readiness to integrate their cultural heritage with contemporary or global religious influences.

Durie (2022) observes that family structure and gender roles within ethnic groups undergo significant changes as a result of acculturation influenced by modernity. Traditional societies typically exhibit distinct roles for men, women, and elders, encompassing particular responsibilities in household management, social organization, and community leadership. Modernity promotes individualism and gender equality, thereby challenging established norms. Consequently, ethnic communities may undergo changes in family dynamics, with younger generations promoting gender equity, educational progress, and professional opportunities beyond conventional roles. This transition may result in generational conflicts, as older community members may oppose changes perceived as threats to the social fabric of their culture. The redefinition of gender roles and family responsibilities, though progressive, necessitates a careful equilibrium between respecting traditional expectations and adopting new possibilities.

Nieuwenhuis (2010) conducted a study indicating that education and knowledge systems represent a significant domain affected by acculturation in ethnic communities confronting modernity. Traditional knowledge systems are integral to the cultural framework of ethnic groups, covering domains such as agriculture, medicine, crafts, and environmental management. Contemporary education frequently emphasizes standardized curricula and subjects, potentially neglecting or undervaluing traditional forms of knowledge. Younger generations of ethnic groups may become disconnected from traditional skills and wisdom as they adapt to modern educational systems, which frequently exclude these elements from formal curricula. Moreover, the emphasis on academic achievement and economic progress may lead to the devaluation of cultural knowledge, relegating it to a subordinate status relative to contemporary education (Abok & Kwanya, 2016). The disparity between traditional knowledge and formal education underscores the necessity for educational reforms that acknowledge and incorporate indigenous knowledge systems, facilitating a more comprehensive and inclusive approach to cultural preservation in contemporary settings.

Belmessous (2013) analyzed the enduring nature of assimilation as an ideology within European empires and its continuation in modern Western democracies, despite significant historical challenges in integrating colonized populations (Belmessous, 2013). Belmessous contended that the principle of assimilation, originally intended to standardize varied colonial societies, continues to exert influence in contemporary governance, motivated by the state's pursuit of legitimacy and

cohesion. The research emphasized that assimilation initiatives demonstrate an ongoing Western emphasis on advancing uniform values and behaviors, a trend that has intensified since September 11, especially through policies that prioritize adherence to fundamental cultural norms. Belmessous argues that this ideology is both a remnant of colonial governance and indicative of the persistent challenges faced by multicultural societies in the context of globalization and increasing issues related to social integration.

A study by Alakwe and Ogbu (2017) indicates that media and technology significantly influence the acculturation of ethnic groups, as contemporary communications hinder these communities' ability to remain isolated from external influences. The extensive accessibility of the internet, social media, and global entertainment presents ethnic groups with diverse lifestyles, values, and belief systems. Younger members of ethnic groups utilize digital media as a platform for self-expression, exploration, and engagement with wider cultural trends. This exposure may result in cultural erosion, as traditional values are frequently eclipsed by dominant narratives that prioritize material success, individualism, and self-promotion. The challenge faced by ethnic groups involves utilizing technology to both celebrate and document their cultural heritage, all while contending with the impact of prevailing digital cultures that could potentially erode their distinct identities.

Marriage customs undergo significant transformations in response to modern pressures, shifting from traditional, community-oriented arrangements to more individualized choices (Engida, 2024). Numerous ethnic groups possess significant customs related to marriage, characterized by ceremonies and arrangements that embody profound cultural values. Modern perspectives on marriage, encompassing notions of romantic love, individual choice, and gender equality, contest traditional norms such as arranged marriages, bride prices, and other culturally specific practices. When individuals from ethnic groups marry outside their communities or make more autonomous choices, marriage customs change, potentially affecting family alliances, social cohesion, and community identity. The alteration in marital norms may promote enhanced integration with the prevailing culture, as intercultural unions frequently yield offspring who are raised with a mixed cultural background.

Modernity and the process of acculturation similarly influence social hierarchy and status systems within ethnic groups (Arora, Sadhwani, & Shah, 2021). Traditional societies typically exhibit distinct hierarchies influenced by age, lineage, and social roles, which govern interactions, decision-making processes, and resource distribution within the community. As contemporary values like meritocracy, equality, and social mobility become more prominent, younger generations are likely to contest these established hierarchies. Furthermore, education, economic opportunity, and individual achievement serve as alternative avenues for acquiring status, resulting in changes in the distribution of respect and authority within the community. This change has the potential to empower individuals; however, it may also result in conflicts between generations or between proponents of modernity and advocates of traditional structures.

Pillay (2021) conducted a critical examination of the application of Latin American decolonial theory within the African context, focusing on the legacy of colonialism on the continent (Pillay, 2021). Pillay contended that although Latin American decolonial theory primarily emphasizes assimilation as a form of epistemic violence—highlighting the imposition of European norms and knowledge systems on indigenous populations—this viewpoint may not fully encompass the African experience. Pillay emphasized that colonialism in Africa was characterized by both enforced assimilation and enforced difference, notably through mechanisms like apartheid education. The study examines how the interplay of assimilation and difference distinctly influenced the African colonial and postcolonial context, positing that an effective decolonial strategy in Africa must consider both historical legacies. Pillay proposed that acknowledging the dual influence of assimilation and difference facilitates a decolonial framework that values cultural distinctiveness while critically examining colonial divisions. This dual recognition is crucial for a comprehensive understanding of African colonialism and the continuous endeavor of knowledge decolonization.

Ngugi, Were, and Babic (2021) observed that perceptions of time and progress frequently change as ethnic groups adapt to modern societies. Traditional societies often possess cyclical or event-based conceptions of time, frequently linked to agricultural cycles, religious observances, or community events. Modernity promotes a linear and future-oriented conception of time, emphasizing progress, efficiency, and productivity. This alteration in time perception may result

in significant transformations in the approaches of individuals within ethnic groups regarding life, work, and relationships. Patel (2021) noted that the implementation of contemporary work schedules and productivity metrics may clash with traditional practices that emphasize communal gatherings and seasonal cycles. The internalization of contemporary temporal values can redefine individual and communal priorities, compelling ethnic groups to balance the aspiration for cultural preservation with the requirements of a rapidly evolving, efficiency-oriented environment.

Bhatia and Ram (2001) investigated the traditional notion of "acculturation" in the context of cross-cultural psychology, focusing on non-Western, non-European immigrants in the United States (Bhatia & Ram, 2001). The authors utilized insights from postcolonial theory to critique the universalist perspective in cross-cultural psychology, which frequently presumes a homogeneous psychological acculturation process among immigrant populations. The authors critically evaluated the tendency of acculturation theories to equate nation with culture, arguing that this perspective neglects the distinct diasporic experiences of diverse immigrant groups. The study redefined the "integration strategy" within acculturation theories by incorporating a postcolonial perspective, emphasizing that immigrant adaptation is significantly shaped by historical and political contexts, rather than merely by a universal cultural framework. This study highlighted the complex relationships between culture and self in shaping immigrant identities and stressed the importance of culturally sensitive methods in examining acculturation.

In summary, acculturation resulting from modernity presents both challenges and opportunities for ethnic groups. Modern influences may facilitate economic and social advancement; however, they can also contribute to the erosion of traditional practices and values. Acculturation involves a complex negotiation rather than a straightforward replacement, as ethnic communities seek to balance the advantages of modernity with the preservation of their cultural identities. Ethnic groups consistently adapt and transform through language, dress, family structure, and educational practices, creating a cultural landscape that embodies both tradition and change. This process highlights the resilience of cultural identities, which continue to evolve in response to the pressures of a modern, interconnected world.

## 2.17 Conclusion

In conclusion, the literature review demonstrates the complex interplay between social media, ethnic identity, and socio-cultural dynamics across historical periods and contemporary contexts (Michalopoulos & Papaioannou, 2016; Ali et al., 2015). The examination reveals how social media platforms serve as influential tools in shaping, preserving, and sometimes challenging ethnic identities, particularly among university students and young people. The historical context of colonial influences continues to shape modern ethnic relations, with colonial-era borders and administrative practices creating lasting impacts on ethnic identity formation and expression in digital spaces (Christopher, 1988; Khanum, 2020).

Studies focusing on social media's role in ethnic identity construction have revealed significant findings about the potential of digital platforms to strengthen and disseminate cultural identities (Putra et al., 2021; Alnaghaimshi & Pearson, 2023). These platforms provide spaces for cultural expression, community building, and heritage preservation, though they simultaneously present risks of cultural misappropriation and misrepresentation. Research has demonstrated that social media can enhance tribal values and traditions while potentially leading to cultural erosion and occupational displacement, creating complex challenges for ethnic communities navigating modern digital spaces (Radwan, 2022; Talukdar & Mete, 2021). This duality highlights the need for careful consideration of how these platforms are utilized in ethnic identity construction.

The research has emphasized social media's capacity to both unite and divide ethnic communities (Chetty & Alathur, 2018; Gerbaudo, 2018). While these platforms facilitate cultural exchange and understanding, they can also amplify existing tensions and enable the spread of hate speech and discriminatory content, particularly during politically sensitive periods. The literature reveals how university students utilize social media platforms to negotiate their ethnic identities while pursuing education, often creating hybrid identities that blend traditional and modern elements (Jordan, 2020; Arora et al., 2021). This negotiation process reflects the broader challenges of maintaining cultural authenticity while adapting to contemporary social demands.

Economic and technological factors emerge as crucial themes in the literature, with research highlighting how access to digital platforms can create new forms of inequality while simultaneously offering opportunities for cultural preservation and community building across

geographical boundaries (Eubank, 2019; Musitha & Mafukata, 2020). The psychological and social dynamics of online ethnic identity construction have been extensively examined, revealing how social media influences individuals' perceptions of their ethnic identity and shapes their interactions with both in-group and out-group members (Duncheon, 2020; Elsayed, 2021). These findings underscore the importance of considering both structural and individual factors in understanding social media's impact on ethnic identity.

Moreover, focusing on the African context has revealed unique challenges and opportunities in the relationship between social media and ethnic identity (Kamau, 2017; Bosire & Fiseha, 2022). Studies have shown how social media platforms influence political mobilization along ethnic lines while also providing spaces for cross-cultural dialogue and understanding. The literature demonstrates that social media can serve as both a tool for fostering social cohesion and a platform for amplifying ethnic tensions, particularly during electoral periods. These findings highlight the need for careful consideration of how social media platforms are used in politically sensitive contexts.

The literature review identifies several significant gaps requiring further research, particularly regarding the long-term impacts of social media on ethnic identity formation, the effectiveness of digital platforms in promoting cross-cultural understanding, and the development of strategies to mitigate online ethnic tensions while promoting positive identity construction (Francis et al., 2019; Radwan, 2022). These gaps suggest important directions for future research in this field, emphasizing the need for continued scholarly attention to the evolving relationship between social media and ethnic identity in an increasingly digitalised world. The complex nature of this relationship requires interdisciplinary approaches that consider historical, social, psychological, and technological factors in understanding how ethnic identities are constructed and maintained in digital spaces.

## CHAPTER THREE

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

#### 3.1 Introduction

The study incorporated six theories to provide a comprehensive framework for analyzing ethnic identity construction and negotiation among university students on social media. Each theory addressed a specific aspect of the study's objectives, ensuring a holistic examination of identity formation. Social Identity Theory was instrumental in explaining how students engaged in economic, social, and political identification online, directly aligning with the first objective by illustrating how group membership influenced self-perception and intergroup relations. Since behaviors are shaped by external reinforcements, Behavioral Theory complements this perspective by explaining how social media interactions conditioned behaviors through reinforcement mechanisms, contributing to the second objective on how students constructed their social identities. However, identity formation was not solely a reaction to social influences but was also historically rooted and symbolically reinforced, which necessitated the inclusion of Ethnosymbolism. This theory explained how students engaged with cultural myths, symbols, and historical narratives to sustain their ethnic identity, addressing the third objective concerning the different forms of social identification in digital spaces.

To further examine the fluidity and continuity of ethnic identity, the study integrated Constructivism and Primordialism, particularly in relation to the fourth objective, which investigated how students (de)constructed and (re)negotiated their ethnic identities using Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS). Constructivism argued that ethnic identity was socially constructed and context-dependent, whereas Primordialism provided a contrasting perspective by emphasizing the deep-rooted and enduring nature of ethnic identity, even amid digital transformation. These theories were essential in explaining why some students redefined their ethnic affiliations while others maintained a strong connection to traditional identity markers. The dual perspective helped the study explore the interplay between historical influences and contemporary social dynamics in ethnic identity formation among university students. Furthermore, Constructivism and Primordialism provide insights into the extent to which social

media acted as a space for identity transformation versus preservation, reinforcing the argument that ethnic identity remained both dynamic and historically grounded.

Lastly, Instrumentalism was integrated to address the fifth and sixth objectives, which examined whether students recognized ethnic tensions on social media and how these tensions influenced their use of digital platforms. Instrumentalism argued that ethnic identity was not only an inherent trait but also a strategic tool for political, social, and economic positioning. This theory linked closely with Constructivism, as both acknowledged that identity could be manipulated, performed, and negotiated depending on the social and political context. By combining these theories, the study provided a comprehensive analytical framework that captured the psychological, social, historical, and strategic aspects of ethnic identity formation. This integration allowed for a deeper understanding of how university students in Kenya used social media as a platform to reinforce, contest, or mobilize ethnic identities, considering both historical continuities and contemporary digital influences. Through this multidimensional approach, the study effectively bridged theoretical perspectives to explain the complexities of ethnic identity construction, negotiation, and mobilization in online spaces.

### **3.2 Social Identity Theory**

The theory, developed by Tajfel and Turner (1986) and Turner (1982), is a social-psychological paradigm that explores self-conception and related social beliefs and mental processes within intergroup relations and group processes. The theory posits that individuals derive a sense of self from their membership in social groups, such as nationality, ethnicity, religion, or social class. These group memberships provide a framework for self-definition, shaping individuals' attitudes, behaviors and perceptions of others (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Social identity is not solely about personal characteristics but also about collective identity, focusing on how individuals view themselves in relation to the groups they belong to (Turner, 1982). A key component of the theory is the process of social categorization, where people categorize themselves and others into different social groups. This categorization simplifies the social environment by organizing people into in-groups (groups one belongs to) and out-groups (groups one does not belong to). The theory suggests that people seek to maintain a positive social identity by favourably comparing their in-group with relevant out-groups. When an in-group is perceived as superior, it enhances members'

self-esteem. Conversely, when an in-group has a lower status, individuals may experience identity threat, which can motivate efforts to improve the group's status or even prompt individuals to leave the group in search of a higher-status identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1986).

The theory also addresses the concepts of social mobility and social change. In some contexts, individuals may strive for upward mobility by distancing themselves from a lower-status group or aligning with a higher-status group. In other cases, collective efforts for social change may occur, where groups seek to improve their status through social movements or advocacy (Turner, 1982). The theory has broad implications for understanding social behavior, including prejudice, stereotyping, and conflict, as well as positive social outcomes such as solidarity and collective action. By emphasizing the significance of group-based identities, social identity theory provides a framework for examining how social and cultural contexts influence individual and group behavior, highlighting the dynamic interplay between personal identity and social environment (Korostelina, 2007). The theory posits that when individuals categorize themselves as members of a social group, they tend to adopt the group's norms and behaviors, which leads to a process called depersonalization. This does not mean losing one's identity, but rather aligning one's attitudes and behaviors with the perceived norms of the group. As a result, self-perception becomes more about "we" than "I," making group identity more salient than personal identity. This shift can explain phenomena such as group conformity, social influence, and collective action, where group members act in ways that reinforce group cohesion and shared goals (Turner, 1982).

The theory was relevant to the current study. The theory can be applied to various contexts, including the study of Kenyan university students' use of social media. The theory can help explore whether social media serves as a space for triggering thoughts, feelings, and actions based on students' personal, familial, or national levels of self. By examining how social media influences the formation and expression of social identities, researchers can gain insights into the dynamics of intergroup relations and the potential for social media to either promote unity or exacerbate divisions among different groups. Furthermore, the theory can be used to investigate how social media can become a powerful tool for dealing with behaviors that often vilify and reject other beliefs and behaviors if their origin is different. By understanding the processes of social

categorization and the salience of group identities in online interactions, researchers can develop strategies to promote more inclusive and respectful communication on social media platforms.

The theory's relevance aligns directly with the study's primary objective of establishing what motivates university students to use social media as a space for economic, social, and political identification in Kenya. Social Identity Theory helps to explain why students join ethnic-based online communities, share cultural content, and engage in collective activities that reinforce their ethnic identity. The theory illuminated how social media platforms serve as virtual spaces where students can express their ethnic affiliations, connect with others from similar backgrounds, and maintain cultural ties while pursuing their education. This theoretical framework serves as particularly valuable in understanding how students use social media to navigate between their traditional ethnic identities and their emerging identities as university students in a multicultural environment.

The theory proved especially relevant in addressing the study's objectives of revealing different forms of social identification and examining how students construct and negotiate their ethnic identities on social media. Through the lens of Social Identity Theory, the research could analyze how students use various social media platforms to maintain connections with their ethnic communities, share cultural knowledge, and participate in online discussions about ethnic affairs. The theory helped explain why students engage in certain online behaviors, such as joining ethnic-specific groups, sharing cultural content, and participating in cultural advocacy. This theoretical perspective was crucial in understanding how social media platforms facilitate both the preservation of ethnic identity and the potential transformation of these identities through interaction with diverse groups in the university setting.

The theory's relevance was particularly evident in addressing the study's objectives related to understanding ethnic tensions and their influence on social media usage. This theoretical framework was essential in analyzing how students navigate potential conflicts between ethnic groups online, how they use social media to either bridge or reinforce ethnic boundaries, and how these platforms influence the broader landscape of ethnic relations within the university context. The theory provides valuable insights into how social media can be used to promote positive ethnic identity construction while fostering intercultural understanding and respect among students from

diverse ethnic backgrounds at Daystar University. Therefore, the theory provides a valuable framework for understanding the complex interplay between individual identity and group membership.

However, the theory has faced several critiques. For instance, it may oversimplify the process of identity creation by focusing solely on group categorization. Personal experiences, attitudes, and individual distinctions all contribute to the complexity and diverse nature of human identity, which goes beyond group membership. Moreover, the theory offers a static perspective of social identity, emphasizing the consistency of group categorizations over time. In reality, social identities can shift in response to changing social situations, personal experiences, and life stages (Korostelina, 2007). Despite these criticisms, the theory is relevant to the current study. It presents a simple and complete explanation of how people spontaneously group themselves and others into social communities based on shared features, generating a sense of identity and belonging. Furthermore, the theory explains phenomena like in-group favouritism and out-group hostility, in which individuals tend to show preference and favourable attitudes towards people within their own social community while displaying negative views towards members of other groups (Tajfel & Turner, 1986).

### **3.3 Behavioral Theory**

Behavioral theory was developed by John Watson in 1913 as a framework for understanding human behavior based on observable actions rather than internal mental processes. The theory posits that behavior is learned through environmental interactions and can be modified via reinforcement and punishment (Kelley & Michela, 1980). Behavioral theory asserts that individuals react to stimuli in their surroundings through conditioning, where behavior is shaped by rewards, punishments, and observational learning. The theory is grounded in two primary forms of conditioning: classical conditioning, which involves associating a neutral stimulus with a response, and operant conditioning, which pertains to learning through reinforcement or punishment (Langton, 1982). Behavioral theory thus emphasizes the significance of environmental factors in shaping human behavior, positioning it as a fundamental approach to analyzing and predicting individual and collective actions in various social settings.

The theory assumes that human beings exhibit specific behaviors to achieve certain results or attain a particular state of being. It also assumes that behavior can be analyzed through social and cultural practices, where individuals learn from their surroundings and interactions (Kelley & Michela, 1980). Behavioral theorists argue that cultural and social ideals can be understood through social learning processes, particularly enculturation, where individuals acquire and adapt to cultural norms over time. Enculturation enables individuals to internalize the beliefs, values, and practices of their ethnic group through repeated exposure and reinforcement (Campbell, 1974). Furthermore, behavioral innovation plays a role in shaping social norms, as new behavioral patterns emerge through trial, error, and adaptation, often depending on environmental outcomes (Langton, 1982). These fundamental assumptions reinforce the notion that behaviors—such as those related to ethnic identity expression—are not fixed but are continuously shaped by external influences and the social validation mechanisms provided by the environment, including digital platforms like social media.

The theory Behavioral Theory was relevant to the current study because it provides a framework for understanding how university students' ethnic identities are shaped, reinforced, and expressed through social media interactions. Digital platforms serve as spaces where behaviors related to ethnic identity are actively reinforced through engagement metrics such as likes, shares, and comments, which function as positive reinforcement mechanisms. This aligns with the study's first and second objectives, as it explains why university students use social media to construct and maintain their ethnic identities. Social media allows individuals to engage in ethnic-based discussions, participate in cultural digital communities, and shape their online personas based on the reinforcement and validation they receive from others. Furthermore, the theory illustrates how individuals learn ethnic identity behaviors through observational learning, as students are exposed to cultural narratives, traditions, and expressions within digital spaces, influencing their self-perception and group identification (Shils, 1975). This highlights the role of digital reinforcement in maintaining ethnic identity solidarity, where social media functions as an extension of traditional identity-building mechanisms.

The theory also supports the study's objectives by explaining how ethnic boundary formation is influenced by positive and negative reinforcement on social media. Digital platforms create echo

chambers where individuals are frequently exposed to content that reinforces their ethnic affiliations. This aligns with the third and fourth research objectives, as it explains how students use social media to construct and maintain their ethnic identities based on social feedback loops. Ethnic identity remains flexible yet deeply embedded within online interactions, where individuals actively negotiate their self-representation depending on social approval or criticism from peers. The study also benefits from the theory's insights into how digital platforms shape social trust through reinforcement mechanisms, demonstrating that social media does not merely reflect identity but actively shapes and reinforces ethnic identity in digital spaces. This is relevant to the final research objective, which examines how students perceive and respond to ethnic tensions on social media, as online interactions reveal both the continuity of ethnic divisions and the opportunities for redefining group identities (Mishra, 2020).

However, the theory faces several critiques. One major limitation is its exclusive focus on observable behaviors, which overlooks the internal cognitive processes that influence identity formation (Grosby, 1994). While the theory explains how ethnic identity behaviors are shaped by reinforcement mechanisms, it does not fully capture the emotional and psychological depth of ethnic identity. Critics argue that individuals do not merely respond to external reinforcements, but also develop internalized cultural affiliations that are deeply rooted in history, tradition, and personal experience (Smith, 2009). Additionally, the theory does not adequately address the role of power structures in shaping behavior. Ethnic identity is not only influenced by environmental reinforcement but is also shaped by political narratives, social hierarchies, and cultural histories, which the theory fails to account for (Eriksen, 2010). Moreover, critics argue that while social media reinforces ethnic identity expression, individuals actively shape and negotiate their identities, rather than merely reacting to external reinforcements (Eller & Coughlan, 1999). Despite these critiques, the theory remains a valuable framework for understanding how social media engagement reinforces ethnic identity behaviors, offering critical insights into the social dynamics that influence identity formation in digital spaces.

### **3.4 Primordialism Theory**

Primordialism theory was developed by Edward Shils in 1957 and later expanded by Clifford Geertz in 1963, establishing one of the foundational approaches to understanding ethnic identity.

The theory states that ethnic ties represent natural, innate attachments that stem from fundamental "givens" of human existence including blood relations, territorial connections, language, religion, and shared cultural practices (Van den Berghe, 1981). The theory posits that these primordial attachments create ineffable bonds between members of ethnic groups that persist regardless of social or political changes, making them resistant to modernization and globalization (Smith, 1986). The theory emphasizes that ethnic identities are deeply emotional, non-rational connections that resist change because they fulfill basic human needs for belonging and cultural continuity, positioning them as fundamental rather than constructed aspects of human society (Shils, 1975). Recent theoretical developments by Eller and Coughlan (1993) have further refined our understanding of how these primordial bonds continue to shape social interactions even in modern settings.

The theory assumes that ethnic identities are transmitted through both genetic inheritance and early socialization, creating bonds that cannot be easily dissolved or replaced by modern political structures or social institutions (Grosby, 1994). In addition, it is assumed by the theory that ethnic attachments generate profound emotional responses that transcend rational calculation or material interests, making them resistant to change even in the face of modernization and economic development (Stack, 1986). Moreover, primordialism posits that core ethnic markers such as language, customs, and beliefs possess an inherent stability that allows them to resist assimilation pressures and persist across generations (Geertz, 1973). Besides these fundamental assumptions, the theory suggests that the significance of ethnic belonging cannot be fully explained in rational terms, as it operates at a deep psychological and emotional level that shapes individual and group behavior in ways that may seem irrational to outside observers but make perfect sense within the logic of primordial attachments (Shils, 1975).

The theory was relevant to the current study because it provides a framework for understanding why ethnic identities persist and strengthen in digital spaces rather than diminishing under globalization and technological advancement. Ethnic identity remains central to social interactions, and social media serves as a modern platform for its expression, construction, and reinforcement. This aligns with the study's first objective, which explores why university students use social media for economic, social, and political identification. Instead of weakening ethnic

ties, social media amplifies them by enabling students to engage with culturally relevant content, participate in ethnic-based discussions, and form digital communities that reinforce group solidarity. Furthermore, the theory explains how digital platforms facilitate the transmission of ethnic identity, allowing students to maintain and strengthen their affiliations despite physical distance from their communities. This directly supports the second research objective by illustrating how students construct their social identities online through language, cultural symbols, and shared historical narratives, demonstrating that digital spaces function as extensions of traditional identity-building processes.

The theory is also relevant in explaining the persistence of ethnic boundaries and tensions within digital spaces, as outlined in the third, fourth, and fifth research objectives. Social media does not dilute ethnic distinctions; rather, it provides an environment where students can navigate multiple identities while still affirming their ethnic group membership. This study examines how students use digital interactions to construct, renegotiate, and make meaning of their ethnic identity, reflecting the dynamic nature of identity formation in online spaces. Additionally, the theory helps explain how students perceive and respond to ethnic tensions expressed on social media, where historical grievances, political narratives, and cultural pride continue to shape intergroup relations. The study further explores how social media serves as a space for ethnic-based mobilization, networking, and advocacy, reinforcing the idea that ethnicity remains a dominant factor in shaping students' engagement with digital content. Ultimately, the theory's insights into the resilience of ethnic identity help explain why university students continue to prioritize their ethnic affiliations in digital interactions, demonstrating that social media plays a crucial role in both preserving and evolving ethnic identity in contemporary Kenya.

However, primordialism faces some critiques. Brass (1991) argues that the theory's emphasis on the fixed, natural character of ethnic identity overlooks how these identities have been shaped by historical processes. Anderson (1983) challenges primordialism's assumptions about the unchanging nature of ethnic ties through his concept of "imagined communities." Barth's (1969) influential critique demonstrates how ethnic boundaries are maintained through social interaction rather than primordial attachments. Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983) show how many supposedly primordial traditions are actually recent inventions. Furthermore, Eriksen (1993) argues that

primordialism's emphasis on the ineffable nature of ethnic attachments can make it difficult to subject its claims to empirical testing. These critiques have led to important theoretical refinements while maintaining primordialism's core insights about the emotional power and persistence of ethnic attachments.

### **3.5 Constructivism Theory**

Constructivism theory in ethnic studies was developed through the seminal works of Fredrik Barth (1969) in his groundbreaking book "Ethnic Groups and Boundaries" and later expanded by Rogers Brubaker (2004) in his influential work "Ethnicity Without Groups." The theory states that ethnic identities are not natural or primordial but are socially constructed through interaction, negotiation, and boundary-making processes (Jenkins, 1997). The theory posits that ethnicity is fluid, contextual, and subject to change rather than fixed or inherent, emphasizing how ethnic identities are actively created and maintained through social processes (Cornell & Hartmann, 2007). The theory argues that ethnic boundaries and identities are products of specific historical, political, and social circumstances, continuously negotiated and renegotiated through human agency and interaction (Wimmer, 2008).

The theory assumes that ethnic identities are not given but made, shaped by social, political, and historical processes that define group boundaries and meanings (Brubaker, 2009). In addition, it is assumed by the theory that ethnic identities are situational and can be activated or deactivated depending on social context and individual choice (Nagel, 1994). Moreover, constructivism posits that power relations play a crucial role in shaping ethnic identities, as dominant groups often have greater influence in defining ethnic categories and boundaries (Chandra, 2012). Besides these fundamental assumptions, the theory suggests that ethnic identity formation involves both top-down processes, such as state categorization and political mobilization, and bottom-up processes of everyday interaction and self-identification (Eriksen, 2010).

The theory was relevant to the current study because it provides a framework for understanding how university students construct and reconstruct their ethnic identities through social media interactions. Digital platforms serve as spaces where ethnic identities are actively negotiated, performed, and transformed through daily interactions. This aligns with the study's first and second objectives by explaining how students engage in identity construction and social

identification within online spaces. Social media enables users to assert, redefine, or reinforce ethnic boundaries through content creation, discussions, and engagement with culturally significant material. The theory's emphasis on social processes in identity formation is crucial for analyzing how students shape their ethnic identity by sharing cultural symbols, using language strategically, and participating in group interactions that validate their affiliations. Ethnic identity online is dynamic, influenced by both self-perception and external validation, reflecting the constant negotiation that occurs in digital spaces.

The theory also supports the study's objectives by explaining how power relations and social context influence ethnic identity construction on social media. The ability to construct, maintain, or challenge ethnic boundaries aligns with how students use social media to shape their identities, as addressed in the third and fourth research objectives. Social media platforms act as modern arenas for boundary-making, where students strategically emphasize or downplay ethnic affiliations depending on context. The theory explains how ethnic identity remains flexible yet deeply rooted in social processes, mirroring how students navigate their self-representation online. The study further benefits from the theory's insights into how digital spaces reinforce or disrupt ethnic hierarchies, demonstrating that social media does not merely reflect identity but actively shapes it. This is relevant to the final research objective, which examines students' awareness of ethnic tensions, as digital interactions reveal both the persistence of ethnic divisions and the potential for redefinition of group identities.

However, constructivism faces several critiques. Hutchinson (2000) argues that the theory may underestimate the durability and emotional power of ethnic attachments by emphasizing their constructed nature. Smith (2009) contends that constructivism's focus on the malleability of ethnic identity can overlook the constraining role of historical and cultural traditions. Eller and Coughlan (1999) point out that the theory's emphasis on strategic identity construction might underestimate the unconscious and deeply felt aspects of ethnic belonging. Additionally, Gil-White (2001) argues that constructivism sometimes fails to adequately explain why constructed ethnic boundaries often appear to be treated as natural and unchangeable by group members. Critics also note that the theory's emphasis on fluidity and change can make it difficult to explain the remarkable persistence of certain ethnic identities over time (Connor, 1994). Despite these critiques, constructivism

remains a powerful theoretical tool for understanding how ethnic identities are created, maintained, and transformed through social interaction, particularly in digital spaces.

### **3.6 Ethnosymbolism**

Ethnosymbolism was developed by Anthony Smith in 1986. The theory states that ethnic groups and national identities are not simply modern constructions, as modernists argue, but rather historically rooted phenomena that draw from deep-seated cultural traditions, myths, symbols, and shared memories (Smith, 1991). Ethnosymbolism emphasizes that national identity is sustained through historical narratives, cultural myths, and collective symbols, which are continuously reinterpreted across generations (Smith, 2009). The theory posits that ethnic communities—what Smith calls "ethnies"—serve as the foundation of national identity, with their historical experiences providing a sense of continuity and legitimacy to modern nations (Smith, 1998). Furthermore, ethnosymbolism suggests that while ethnic identities evolve over time, they remain anchored in a group's shared cultural heritage, reinforced by historical events, folklore, and symbolic representations (Armstrong, 1982). The theory highlights that ethnic identity is shaped by cultural markers such as language, religion, rituals, and ancestral myths, which provide a sense of distinctiveness and belonging among group members (Smith, 2001).

Ethnosymbolism states that nations derive their strength and resilience from the ability to reinterpret and adapt historical myths and traditions to contemporary realities, ensuring their cultural survival and political legitimacy (Smith, 2009). This theoretical perspective provides a crucial lens for understanding how ethnic identity is maintained and transformed in different sociopolitical contexts, including digital spaces where symbolic narratives are widely disseminated (Grosby, 2005). The theory assumes that ethnic identity is deeply embedded in historical continuity, meaning that modern national and ethnic identities cannot be fully understood without considering their pre-modern origins (Smith, 1986). In addition, it is assumed by the theory that myths and collective memories play a fundamental role in shaping ethnic consciousness, as they provide a shared historical reference point that binds members of an ethnic group together (Armstrong, 1982). Moreover, ethnosymbolism assumes that symbols, traditions, and cultural myths serve as mechanisms for maintaining ethnic identity over generations, reinforcing group cohesion even in the face of social change (Smith, 1999).

Besides, the theory assumes that ethnic groups are not static but rather dynamic entities that continuously reinterpret their historical past to fit contemporary circumstances, ensuring their survival and adaptability (Grosby, 2005). The theory further assumes that ethnic identity is constructed through collective experiences, including struggles, triumphs, and shared cultural expressions, which strengthen group solidarity (Smith, 2009). Additionally, ethnosymbolism assumes that nationalism is not solely a modern political ideology but rather an extension of deeper ethnic traditions that have existed for centuries, providing historical legitimacy to nationalist movements (Armstrong, 1982). The theory also postulates that while modernization may alter certain cultural practices, ethnic identity persists due to the enduring power of symbols, myths, and collective memories, which are passed down through socialization and cultural reproduction (Smith, 1991). These assumptions form the basis for analyzing how social media serves as a digital space for the transmission and reinforcement of ethnic identity, where historical narratives and cultural symbols are constantly reshaped and reaffirmed.

The theory was relevant to the current study because it provided a historical and symbolic framework for understanding how university students engage with ethnic identity on social media. Ethnosymbolism explains why ethnic identity remains a powerful force in contemporary society, despite globalization and technological advancements. The theory was useful in examining how students use social media to express and reinforce their ethnic identity through symbols, language, and cultural narratives, mirroring the role of traditional storytelling and folklore in pre-modern societies. Additionally, ethnosymbolism helps to analyze how digital platforms facilitate the reinterpretation of ethnic myths and traditions, as young people engage in online discussions that shape their collective memory and sense of belonging. The theory also provided insights into why certain ethnic groups emphasize historical continuity and cultural preservation in the digital space, using social media as a tool to celebrate and maintain their heritage. Furthermore, the theory was instrumental in understanding how social media allows for the mobilization of ethnic identity, where students participate in online movements that reaffirm their cultural pride and challenge narratives that threaten their ethnic distinctiveness. This aligns with the study's first objective, which seeks to establish what motivates university students to use social media as a space for economic, social, and political identification in Kenya.

The theory was also relevant to the study because it helped explain how social media functions as a space for ethnic resilience and cultural preservation. The second and third objectives of the study focus on how university students construct their identities on social media and the different forms of social identification they use. Ethnosymbolism explains why digital platforms serve as modern arenas for the reproduction of ethnic identity, where students use memes, hashtags, and visual content to celebrate their heritage and assert their cultural distinctiveness. The theory also provided insights into how ethnic identity is passed down through generations in the digital age, where online interactions serve as a modern form of cultural transmission. The study further examined how social media fosters intergenerational connections, allowing young people to learn about their ethnic history and traditions from older generations who engage in digital storytelling. Additionally, the theory was useful in analyzing how students reinterpret their ethnic identity in response to global influences, where digital interactions expose them to different cultural perspectives that may alter or reinforce their ethnic consciousness. This ties directly to the fourth objective, which seeks to determine how university students construct, renegotiate, and make meaning of their ethnic identities on social media. Finally, ethnosymbolism was relevant to explaining how students become aware of ethnic identity tensions in Kenya's diverse communities, as the study examined how social media serves as a battleground for ethnic narratives, shaping how students perceive and engage with issues of ethnicity in online spaces.

Despite its strengths, ethnosymbolism has several limitations and critiques. Critics argue that the theory romanticizes ethnic identity and overemphasizes historical continuity, failing to fully account for the fluid and constructed nature of ethnicity (Conversi, 2004). Others suggest that ethnosymbolism does not adequately address the role of power and political manipulation in ethnic identity formation, as it focuses primarily on cultural symbols rather than the strategic use of ethnicity for political gain (Hutchinson, 2005). Additionally, the theory has been criticized for lacking empirical rigor, as it often relies on historical narratives that may be subjective or mythologized (Grosby, 2005). Some scholars argue that ethnosymbolism underestimates the impact of globalization and hybrid identities, assuming that ethnic identity remains relatively stable despite external influences. Despite these critiques, ethnosymbolism remains a valuable framework for analyzing how ethnic identity is preserved, reinterpreted, and expressed in the

digital age, particularly in contexts where historical continuity plays a significant role in shaping national and cultural identities.

### **3.7 Instrumentalism**

This theory was developed by Abner Cohen in 1969 and advanced by Paul Brass in 1974. The theory that ethnic identity is fluid and can be strategically emphasized or downplayed depending on the context and the benefits that can be derived from it (Cohen, 1969). The theory further posits that elites play a central role in shaping and mobilizing ethnic identities, particularly in political competition, economic struggles, and social movements (Brass, 1974). Moreover, instrumentalism highlights the role of institutions, policies, and power structures in shaping ethnic identities, suggesting that ethnic affiliations can be mobilized to secure access to resources, representation, or economic advantages (Bates, 1983). The theory also argues that ethnic identity can be redefined or reconstructed over time based on shifting interests, making it a dynamic rather than a permanent aspect of human identity (Hechter, 2000). These ideas challenge the essentialist views of ethnicity and provide a framework for understanding how individuals and groups strategically use ethnic identity for various advantages in political and social arenas (Posner, 2005).

The theory assumes that ethnicity is not an inherent characteristic but rather a flexible identity that can be activated or deactivated depending on circumstances (Brass, 1991). In addition, it is assumed by the theory that ethnic groups are not naturally occurring social units but are shaped by political, economic, and institutional forces that define group boundaries and significance (Cohen, 1969). Moreover, instrumentalism assumes that ethnic identity is often manipulated by elites who mobilize group solidarity to achieve political or economic objectives (Bates, 1983). Besides, the theory assumes that ethnic affiliations can change over time, influenced by factors such as migration, economic incentives, and political pressures (Hechter, 2000). The theory further assumes that ethnic conflicts often arise not because of deep-seated historical divisions but because of competition over resources, power, and representation (Posner, 2005). Additionally, instrumentalism assumes that ethnic identity can be constructed and reconstructed depending on how individuals perceive its benefits in different social and political contexts (Brass, 1974). The theory also postulates that ethnic boundaries are often artificial and shaped by institutions, laws, and policies that define group membership and access to privileges (Fearon & Laitin, 2000).

The theory was relevant to the current study because it provided a political and strategic framework for understanding how university students engage with ethnic identity on social media. Instrumentalism explains why ethnic identity is not only a cultural or historical phenomenon but also a tool that can be strategically used in different contexts. This aligns with the study's first objective, which seeks to establish what motivates university students to use social media as a space for economic, social, and political identification in Kenya. The theory was useful in examining how students selectively emphasize their ethnic identity based on social, political, or economic advantages that may arise from doing so. It also provided insights into how social media platforms facilitate ethnic mobilization, allowing students to engage in discussions, advocacy, and social movements that promote ethnic solidarity or contest existing power structures. Furthermore, the theory helped to analyze why certain ethnic narratives gain prominence in online spaces, as digital influencers, activists, or political figures strategically frame ethnic issues to serve specific interests. By applying instrumentalism, the study explored how students use social media to navigate ethnic identity in ways that are context-dependent, shifting between emphasizing and downplaying ethnicity based on situational needs.

The theory was also relevant to the study because it explained how ethnic identity is mobilized during elections and political campaigns on social media. This supports the second and third objectives, which examine how university students construct different social identities and the various forms of identification they use online. Instrumentalism highlights how ethnic identity becomes politicized, with students engaging in online political discussions that reinforce ethnic divisions or promote ethnic-based voting patterns. The theory also provided insights into how social media functions as a tool for economic and social advancement, where ethnic identity is leveraged for networking, professional collaborations, and entrepreneurship. This aligns with the fourth and fifth objectives, which examine how university students construct and renegotiate ethnic identity while being aware of ethnic tensions in digital spaces. Furthermore, the study explored how social media serves as a platform for ethnic-based activism, where students participate in advocacy efforts addressing marginalization, discrimination, and cultural preservation. By framing ethnic identity as a dynamic and strategic construct, the study demonstrated how university students use digital platforms to express, challenge, and redefine their ethnic affiliations,

reinforcing the idea that ethnicity remains a significant factor in shaping digital engagement, political discourse, and economic opportunities.

Despite its strengths, instrumentalism has several limitations and critiques. Critics argue that the theory overemphasizes the strategic and manipulative aspects of ethnic identity, neglecting the emotional, cultural, and deeply personal connections individuals have to their ethnic groups (Chandra, 2006). Others suggest that instrumentalism fails to account for the historical depth and resilience of ethnic identity, assuming that it is entirely fluid and shaped by short-term interests (Laitin, 1998). Additionally, the theory has been criticized for focusing too much on elite-driven identity politics, underestimating the role of grassroots and community-based ethnic identification (Fearon & Laitin, 2000). Some scholars argue that instrumentalism overlooks the impact of historical injustices and long-term ethnic marginalization, treating ethnicity as purely situational rather than acknowledging its structural and systemic dimensions (Bates, 1983). Despite these critiques, instrumentalism remains a valuable framework for analyzing how ethnic identity is strategically constructed, mobilized, and utilized in digital spaces, particularly in contexts where political, economic, and social competition shape group dynamics.

### **3.8 Conclusion**

The chapter presents a comprehensive review of the relevant theoretical frameworks pertaining to the study. The integration of social identity theory, behavioral theory, primordialism, constructivism, ethnosymbolism, and instrumentalism provides a robust foundation for understanding the formation, negotiation, and strategic use of ethnic identity in digital spaces. These theories collectively enhance the study by offering historical, social, behavioral, and strategic perspectives on identity construction, allowing for a multifaceted exploration of how university students engage with ethnic identity on social media. Tajfel and Turner's Social Identity Theory (1979) highlights the importance of group membership in shaping individual identities and behaviors, particularly in distinguishing between in-group and out-group dynamics. The theory is crucial in explaining how university students reinforce their ethnic identities through social media interactions, forming digital communities that promote solidarity while differentiating themselves from other groups. Although it has been critiqued for its static view of identity, the theory remains instrumental in understanding identity-based interactions and ethnic affiliations in digital spaces.

Watson's (1913) Behavioral Theory provides an observational framework for analyzing identity-related behaviors influenced by conditioning and environmental factors. This theory helps explain how social media reinforces ethnic identity through repeated exposure to cultural content, group-based interactions, and digital engagement. The study applies behavioral theory to explore whether social media conditions students to adopt exclusionary ethnic behaviors, amplify stereotypes, or reinforce cultural pride through online engagement. Primordialism provides a foundational explanation for why ethnic identity remains deeply embedded in social interactions, viewing ethnicity as an innate and enduring characteristic. The theory argues that ethnic ties are biologically rooted and emotionally significant, making them resilient to external influences. This perspective is particularly relevant in explaining why university students continue to emphasize their ethnic identities in digital spaces, despite increasing globalization. The study examines how social media serves as a platform for reinforcing primordial ethnic attachments, sustaining group cohesion, and preserving traditional values in an evolving digital landscape.

Constructivism offers a contrasting view, arguing that ethnic identity is fluid, socially constructed, and shaped by interactions rather than being biologically determined. This theory helps explain how university students actively construct and redefine their ethnic identities through social media, using digital platforms to express, negotiate, and transform their affiliations. The study applies constructivism to explore how students engage in cultural expression, self-presentation, and online interactions that continuously reshape ethnic identities in response to digital narratives and socio-political contexts. Ethnosymbolism adds a historical and symbolic dimension to the study by emphasizing the role of myths, collective memories, and cultural symbols in sustaining ethnic identity. This theory explains why students use social media to engage with traditional narratives, celebrate cultural heritage, and reinforce ethnic continuity. The study applies ethnosymbolism to analyze how digital spaces facilitate the reinterpretation and transmission of ethnic myths, ensuring their relevance across generations. Social media acts as a modern platform for sustaining historical ethnic narratives, allowing students to maintain a sense of cultural rootedness despite being in a highly digitized and globalized environment.

Instrumentalism further expands the study by illustrating how ethnic identity is not just a cultural marker but also a strategic tool for political, economic, and social advantage. The theory explains

how ethnic identity is mobilized in digital spaces for networking, advocacy, and influence, shaping online discussions around ethnic-based political movements, social mobilization, and economic opportunities. The study applies instrumentalism to examine how students use social media to engage in ethnic-based political activism, economic empowerment, and strategic identity positioning for social gain. By integrating historical, social, behavioral, and strategic perspectives, this study provides a comprehensive understanding of how university students in Kenya construct, reinforce, and mobilize their ethnic identities on social media. The combination of these theoretical frameworks ensures that the research captures the complexity of identity-related interactions in digital spaces, offering valuable insights into the persistence, adaptation, and strategic use of ethnic identity in contemporary social media environments.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### METHODOLOGY

#### 4.1 Introduction

The chapter contained the research methodology and techniques that were employed to generate the results for hypothesis testing. The chapter illustrated the research design that was used, the target population, the sampling design, and the sample size. Further, the chapter provided the operationalization and measurement of the variables under the study and the instrument of data collection. Also, the chapter outlined the procedure of data collection, data analysis methods, model specification, and presentation of findings. Lastly, the chapter highlighted the ethical considerations that were made.

#### 4.2 Research Approach

The research approach adopted in this study was qualitative, as it aimed to explore and interpret the ways in which university students in Kenya constructed, negotiated, and mobilized their ethnic identities through social media. A qualitative approach was appropriate because it allowed for an in-depth exploration of students' experiences, perceptions, and behaviors, emphasizing the subjective and socially constructed nature of ethnic identity. Qualitative research is an exploratory and interpretative strategy for gaining a thorough understanding of social phenomena, experiences, and processes. Unlike quantitative research, which relies on numerical data and statistical analysis, qualitative research focuses on the richness and complexity of human experiences (Liamputtong, 2020). This study employed a qualitative research approach, involving focus groups and key informant interviews, to explore the experiences and perspectives of university students on social media use and ethnic identity construction in Kenya. Qualitative methods were used to gather detailed insights into students' perceptions and interactions on social media regarding their ethnic identities. The study relied on qualitative techniques to capture nuanced perspectives that would have been difficult to quantify through numerical data. Qualitative studies obtain information from people in real-life and natural environments to reveal unexpected and unknown social underpinnings. On the contrary, quantitative researchers focus on gathering, analyzing,

interpreting, and eventually presenting numerical data to derive statistical insights (Creswell & Clark, 2017; Ngulube & Ngulube, 2015).

### **4.3 Research Design**

Research design denoted the comprehensive strategy the researcher selected to cohesively integrate the different components of the study, ensuring consistency and logic, which facilitated the resolution of the research problem. This was conducted to ensure the research problem was adequately addressed, ensuring that the research problem was approached appropriately. Rezigalla (2020) identified issues in research due to the necessity of data collection, measurement, and subsequent analysis, which constituted a significant challenge within the research process. Kazdin (2021) classified research designs into three distinct categories applicable in the research process. Research designs in this category encompassed experimental, causal, cross-sectional, and descriptive methodologies. Experimental research designs were among the most commonly utilized in research studies. With reference to Kazdin (2021), the present study employed a descriptive research design, as it elucidated the phenomena related to the subject population. The investigation of the topic was warranted for this reason. This was accomplished by identifying the characteristics exhibited between two or more research variables during the research process. Descriptive research designs were formulated to accurately represent the characteristics of a population or phenomenon. Common methods employed in descriptive research included questionnaires, observations, and content analyses, among others.

### **4.4 Research Locality**

The locality of this study was Daystar University, a Christ-centred non-denominational institution of higher learning that was established to equip Christian servant leaders for the transformation of church and society. The institution's origins could be traced to Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, where it was founded as Daystar Publications in 1964, before relocating to Kenya in 1971. It was initially registered as Daystar Communications, a non-profit organization, in 1973, offering a five-week International Institute for Christian Communication (IICC) course. The institution's educational scope expanded in 1976 when it introduced a two-year post-high school diploma programme in

Christian Communications, followed by a two-year M.A. programme in Christian Communication and Christian Ministries in 1978, in collaboration with Wheaton College in Illinois, USA.

The university operated from its main campus in Athi River, approximately 30 kilometres southeast of Nairobi, and maintained a city campus along Valley Road in Nairobi's central business district. The institution achieved a significant milestone on September 29, 1994, when it was granted a Charter by the Government of Kenya, officially becoming Daystar University. Since then, it has continued to strengthen its academic offerings, research, and extension services in response to emerging societal needs. The Athi River campus occupied approximately 300 acres of a serene, suburban environment conducive to learning. The campus was equipped with modern facilities, including student hostels that accommodated approximately 900 students. The residential facilities were designed with gender-segregated hostels that included amenities such as study areas, common rooms, and dining facilities, creating a community atmosphere while providing comfortable living spaces for students from various parts of Kenya and beyond.

During the study period, the student population originated from diverse geographical locations. The university's strategic location along Mombasa Road highway facilitated easy access for both residential and commuter students. The institution also attracted international students from various African countries, contributing to its multicultural environment. English served as the primary medium of instruction, aligned with Kenya's educational system and the institution's international outlook, though Kiswahili was also used in specific academic programs and informal communication. The language policy reflected the university's commitment to preparing students for both local and global professional environments while maintaining cultural sensitivity.

As a private Christian institution, Daystar University operated under the Commission for University Education (CUE) guidelines, maintaining high academic standards while incorporating Christian values. At the time of the study, the university catered to approximately 6,000 students across various academic programs at undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral levels. The student population represented diverse ethnic backgrounds, nationalities, and religious affiliations, though the institution maintained its Christian ethos. The university offered comprehensive academic programs across eight schools, including the School of Communication, School of Business and Economics, School of Arts and Humanities, and School of Science, Engineering, and Health.

These schools were housed in modern facilities equipped with current technology and learning resources. This setting provided an ideal environment for investigating the nexus between social media and ethnic identity among university students in Kenya.

#### 4.5 Target Population

According to Duncheon (2020), the target population reflects the larger group for which the researcher aims to draw conclusions based on the study's findings. Researchers must precisely describe and delineate the features of the target group to ensure that the study sample is representative and that study results may be confidently extrapolated. The target population was students from Daystar University in Kenya. These were undergraduate students. The main reason for working with undergraduate students was their accessibility and availability. The study was carried out at Daystar University due to its proximity to Nairobi City Centre. Stratified sampling was used to select the study participants.

**Table 1: Distribution of Study Participants by Gender**

School	Registered	Sample Population	Gender distribution	
			Males	Females
Directorate of Daystar Leadership and Professional	121	5	2	3
School of Arts and Social Science	846	5	2	3
School of Business and Economics	1,142	5	2	3
School of Communication	1,200	5	3	2
School of Applied Human Sciences	823	5	2	3
School of Science, Engineering, and Public Health	893	5	3	2
School of Nursing	553	5	2	3
School of Law	291	5	2	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,869</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>22</b>

#### 4.6 Methods of Data Collection

This process entailed the procedure employed in collecting data. The locations of the respondents were identified, and the participants were informed of the purpose of the study. Their consent to

participate in the study was sought. With the help of a research assistant, focus group discussions were carried out. Additionally, the researcher conducted a group discussion session and ensured that participants fully responded to all questions contained in the data collection instrument.

#### **4.7 Instruments for Data Collection**

This refers to the tools employed by the researcher to gather information from the respondents in the research process (Thomas et al., 2018). The study utilized primary data for analysis and interpretation purposes. An interview guide was employed for primary data collection. Interview guides were preferred because of their convenience, appropriateness, and cost-effectiveness. They were used to collect data about the respondents' answers to questions for data collection. The interview guides were structured to establish the respondents' opinions in relation to the researcher's questions and statements for assessment. They contained open-ended questions to allow for in-depth responses and richer qualitative insights.

##### **4.7.1 Focus Groups Discussion**

According to Ngugi et al. (2021, pp. 1–14), a focus group discussion (FGD) is a qualitative research approach commonly employed in social science research. It is used to seek opinions and ideas from respondents regarding a particular phenomenon. These groups normally comprise a small number of participants moderated by a skilled facilitator to guide a structured discussion on a specific topic of interest. In an FGD, the group usually consists of 6 to 12 people who share traits related to the research issue, such as age, gender, career, or interests. The current study carried out five focus groups, each consisting of eight students. Participants were recruited from different schools and departments at the university to ensure diversity in terms of gender, age, and academic discipline. Since the sample size was 40, with eight schools involved, the researcher purposely selected five students from each school to participate in the study. The FGD guide was used to collect data on the following key areas:

- Social media use and identity construction
- The role of online social networks in promoting and reinforcing ethnic identities
- The positive and negative consequences of social media use for ethnic identity construction
- Strategies for using social media to promote positive ethnic identity construction.

#### **4.7.2 Key Informant Interviews**

Key informant interviews are a research approach applied in qualitative research, which collects information from participants who have specialized knowledge or experience on a specific issue or research area (Lokot, 2021). These individuals are chosen based on their skills, knowledge, or role in a particular concept. Key informant interviews are often conducted as one-on-one interactions between the researcher and the informant, allowing for a focused investigation of pertinent themes, opinions, and experiences. The current study undertook key informant interviews with eight schools at the university, involving the Head of Department (HoD) or Head of School for each academic unit. The eight HoDs comprised the key informant participants who were interviewed. The interview guide focused on the following key areas:

- The latest trends in social media use and ethnic identity construction
- The challenges and opportunities of using social media to promote positive ethnic identity construction
- Recommendations for policymakers and practitioners on how to promote positive ethnic identity construction through social media.

#### **4.8 Data Analysis**

Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data for the focus group discussions (FGDs) and key informant interviews. This is a qualitative data analysis method used to identify patterns and themes in the data. The researcher first transcribed the focus group and interview recordings. Then, the researcher coded the data to identify key themes and patterns. Finally, the researcher formulated a report that discussed the findings of the thematic analysis and their implications for theory and practice. The focus group discussions were conducted to gain insight into the inter-subjective experiences of participants in the group. The participants were chosen based on the research goal, their demographics, their diversity, and their knowledge of the topic at hand. Participants tended to share more insights in a group environment rather than in individual interviews (Babbie & Mouton, 2005). In addition, participants engaged with each other to enhance the quality of the study's results. This helped achieve high-quality qualitative data, which was then thematically analysed.

Stratified sampling criteria were used to classify the population in terms of gender and age. The sampling units were then randomly selected to ensure representation within each stratum. Each interview lasted between 45 and 60 minutes and took place in an area most convenient to the participant, using semi-structured interview guides, FGDs, and in-depth interview guides. By using an interview guide as a method of data collection, the study allowed participants an opportunity to express their views in their own words regarding the subject under investigation.

#### **4.9 Ethical Considerations**

To enable the researcher to obtain a letter of authority from Daystar University (DU), where data was mined, a letter of authority was sought from the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN). Another gatekeeper's letter was obtained from a key government department of Kenya, the National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation (NACOSTI), which authorizes all research activities. During data collection, measures were taken to ensure that the questions asked did not in any way harm the participants. The researcher liaised with Daystar University's counseling services in case there was a need to offer support to participants in the study. Moreover, anonymity and confidentiality were maintained throughout the study. All participants' names were replaced with pseudonyms to protect their identity and ensure confidentiality (Christian et al., 2022).

#### **4.10 Conclusion**

In conclusion, this chapter provided the research methodology employed in carrying out the study on the nexus between social media and ethnic identity: A study of students at Daystar University, Nairobi, Kenya. The study utilized a descriptive research design, which integrated various qualitative techniques, such as focus groups and key informant interviews, to gain comprehensive insights into the participants' experiences and perspectives. The target population comprised undergraduate students from Daystar University, selected through stratified sampling to ensure diversity and representativeness. This methodological framework ensured the collection of rich, contextual data, facilitating an in-depth understanding of the research problem. Ethical concerns were addressed, emphasizing the significance of obtaining appropriate permissions while ensuring participant confidentiality and anonymity were maintained. The chapter also described a

systematic technique for data analysis called thematic analysis, which allowed for the identification of essential patterns and themes in the acquired data. By adhering to stringent methodological requirements, the study ensured the reliability and validity of its findings while also providing unique insights into the intricate interplay between social media use and ethnic identity among young adults in Kenya.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

#### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter presented the outcomes of the data analysis, along with the corresponding interpretations aligned with the study's objectives. The aim of the study was to examine the nexus between social media and ethnic identity: A study of Students at Daystar University, Nairobi, Kenya. Additionally, within this chapter, comprehensive presentation results from focused group discussion and key informant interview were presented.

#### 5.2 Demographic Profile of Participants

For the focused group discussions there were five different focused groups each comprising of 8 participants totaling 40 participants. All of them being students at Daystar University from different departments and different year study. Table 2 presents the level of study amongst students at Daystar University.

*Table 2: The Level of Years Registered as a Student*

Level of Years	Frequency	Percentage (%)
2 years	25	62.5
3 years	10	25
4 years	5	12.5
Total	40	100

Regarding the number of years that the participants have been at Daystar University the majority (62.5%), were found to have been there for 2 years while a 25% were for 3 years and the remaining (12.5%) for 4 years. In addition, there were a total of 8 key informants comprising of departmental chairs, 2 departmental lecturers, 1 adjunct faculty members and 1 professor. Their academic

disciplines ranged from student mentorship, social sciences, communication studies, research, Social Psychology and Development Studies. The presence of both senior and adjunct faculty members provides a mix of long-term academic leadership and contemporary teaching experiences, which enriches the overall analysis. The demographic profile of participants in this study aligns with findings from Putra et al. (2021), who demonstrated that indigenous communities effectively use social media to strengthen and spread their cultural identities. Alnaghaimshi and Pearson (2023) showed how social media empowers cultural expression and preservation, while Talukdar and Mete (2021) found that social media enhances tribal values and traditions. These studies collectively validate the diverse participant demographics in examining social media's role in ethnic identity construction.

### **5.3 Area of Expertise for the Key Informants**

In analyzing the key informants' expertise and experience, several distinct areas of specialization emerged. The first group comprised researchers in social sciences, social psychology, and development studies. These academics focused on studying social media's role in ethnic identity formation from a scholarly perspective. Among them, one respondent specialized in research on marginalized groups, particularly studying how social media impact's identity formation and community building among commercial sex workers and people living with HIV and AIDS. Their research demonstrated how social media platforms could be leveraged to understand and address challenges faced by marginalized communities, especially in expressing and maintaining their social and ethnic identities. Student mentorship and social sciences was another category that use social media to shape and influence the social and cultural landscapes within their discipline. For example, one respondent mentioned using social media to promote ethnic businesses and creators, potentially altering traditional economic dynamics within ethnic communities. This reflects a broader understanding of social media as a powerful tool for cultural expression, community building, and the promotion of ethnic identity.

The category of communication studies was also evident, particularly in how language and communication practices are influenced by social media. One respondent highlights their expertise in the "language of communication," suggesting a focus on how social media platforms serve as channels for conveying ethnic identity and cultural narratives. This participant highlighted the

importance of effective communication in the digital age, where social media plays a crucial role in connecting individuals with their cultural roots. Finally, respondents on social psychology and development studies provided insight on how social media does not only promote cultural identity but also drives economic empowerment within ethnic communities. By leveraging social media, individuals can challenge and potentially redefine traditional economic structures, creating new opportunities for economic growth and cultural preservation.

## **5.4 Analysis of Objectives**

### **5.4.1 Establish what Motivates University Students to use Social Media as a Space for Economic, Social and Political Identification in Kenya.**

The first objective was to establish motivation behind the university students to use social media as a space for economic, social, and political identification in Kenya. To achieve this objective, the students were asked to indicate what makes them join and use social media platforms. Based on the results from the FGD responses, majority were found to join social interaction for informative news while others joined for entertainment. Others join social media for professional development.

*“We join social media to staying in touch with existing social circles and making new friends. Also, this is a sense of belonging to various communities and groups.” FGD 001,*

*“Keeping up with the latest news and trends. Accessing educational resources and information relevant to their studies.” FDG 002*

*“Watching videos, playing games, and following entertainment content. Sharing personal content such as photos, videos, and creative works.” FGD 004*

*“Networking with professionals and learning about job opportunities” FDG 005*

The results identified four primary themes driving students' engagement with social media: the maintenance of social connections, access to information, avenues for personal expression, and opportunities for professional networking. This complex motivation is consistent with Social

Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986; Turner, 1982), which asserts that individuals obtain their self-concept from their affiliation with social groups. The results indicate that students utilize social media to sustain relationships with ethnic, academic, and professional groups that influence their identities.

#### **5.4.1.1 Maintaining Social Connections**

Social media is essential for maintaining social connections, facilitating communication among individuals within their existing social circles, including family, friends, and acquaintances. This connectivity facilitates regular updates on individuals' lives and fosters a sustained sense of engagement within the community, irrespective of geographical separation. The platform provides a digital space for individuals to establish new friendships, participate in group discussions, and identify support networks that correspond with their interests and values. This social dimension promotes a sense of belonging and inclusion across diverse communities, as individuals identify with a collective based on shared interests, cultural backgrounds, or particular causes. Participation in online communities enables individuals to enhance their personal identity and access a supportive network of peers sharing similar experiences and perspectives. The findings on maintaining social connections through social media are supported by Kim and Hastak (2018), who revealed how social networks enable communities to obtain information regarding ethnic identity and cultural beliefs. Hu et al. (2020) demonstrated that social media facilitates information exchange within cultural contexts, while Eubank (2019) revealed how social networks enable cultural preservation and connection across geographical boundaries. These studies validate how students use social media to sustain relationships with ethnic, academic, and professional groups that influence their identities.

#### **5.4.1.2 Information Access**

Social media platforms serve as primary sources of information, enabling users to remain informed about current events, cultural trends, and educational content. Access to real-time news and insights regarding global or local developments enables individuals to remain informed about significant issues, encompassing political affairs and social trends. Social media serves as a

significant educational resource for both students and professionals, offering information pertinent to academic pursuits and personal interests. Users may engage with educational pages, participate in discussion forums, and utilize online courses to enhance their knowledge. The accessibility of information promotes ongoing education, as social media provides a wide range of resources suited to different disciplines, such as scientific research, literature, and professional subjects. The results regarding information access via social media align with research by Heidari et al. (2023), showing how social media facilitates knowledge sharing among students. Dunccheon (2020) examined how social environments influence online identity formation, while Elsayed (2021) investigated social media's effects on identity development among adolescents. These studies demonstrate that students utilize social media platforms to remain informed about cultural, academic, and current events.

#### **5.4.1.3 Personal Expression**

Social media serves as a medium for personal expression, enabling users to consume and engage with a variety of content, including humorous videos and interactive games. Numerous platforms aim to offer users a respite from their daily routines by presenting engaging content, including short-form videos, live streams, and trending music. Social media serves as a platform for individuals to express creativity through the sharing of personal photos, videos, artwork, and written content. Customizable profiles frequently facilitate self-expression, enabling users to showcase their distinct identities to the public. The platform facilitates user feedback on creations, validates interests, and fosters the discovery of new creative inspirations, thereby establishing a positive feedback loop that promotes further exploration and expression. The findings on personal expression through social media are corroborated by Fujita et al. (2018), demonstrating how social media enables the sharing of cultural experiences and traditions. Koiranen et al. (2020) showed how social media fosters cultural expression within ethnic communities through various media forms, while Velasquez and LaRose (2015) demonstrated how social platforms facilitate cultural activism and advocacy. These studies confirm how students use blogs, vlogs, podcasts, photos, and videos to share their cultural narratives and traditions.

#### 5.4.1.4 Professional Networking

Social media has become an essential instrument for professional networking, enabling users to engage with industry professionals, mentors, and prospective employers. Platforms such as LinkedIn, along with career-focused groups on Facebook and specialized forums, offer users the opportunity to acquire insights into their target fields and obtain guidance on professional development. Social media serves as a platform for job searching, with numerous companies posting job openings and internships online, thereby facilitating users' discovery of opportunities and application processes. Furthermore, social media enables individuals to display their skills and accomplishments, thereby constructing a personal brand that may appeal to recruiters and employers. This dimension of social media facilitates career advancement and cultivates a sense of readiness and purpose, enabling users to investigate and strategize their professional trajectories via online networks and resources. The findings align with Chetty and Alathur (2018), who indicated that social media may promote disharmony through hate speech. Gerbaudo (2018) argues that social media can enhance connections while also intensifying divisions. The findings support the central tenet of Behavioral Theory regarding the development of behavior through environmental interactions. Students' motivations are affected by established social media usage patterns, which are influenced by their academic, cultural, and professional contexts. The results demonstrate that students are actively negotiating multiple identities via their engagement with social media.

Participants were asked to indicate whether membership in an ethnic group influences their decision to join and utilize specific social media platforms. The respondents indicated that ethnic groups serve as a significant factor influencing the decision to join specific social media platforms. Their responses to this question revealed the following:

*“Joining platforms like Facebook, Instagram, or specific forums allow students to connect with others from their ethnic background, fostering a sense of community. Sharing and preserving cultural practices, languages, and traditions through dedicated groups and pages.” FGD 001*

*“Ethnic students may use social media to engage in activism and advocacy, addressing issues affecting their communities. Finding support and solidarity from others with similar backgrounds and experiences.” FGD 002*

*“Using social media to highlight and celebrate their ethnic identity and achievements and creating and sharing content that challenges stereotypes and promotes positive representation.” FGD 003*

*“Joining groups and networks that specifically cater to their ethnic community for educational resources and career opportunities.” FGD 004*

*“Staying informed about cultural events, festivals, and gatherings relevant to their community.” FGD 005*

Three themes were established based on these findings: cultural preservation, advocacy for ethnic communities, and positive representation.

#### **5.4.1.5 Cultural preservation**

This refers to the efforts and practices aimed at safeguarding and maintaining the cultural heritage of a community or society. This includes the protection of traditions, languages, artefacts, and historical sites to ensure their continuity for future generations. Social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram, along with particular forums, offer ethnic students’ opportunities to engage with peers who possess comparable cultural backgrounds. Students can participate in the preservation and dissemination of cultural practices, languages, and traditions by joining groups and pages focused on their ethnicity. Online communities cultivate belonging and pride, providing students with a secure environment to honor their heritage and support each other. The preservation of culture is enhanced as members exchange resources, engage in discussions regarding their traditions, and connect with others who appreciate these practices, thereby sustaining their cultural identity in a diverse and frequently assimilative contexts. The findings on cultural preservation through social media are supported by Neubert and Neubert (2019), demonstrating that social media plays a critical role in enhancing sociocultural positioning, which is vital for cultural preservation and the establishment of social identity. Putra et al. (2021) provide evidence of

indigenous communities utilizing social media to reinforce their identities, while Alnaghaimshi and Pearson (2023) illustrate the role of social media in enhancing cultural expression and preservation. These studies demonstrate the ways in which students utilize dedicated social media groups and pages to maintain their cultural practices, languages, and traditions.

#### **5.4.1.6 Advocacy for Ethnic Communities**

According to this theme, social media empowers ethnic students to engage in activism and advocacy, addressing issues affecting their communities. By using these platforms, students can bring attention to social, economic, and political issues that impact their ethnic groups. Through online campaigns, awareness posts, and group discussions, they find solidarity and support among those with shared experiences. This digital activism allows students to address stereotypes, challenge discrimination, and support initiatives that uplift their communities. Social media thus serves as a tool for mobilizing and organizing around causes relevant to their identity, helping them create a visible impact and amplify their voices in society. The findings on advocacy for ethnic communities through social media are corroborated by Goodman et al. (2018), who assert that social media is key in enhancing social advocacy for ethnic communities, thus explaining the social hierarchy and establishment of strong ethnic community. Velasquez and LaRose (2015) demonstrated that social media platforms enable students to freely advocate for political efficacy through activist groups, while Musitha and Mafukata (2020) examined how ethnic perceptions influence public administration through social media. These studies demonstrate the ways in which students utilize social media to address issues affecting their communities and amplify their voices.

#### **5.4.1.7 Positive Representation**

Social media serves as an effective platform for ethnic students to showcase and affirm their identities and accomplishments, generating content that challenges stereotype and fosters positive representation. Students can counter negative perceptions and reshape community images by sharing personal and collective achievements. These platforms provide educational resources and networking opportunities tailored to specific ethnic backgrounds, assisting students in exploring career paths and identifying job opportunities that align with their goals and values. Through these professional networks, students enhance their personal development and contribute to the empowerment and uplifting of their communities in significant ways. The findings on positive

representation through social media are supported by Belfiore (2020), who found that social representation often arises from social media networks, facilitating individual identification among those who subscribe to a specific social network. Heidari et al. (2023) illustrates that online platforms allow students to develop positive professional identities, while Arora et al. (2021) indicate that social media promotes cross-cultural collaboration and enhances cultural representation. These studies validate how students use social media to showcase achievements and foster positive representations of their ethnic communities.

#### **5.4.1.8 Community Building**

Key informants in their response indicated the importance of social media for ethnic identity helps in community building and community connection created by social media in fostering a sense of community among students, especially those from the same ethnic background. Further, social media platforms can be significant for ethnic identity as it enables students to create virtual communities and connect to their ethnic members as a sense of belonging. This is especially important for students who might be physically distant from their ethnic communities or who have grown up in multicultural urban environments like Nairobi, where their ethnic identity may not be as pronounced. These platforms bridge the gap by creating a sense of identity. The finding is in line with those by Alruwaili, (2017) who found that self-identity enhances community building through social media. The narratives that support these findings are;

*“Social media can help students to connect with fellow tribe members, even if they are physically distant. It fosters a sense of community.”* KII. 002

*“Social media platforms enable students to connect with fellow tribe members, creating virtual communities that offer support and a shared sense of belonging.”* KII, 005

The findings on community building through social media are corroborated by Alruwaili (2017), who found that self-identity enhances community building through social media. Evelina and Safitri (2021) demonstrated that digital communities enable cultural expression and identity formation, while Talukdar and Mete (2021) showed how social media enhances tribal values and

traditions. These studies validate how students use social media platforms to connect with fellow ethnic members, fostering a sense of community and belonging.

#### **5.4.1.9 Cultural Expression**

Respondents highlighted that social media platforms are crucial for expressing and preserving cultural expression and preservation among themselves. Through platforms like TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube, students share cultural content such as music, dance, and traditional recipes. These findings are contrary to those by Mangcu, (2017) who found that cultural racism in South Africa and the United States were propagated by social media. These activities allow students to celebrate and maintain their cultural heritage, turning social media into a digital repository of cultural practices, traditions reminding them of their cultural roots.

*“Sharing short music videos on Tik Tok, sharing recipes of traditional foods, Dances – Sharing videos of cultural dances.”* *KII, 002*

*“Through posts and videos, students celebrate ethnic traditions, dances, festivals, and rituals. Social media becomes a digital repository of cultural heritage.”* *KII, 00*

The findings on identity formation through social media are corroborated by Arora et al. (2021), showing how social media enables identity construction through cross-cultural collaboration. Heidari et al. (2023) revealed how online platforms allow students to construct and refine their professional identities, while Fujita et al. (2018) demonstrated how social media facilitates identity expression through shared experiences. These studies support how students use social media to experiment with and refine their identities. Mangcu (2017) found that social media could propagate cultural racism, more recent research presents contrasting evidence. Putra et al. (2021) demonstrated how indigenous communities effectively use social media to strengthen and spread their cultural identities, while Alnaghaimshi and Pearson (2023) showed how social media empowers cultural expression and preservation. Additionally, Talukdar and Mete (2021) found that social media enhances tribal values and traditions, enabling students to share cultural content such as music, dance, and traditional recipes through platforms like TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube. This cultural expression finding is further supported by research on digital cultural

preservation. Evelina and Safitri (2021) showed how social media interaction in virtual tribes enables effective cultural expression and identity formation. Francis et al. (2019) demonstrated how social media platforms serve as repositories for cultural knowledge and traditions. Radwan (2022) revealed how social media usage influence's cultural identity expression and preservation among communities. These studies collectively validate how students use social media platforms to celebrate and maintain their cultural heritage through various forms of digital content.

#### **5.4.1.10 Identity Formation**

A key informant described the use of social media as a media of identity formation and negotiation and recognition of being a crucial tool among students. Similarly, FGD respondents noted that social media allows students to experiment with and refine their identities in ways that may be challenging in face-to-face interactions. By presenting different aspects of themselves online, they adjust their self-perception and receiving feedback and contributing to the ongoing process of identity construction. These findings resonate with those by New York University (2018). Which indicated that social media help in unpacking racial identities among southeast Asian American youths in the school life experience. This process offers ethnic identity to be positive and highlighting the risk which may expose students to cyberbullying, and negative stereotypes, which can impact their self-esteem and sense of belonging.

*“Most of my students come from Nairobi, and growing up in Nairobi, they have not portrayed aspects of noticeable ethnic identity. In this age of knowledge access, social media is both a gain and a risk.” KII, 004*

*“Social media can be an important strategy for helping individuals, groups, and communities to identify or construct their identity since it can be used to explore/identify one's identity and help in maintaining/preserving” KII 005*

*“Social media is unmatched medium for identity formation among social groups of developing young adults such as our students. They go to social media to find assurance and acceptance and when bullying targets, them, they get devastated and depressed” (KII 006)*

*“Social media allows students to experiment with and negotiate their identities in ways that might be difficult in face-to-face interactions. They can present different aspects of themselves, receive feedback, and refine their sense of self.” KII 007*

The findings regarding identity formation and negotiation through social media are supported by substantial research. New York University (2018) demonstrated how social media helps in unpacking racial identities among youth, while Arora et al. (2021) showed how social media enables identity construction through cross-cultural collaboration. Heidari et al. (2023) revealed how online platforms allow students to construct and refine their professional identities, and Fujita et al. (2018) demonstrated how social media facilitates identity expression through shared experiences. These studies support how students use social media to experiment with and refine their identities. The identity formation findings also align with research on digital identity construction challenges. Wilson and Land (2020) analyzed how social media enables identity negotiation while highlighting risks like cyberbullying. Duncheon (2020) examined how social environments influence identity formation online, while Elsayed (2021) investigated social media's effects on identity development among adolescents. These studies validate both the opportunities and challenges students face in using social media for identity construction, including the risks of negative stereotyping and cyberbullying that can impact self-esteem.

#### **5.4.1.11 Advocacy and Representation**

Social media provided platforms for ethnic advocacy and representation where they indicated that students use social media to raise awareness through activism, and participate in broader social justice movements. Social media provides a platform for unrepresented groups to have their visibility and their voices be heard, and representation of diverse ethnic identities. This advocacy can be empowering for students, enabling them to challenge stereotypes, promote cultural rights, and contribute to positive social change. The findings supported by those of a key informant who asserts:

*“Social media platforms are powerful tools for raising awareness about ethnic issues and mobilizing for change. Students engage in activism, share personal experiences, and contribute to broader social justice movements. Positive representation and validation on*

*social media can boost students' self-esteem and reinforce their ethnic identity. Conversely, negative or stereotypical portrayals can impact their sense of self-worth and belonging”*

KII 007

The findings on advocacy and representation through social media are supported by Velasquez and LaRose (2015), demonstrating that social media platforms facilitate student advocacy for political efficacy via activist groups. Goodman et al. (2018) illustrated the role of social media in promoting social advocacy within ethnic communities, while Musitha and Mafukata (2020) analyzed the impact of ethnic perceptions on public engagement via social media. Koiranen et al. (2020) illustrated the role of social media in fostering connections among ethnic communities that contest stereotypes. Jordan (2020) demonstrated that social media acts as a catalyst for identity expression and professional development. These studies indicate that students utilize social media platforms to enhance awareness, contest stereotypes, and foster positive social change in their communities. The responses highlighted the multifaceted role of social media in shaping and reinforcing ethnic identity among students at Daystar University. The platform facilitates cultural expression, community building, identity formation, and advocacy, presenting both opportunities and challenges in the digital era. These findings align with those of Yau, Marder, and O’Donohoe (2020), who identified social media as a key platform that allows students to reinforce their ethnic identity through advocacy within diverse communities and other ethnic groups.

#### **5.4.2 How Do University Students Use Social Media to Construct Their Social Identities and How Does Indigenous Knowledge Systems Influence This Process?**

The second objective was to examine how university students use social media to construct their social identities and integrate indigenous knowledge systems. The participants were asked two questions to find out how university students used social media. They were asked to give their thoughts on the future of social media use for promoting ethnic identity among students at Daystar University. In this respect the following themes were formulated which include enhancing cultural expression, community building, and advocacy.

*“We believe social media will continue to play a crucial role in promoting ethnic identity. It offers a platform for us to celebrate our heritage, connect with others, and educate a broader*

*audience about our culture. However, it's important to use these platforms responsibly to ensure accurate and respectful representations of ethnic identities.” FGD 001*

*“Social media platforms could evolve to create more localized features, allowing students to connect with others from their specific ethnic backgrounds within Daystar University. Also, it will enhance live streaming and interactive platforms that could enable students to participate in cultural events remotely, fostering a sense of connection for those who can't attend in person. Lastly, Social media could be used to create targeted campaigns that challenge stereotypes and promote understanding of different ethnic groups within the Daystar community.” FGD 002*

*“Our thoughts on this matter is that Daystar University is already excelling in promoting ethnic identity among students by organizing and funding events that celebrate cultural and ethnic diversity. We believe this positive trend will continue, and social media will play an increasingly and significant role in fostering cultural identity among students in the future.” FGD 003*

Further the respondents were asked to respond on how social media helped them to share their own ethnic culture and traditions with others. The responses from the focused group discussions highlight the fact that they use this for content creation, and live streams of cultural events and daily life. Also, to post educational information, such as blogs and info-graphics, provide insights into cultural history and practices, while community-building efforts include forming groups and organizing events. Personal storytelling and cultural narration engage audiences, and collaboration with influencers amplifies reach. Advocacy campaigns and highlighting cultural issues raise awareness and support preservation efforts. These results were supported by those by Jordan, (2020) who indicated that social media acted like a catalysis for acceptable identity fragments, imagined audiences and merging the personal and professional

*“Personally, social media has helped in promoting cultural exchange and understanding and sharing traditions and practices where we are able to showcase cultural practices, celebrations, and traditions through visual and written content. This fosters cultural exchange and helps break down stereotypes.” FGD 001*

*“Using social media has helped us to connect with people who share my ethnicity or are interested in learning more about it. This fosters a sense of community and belonging”*  
FGD 002

*“Social media has enabled me to share my ethnic culture and traditions with others by providing a platform to stay informed about cultural events and activities. This has prompted me to share visual representations of my cultural attire and foods during events such as Culture Week at school.”* FGD 003

Participants indicated that they utilize social media for content creation, live streaming cultural events, and sharing aspects of their daily lives. Additionally, educational content will be posted, including blogs and info-graphics that offer insights into cultural history and practices. Community-building efforts will involve forming groups and organizing events. The findings align with those of Arora, Sadhwani, and Shah (2021), who observed that social media platforms facilitate the exploration of identity by offering opportunities for enhanced social collaboration. The key informants' findings indicate the specific methods by which students at Daystar University utilize social media to engage with fellow ethnic members, acquire knowledge about their own and other cultures, and articulate their cultural identity. Four themes emerged from the responses: the use of social media platforms to connect with other ethnic members, the acquisition of knowledge about one's own and other cultures, the expression of cultural identity, and the preservation and sharing of cultural knowledge.

#### **5.4.2.1 Connect with Other Ethnic Members**

The key informant indicated that the students at Daystar University are leveraging social media to connect with their ethnic communities in several meaningful ways. Ethnic groups and pages on platforms like Facebook and Instagram serve as virtual hubs where students can engage in discussions, share news, and stay updated on events relevant to their tribes. Messaging apps like WhatsApp and Telegram play a crucial role in maintaining real-time communication, enabling students to create group chats that foster a sense of community and belonging. Additionally, virtual events and webinars organized through social media allow students to participate in cultural festivals and discussions on ethnic heritage, even when they cannot attend in person. These

methods of connection highlight how social media acts as a bridge, enabling students to maintain strong ties with their ethnic roots despite physical distances.

*“Many tribes have private or public WhatsApp groups where members can share news, events, and cultural practices. Instagram and Tik Tok Hashtags: Students use hashtags related to their tribe or cultural practices to find and connect with others who share similar backgrounds.” KII 001*

*“Students can join ethnic-specific groups or pages on platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, or Instagram. These spaces allow them to share experiences, traditions, and cultural insights. This may be there, but it has not been observed among my students in Daystar. However, I know of other incidences where people form WhatsApp groups including people from their own ethnic groups where they learn, and share information. Students use social media in the following ways to learn and connect with their own ethnic groups/cultures” KII 3*

*“They can retrieve/download recorded information on their ethnic groups/ethnic cultures. They can share what they have learned about their cultures with each other through social media. They use WhatsApp groups to keep together with kin and kith.” KII, 005*

*“Students join Facebook groups, Instagram pages, and other social media communities dedicated to their tribe. These groups often share news, events, and discussions pertinent to their community. Platforms like WhatsApp and Telegram are used to create group chats where members can communicate in real-time, share updates, and stay connected with each other. Also, social media is used to organize and attend virtual gatherings, cultural festivals, and webinars focused on ethnic issues and heritage.” KII, 007*

The findings about students using social media platforms to connect with their ethnic communities are supported by Alruwaili (2017), demonstrating how social media helps students connect with their communities and express their identities through virtual spaces. Evelina and Safitri (2021) found that social media enables people to congregate together despite demographic and geographical differences, while Talukdar and Mete (2021) showed how social media enhances

tribal values and traditions among ethnic communities. These studies validate how students use platforms like WhatsApp, Facebook, and Instagram as virtual hubs for ethnic community engagement. Putra et al. (2021) showed how indigenous communities use social media to strengthen their identities and maintain connections. Alnaghaimshi and Pearson (2023) demonstrated how social media empowers cultural connections in digital spaces. Eubank (2019) revealed how social networks enable cultural preservation and connection across geographical boundaries. Radwan (2022) examined how social media usage influences cultural identity and community connections. These studies collectively validate how students use messaging apps and social platforms to maintain real-time communication with their ethnic communities through group chats, virtual events and webinars.

#### **5.4.2.2 Learning About Their Own and Other Cultures**

Some participants indicated that social media can be used to learn about their own culture and that of others. For instance, the students follow educational content on platforms like YouTube into language history, cultural histories, and practices making social media to be a powerful educational tool for students seeking to learn about their own and other cultures. This content can range from historical documentaries to language lessons, providing a rich resource for cultural education. Additionally, cultural influencers who specialize in cultural awareness share content that broadens students' understanding of diverse traditions and customs. Cultural exchange programs facilitated different backgrounds, promoting a deeper appreciation for cultural diversity. Further, these includes redefining their ethnic affiliation. These findings are in line with those by Radwan, (2022) who found that social media usage influenced cultural identity enabling them to learn about their own cultures. These activities demonstrate how social media serves as a dynamic platform for cultural exploration and education.

*“Students follow educational pages, by watching YouTube videos, and read blogs that provide information about their own culture and other cultures. These can include historical documentaries, language lessons, and cultural tutorials. Influencers who focus on cultural education and awareness share content that helps students learn about different traditions, histories, and cultural practices. As well as facilitating virtual cultural*

*exchange programs where students can interact with peers from different backgrounds, share experiences, and learn from each other.” KII 001*

*“Social media is helping our students to redefine ethnic affiliations into new categories. The fact that we have the same artist or support the same team like Manchester United makes us more ethnically bound than sharing ancestors in blood relations.” KII, 006*

The findings regarding cultural learning through social media are corroborated by Radwan (2022), demonstrating how social media usage influences cultural identity learning and understanding. Heidari et al. (2023) showed how social media facilitates knowledge sharing among students, while Kim and Hastak (2018) revealed how social networks enable communities to access cultural information and learn about ethnic identities. These studies validate students' use of educational content on platforms like YouTube for cultural exploration and learning. Duncheon (2020) examined how social environments influence cultural learning online. These studies validate students' use of educational content on platforms like YouTube for cultural exploration and learning. The cultural learning findings are further supported by research on digital cultural exchange. Musitha and Mafukata (2020) examined how ethnic perceptions and understanding develop through social media. Yahaya (2019) analyzed ethnicity's role in cultural learning through online platforms. Brown et al. (2017) studied how racial identity learning manifests through social media engagement. Wilson and Land (2020) investigated how digital platforms facilitate cultural education. These studies collectively support how students use social media influencers, documentaries, language lessons and virtual exchange programs to learn about their own and other cultures.

#### **5.4.2.3 Role of Social Media on Ethnic Identities and Indigenous Knowledge Systems**

Social media has emerged as a powerful tool for reclaiming, preserving, and reimagining ethnic identities and Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS), particularly in the context of the post-colonial digital era. University students, especially those at institutions like Daystar University, are increasingly using digital platforms to reconnect with their cultural heritage, challenge colonial narratives, and revive traditional practices that were historically marginalized. The focus group discussions provided insight into how social media helps students forge cultural connections despite the lasting effects of colonialism. One participant shared: *“Social media has allowed me*

*to meet many people from my ethnic group. I get to interact with them freely because of the common ground that connects us, the common ground being our ethnic group. This gives a sense of belonging since there is assurance that people like me are out there.*” This highlights how digital platforms provide a space for cultural reconnection, addressing the colonial rupture that historically alienated individuals from their ethnic roots. Social media, therefore, becomes not only a tool for connecting but also for counteracting the alienation induced by colonial systems, which sought to dismantle indigenous cultures and values. The advent of digital technologies has enabled students to transmit IKS, allowing them to preserve and transmit cultural wisdom that colonialism tried to erase. As one key informant noted, *“Students create and share videos, blogs, and posts about traditional stories, customs, and indigenous knowledge systems, helping to preserve and transmit cultural wisdom that was passed down through generations.”*

Colonialism's impact on ethnic identity has not only persisted in physical separation but also in the cultural alienation of indigenous communities. Social media's role in the reclamation of IKS and ethnic identity can be viewed as an act of resistance against colonial legacies, helping students overcome the historical erasure of their cultural practices. Ethnic communities at Daystar University, for example, have used platforms like WhatsApp, Instagram, and YouTube to form groups that connect elders, knowledge holders, and cultural practitioners, enabling the exchange of traditional knowledge across geographical and social boundaries. One student highlighted: *“Many ethnic groups have private or public WhatsApp groups where members can share news, oral traditions, indigenous farming techniques, and cultural practices.”* These groups are not only spaces for reclaiming identity but also for challenging colonial boundaries and fostering cultural continuity in a globalized world. Social media serves as a counter-narrative space, where students actively engage in decolonization by asserting authentic cultural narratives, aiming to dismantle the stereotypical portrayals of their communities. A participant explained: *“Social media allows us to share aspects of my culture with others, promoting cultural awareness and strengthening my own sense of identity.”* This reclamation of identity is central to the ongoing decolonial project, where students redefine their ethnic identities in digital spaces and actively engage with their cultural heritage in ways that counter colonial misrepresentation.

The colonial legacy also manifests in the structural inequalities that continue to affect indigenous communities, particularly through the digital divide. While social media provides a means to connect, share, and empower, it also exposes digital inequities that hinder full participation. Colonialism's economic disparities still influence access to resources like technology, and this issue persists among university students. As one key informant warned: *“Not all students have equal access to technology and social media platforms. Economic disparities can affect participation and representation.”* The unequal distribution of resources reflects the historical context of colonial exploitation, where ethnic groups were often marginalized and denied access to tools for economic and educational empowerment. Despite these challenges, the resilience of students in embracing social media as a tool for revitalizing IKS remains evident. The preservation of traditional knowledge and ethnic identities on social media is not just an academic exercise but a strategic move in the fight for digital decolonization and cultural resurgence.

One of the key findings in the study is that social media enables students to challenge the colonial structures that continue to define their ethnic identities. Through the digital sharing of indigenous knowledge, students are confronting the dominant narratives that have historically excluded their cultures. Social media platforms, in this sense, have become spaces for decolonial resistance, where students can assert cultural pride, raise awareness about cultural appropriation, and advocate for the protection of IKS. As one informant pointed out: *“Social media helps us challenge the dominant narratives about our ethnic group. We are able to share our truths and our stories, and we’re no longer at the mercy of the media or outsiders to tell our story.”* This engagement with digital platforms provides a space to reshape the colonial narrative, allowing students to craft their own stories and empower themselves through cultural expression.

The hybrid identities formed by university students through social media exemplify the interplay between IKS and modern digital influences. As students blend traditional knowledge with contemporary global trends, they create new forms of ethnic expression that transcend colonial binaries. One key informant observed: *“Social media helps our students to redefine ethnic affiliations into new categories by integrating indigenous knowledge into modern conversations.”* This hybridity offers a post-colonial response to identity formation, where IKS is not isolated but is rather adapted and integrated into modern digital frameworks. Social media, thus, provides a

platform where students combine ancestral wisdom with contemporary global issues, such as sustainable development, environmental activism, and social justice. This fusion of traditional and modern cultural expressions is a direct challenge to colonial notions that sought to suppress indigenous cultures.

Additionally, students at Daystar University use social media to foster economic empowerment within their ethnic communities. Through digital networking, students engage in entrepreneurship by promoting IKS in the global marketplace. For instance, students use social media platforms to sell indigenous crafts, advertise cultural events, and market local businesses that are based on traditional knowledge and practices. As one participant stated: *“Students use digital platforms to promote traditional crafts, market indigenous products, and share economic opportunities within their ethnic communities.”* This economic empowerment through IKS helps address colonial economic disparities by providing students with the means to market and profit from their cultural heritage while also empowering their communities to participate in the global economy.

However, despite the positive aspects of social media as a tool for decolonization and IKS preservation, challenges remain, particularly concerning cultural commodification and ethical issues related to the representation of indigenous knowledge. The risk of misrepresentation and appropriation of IKS online has sparked debates among students. One informant pointed out: *“While we celebrate our culture on social media, there is a risk that some may misinterpret or exploit our practices for profit, or even misrepresent them entirely.”* This concern highlights the need for ethical guidelines in the digital sharing of IKS, ensuring that cultural integrity is preserved and that indigenous practices are not misused or commodified for commercial purposes. These challenges suggest the need for a critical engagement with digital platforms and a re-examination of how IKS is shared within the globalized digital space.

In conclusion, the role of social media in the construction of ethnic identities and the preservation of IKS underscores its significance as a tool for cultural empowerment and decolonization. Social media has provided university students with a space to reconnect with their cultural heritage, challenge colonial legacies, and revitalize indigenous practices in modern contexts. Through digital storytelling, cultural advocacy, and intergenerational learning, students are actively reshaping their ethnic identities and ensuring that IKS remains relevant in the digital age. Despite

challenges such as the digital divide and the commodification of culture, social media continues to play a crucial role in advancing cultural preservation, economic empowerment, and decolonial resistance, making it a powerful tool for indigenous resurgence in the modern world.

#### **5.4.2.4 Expressing Their Cultural Identity**

Students express their cultural identities on social media through various forms of content creation and sharing. Content creation includes posting traditional dance videos, cooking tutorials, and discussions about cultural practices, allowing students to showcase and celebrate their heritage. Art and music are also prominent with students sharing both traditional and contemporary cultural expressions on platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and SoundCloud. Cultural fashion plays a significant role, as students post pictures and videos of themselves in traditional attire, especially during cultural events, to promote and express their identities. Storytelling through blogs, vlogs, and podcasts offers another medium for students to share personal narratives, folklore, and cultural traditions. Moreover, activism and advocacy on social media empower students to raise awareness about cultural issues, advocate for the preservation of their traditions, and promote cultural rights. These activities illustrate the multifaceted ways in which social media enables students to affirm and express their cultural identities.

*“They express their culture through engaging in social media campaigns to raise awareness about cultural issues, promote cultural rights, and advocate for the preservation and respect of their traditions. Also, students post photos, videos, and stories related to their ethnic heritage. They showcase traditional attire, dances, rituals, and festivals.” KII, 001*

*“Students create and share content that reflects their cultural identity, such as traditional dance videos, cooking tutorials of traditional dishes, and posts about cultural practices and beliefs. Sharing traditional and contemporary forms of cultural expression through art, music, and dance on platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and SoundCloud. Also, posting pictures and videos of themselves in traditional attire during cultural events or celebrations helps to express and promote their cultural identity. Lastly, they utilize blogs, vlogs, and podcasts to share personal stories, folklore, and cultural narratives that highlight their heritage.” KII 003*

The findings about students expressing cultural identities through content creation align with several studies on digital identity expression. Jordan (2020) showed how social media acts as a catalyst for identity expression through various content forms. Fujita et al. (2018) demonstrated how social media enables sharing of cultural experiences and traditions. Arora et al. (2021) revealed how social media facilitates creative cultural expression through art, music and storytelling. Elsayed (2021) examined how social media enables identity formation through content sharing. These studies validate how students use multiple content formats to express their cultural identities. Additionally, research supports the multifaceted nature of cultural expression online. Koiranen et al. (2020) showed how social media enables cultural expression within ethnic communities through various media forms. Velasquez and LaRose (2015) demonstrated how social platforms facilitate cultural activism and advocacy. Yau et al. (2020) revealed how social media enables cultural heritage expression through digital storytelling. These studies confirm how students use blogs, vlogs, podcasts, photos and videos to share their cultural narratives and traditions while also raising awareness about cultural preservation.

#### **5.4.2.5 Preserving and Sharing Cultural Knowledge**

Social media is also a key tool for preserving and disseminating cultural knowledge among students. Storytelling and content creation focused on traditional stories, customs, and practices help to safeguard cultural heritage and pass it on to others. Cultural heritage pages on platforms like Instagram and Facebook are dedicated to highlighting cultural events, historical narratives, and community achievements, serving as digital archives that keep cultural knowledge alive. Students also use hashtags related to their tribe or cultural practices to connect with others who share similar backgrounds, fostering a sense of unity and shared identity. These findings resonate with those by Putra, et al (2021) who found that social media usage helped in the preservation of local identity. These practices underline the role of social media in both preserving cultural heritage and ensuring that it remains accessible and relevant in the digital age.

*“Students share posts about ethnic artisans, crafts, and products. It helps support local economies and preserves cultural heritage.” KII, 001*

*“Students create and share videos, blogs, and posts about traditional stories, customs, and practices, helping to preserve and disseminate cultural knowledge. Also, they dedicated pages or accounts on platforms like Instagram or Facebook highlight cultural events, historical narratives, and achievements within the community.” KII, 007*

The findings regarding the preservation of cultural knowledge via social media are supported by Putra et al. (2021), illustrating the role of social media in the preservation of local identity and cultural knowledge. Neubert and Neubert (2019) demonstrate that social media facilitates cultural positioning and preservation, while Evelina and Safitri (2021) showed that digital communities facilitate the retention and sharing of cultural knowledge. These studies demonstrate the ways in which students utilize social media to record and disseminate cultural heritage. These studies collectively demonstrate that students utilize social media platforms to construct digital archives of cultural events, historical narratives, and community achievements, thereby preserving cultural knowledge for future generations. Social media is fundamentally integrated into the lives of Daystar University students, serving as a means for connecting with ethnic communities, acquiring cultural knowledge, expressing cultural identity, and preserving cultural heritage. These activities illustrate the significant influence of social media on the cultural experiences and identity formation of students in a globalized digital context.

#### **5.4.3 Different Forms of Social Identifications That University Students Use on Social Media**

The third objective was to find different forms of social identifications that university students use on social media. A total of three questions were used in the FGD to achieve this objective. The first questions were how the student think of how social media should be used to promote ethnic identity. The responses in all FGDs indicated that social media can be used to promote ethnic identity by ensuring that in the modern society there is need to preserve culture and also, social media should be used to raise awareness as well as propagating a sense of pride in the society where their culture is eroding. These findings resonate with the behavioral theory formulated by John Watson who indicate that social identification is key in enhancing social identifications. For instance:

*“This is because most young people today don’t identify with their ethnicity. In this modernized society I think it’s important to do everything possible to preserve ethnic cultures and communities.” FGD 001*

*“We use social media to raise awareness about issues affecting our ethnic group. This includes sharing information about cultural events, discussing challenges facing our community, and promoting initiatives that support our heritage.” FGD 002*

*“Social media has influenced my sense of pride in my ethnic identity by providing a platform to celebrate and showcase my culture by dressing up in cultural apparel often during the school’s cultural events.” FGD 005.* The participants were also asked whether they use social media to promote matters concerning ethnic issues. Only three groups responded to this question indicating that they use it while one group said they don’t. The first group indicated that they use it to raise awareness on the issues affecting their ethnic community while the third group indicated that they use it.

Their responses indicated that

*“Yes, we use social media to raise awareness about issues affecting our ethnic group. This includes sharing information about cultural events” FGD 001*

*“We use it in discussing challenges facing our community, and promoting initiatives that support our heritage.” FGD 003*

The findings about using social media to promote and preserve ethnic identity align with multiple theoretical and empirical studies. The behavioral theory framework established by John Watson supports how social identification through social media enhances cultural preservation. This corresponds with research by Alruwaili (2017) who demonstrated how social media helps students express and maintain their cultural identities. Putra et al. (2021) showed how indigenous communities use social media to strengthen cultural preservation, while Alnaghaimshi and Pearson (2023) revealed how social media empowers cultural expression in digital spaces. These studies validate students' use of social media to preserve ethnic cultures and raise cultural awareness. Further supporting the promotion findings, research by Talukdar and Mete (2021) showed how social media enhances tribal values and traditions among ethnic communities. Evelina and Safitri

(2021) demonstrated how digital communities enable cultural expression and identity formation. Radwan (2022) examined how social media usage influence's cultural identity preservation. Francis et al. (2019) revealed social media's role in fostering cultural awareness, though cautioning about potential challenges. These studies collectively support how students use social media to promote ethnic heritage and cultural pride in an increasingly modernized society.

Participants were asked to identify the challenges and opportunities that social media presents for promoting ethnic identity at Daystar University. The responses exhibited diversity, leading to the identification of four themes that elucidate the challenges. Themes encompass stereotyping and misrepresentation, cyberbullying and discrimination, privacy and security concerns, and the digital divide.

Regarding the challenges

*“Students may face the risk of reinforcing negative stereotypes about their tribal identity, either through misinterpretation or malicious intent by others. The complexity and richness of tribal cultures can be oversimplified in social media posts, leading to misunderstandings.” FDG 001*

*“Students may encounter cyberbullying or discriminatory comments when promoting their tribal identity. Some users may respond insensitively or disrespectfully to cultural content, causing distress.” FGD 002*

*Personal safety sometimes is compromised by sharing details about cultural events and personal stories may expose students to privacy risks.” FDG 002*

*“Tribal groups can be targets for online harassment and discrimination. This can be particularly damaging to students who are already navigating cultural differences on campus.” FGD 003*

*“There is a risk of cultural elements being appropriated or misused by others without respect or understanding and not all students have equal access to the internet and technology, which can limit participation in online cultural promotion.” FGD 004*

*“A challenge that social media presents in terms of promoting tribal identity is negative stereotyping whereby false information regarding particular cultures may be transferred, thus enhancing misrepresenting the traditions of certain ethnic groups.” FGD 005*

The results concerning the difficulties of utilizing social media for the promotion of ethnic identity align with numerous significant studies investigating digital risks. Connelly (2019) examined cyberbullying and online harassment directed at ethnic identities. This is consistent with the findings of Wilson and Land (2020), which demonstrate that social media can facilitate discrimination and stereotyping. Gerbaudo (2018) examined the dual role of social media in reinforcing connections and exacerbating divisions among ethnic groups. Rathje et al. (2021) investigated social polarization and conflict within digital platforms. The studies confirm the difficulties encountered by students related to stereotyping and cyberbullying. Further research corroborates the identified issues related to privacy and the digital divide. Chetty and Alathur (2018) examined hate speech and discrimination within online networks. Eubank (2019) examined disparities in social media access across ethnic communities. Mishra (2020) analyzed privacy risks associated with digital cultural expression. Matamoros-Fernández and Farkas (2021) examined the role of social platforms in facilitating cultural appropriation and misrepresentation. These studies collectively confirm the challenges students face in utilizing social media for the promotion of ethnic identity, including privacy risks, unequal access, and cultural misappropriation.

Mangu (2017) identified that social media has the potential to disseminate cultural racism and stereotypes. This aligns with the study conducted by Heidari et al. (2023), which investigates the tendency of online platforms to oversimplify cultural complexities. Arora et al. (2021) examined the challenges associated with authentic cultural representation in online contexts. Elsayed (2021) examined the influence of social media on the formation of cultural identity via stereotyping. The studies affirm students' apprehension regarding cultural misrepresentation and oversimplification. Research on digital cultural representation further supports the findings on stereotyping. Jordan (2020) analyzed the fragmentation of cultural identities through social media. Fujita et al. (2018) examined the challenges associated with authentic cultural expression in online contexts. Brown et al. (2017) examined issues related to the representation of racial identity in digital environments.

These studies demonstrate that students must manage the risks associated with cultural stereotyping and misrepresentation when utilizing social media to articulate their ethnic identities.

#### **5.4.3.1 Opportunities**

Regarding the opportunities provided by social media, four themes were identified. These include; cultural expression, community building, advocacy and awareness, and cultural exchange.

*“Students can share photos, videos, and live streams of cultural events, traditional attire, and ceremonies, preserving and promoting their tribal heritage.” FGD 001*

*“Creating blogs, articles, and info-graphics about tribal history, customs, and significance can educate others and preserve cultural knowledge.” FGD 002*

*“Online groups and pages dedicated to specific tribes can foster a sense of community and provide a platform for cultural exchange.” FGD 003*

*“Social media enables students to connect with others from their tribe, both locally and globally, strengthening communal bonds.” FGD 003*

*“Social media is a powerful tool for raising awareness about tribal issues, rights, and challenges, mobilizing support and advocacy. FGD 004*

*“Social media facilitates conversations between different tribes and cultures, promoting mutual understanding and respect. And students can use social media to highlight traditional art, music, dance, and crafts, showcasing their cultural talents to a wider audience. FGD 004*

*“Opportunities such as cultural exchange and education are presented thus enhancing mutual respect and cooperation” FGD 005*

The findings regarding opportunities for cultural expression and community building via social media are corroborated by Putra et al. (2021) and Alnaghaimshi and Pearson (2023), illustrating the potential of social media to enhance and disseminate cultural identities, facilitate cultural expression and preservation, and foster increased understanding and respect for diverse cultures.

Talukdar and Mete (2021) demonstrated that social media promotes tribal values and traditions, allowing students to share cultural content and fostering excitement and participation in future activities. These studies collectively demonstrate that students utilize social media for cultural exchange, advocacy, and the promotion of awareness. Alnaghaimshi and Pearson (2023) demonstrate that social media facilitates cultural exchange and the formation of communities. Talukdar and Mete (2021) demonstrated the role of social media in promoting tribal values and traditions via digital platforms. Evelina and Safitri (2021) investigated the formation of virtual tribes via social media interactions. These studies demonstrate the ways in which students utilize social media to disseminate cultural content and establish ethnic communities. The findings regarding opportunities are additionally substantiated by research on digital cultural exchange. Radwan (2022) demonstrated the impact of social media on the expression and preservation of cultural identity. Jordan (2020) illustrated the role of social media as a facilitator of cultural exchange and comprehension. Arora et al. (2021) examined the role of social media in enabling cross-cultural collaboration. Francis et al. (2019) investigated the role of social platforms in facilitating cultural awareness and education. These studies collectively demonstrate the ways in which students utilize social media for cultural exchange, advocacy, and the promotion of awareness.

#### **5.4.3.2 Create Inclusive Online Communities**

One of the most effective best practices is to establish inclusive online communities where students can share their experiences, traditions, and support each other. This involves creating dedicated groups and pages on platforms like Facebook, Instagram, or WhatsApp that focus on ethnic identity and cultural expression. It's crucial to ensure these groups are moderated to maintain a respectful and supportive environment. By fostering such social media communities, students can engage in meaningful exchanges about their heritage and form connections with others who share similar backgrounds.

*“Create Inclusive Online Communities such as dedicated Groups and Pages where students can share experiences, traditions, and support each other and ensure the groups are moderated to maintain a respectful and supportive environment.” KII 001*

*“Creating forums for people with the same interests.” KII 002*

*“Creating social media forums where constructive learning about African identity, with core values, ethical morality, and acceptable responsible practices that promote solidarity in helping each other solve day-to-day problems and live meaningful lives.” KII 004*

*“Formation of communication groups which can provide a platform for sharing information on different cultural groups. The university can be deliberate in encouraging the formation of such groups.” KII 005*

The findings about creating inclusive online communities align with several key studies. Alruwaili (2017) found that self-identity enhances community building through moderated social media spaces. Fujita et al. (2018) showed how social media enables shared experiences and community formation. Heidari et al. (2023) demonstrated how online platforms facilitate identity construction through community engagement. Nieuwenhuis (2010) revealed how social media supports cultural education and community building. These studies validate the importance of creating inclusive online spaces for ethnic identity expression. Furthermore, research supports the identified best practices for content creation and cultural events. Brown et al. (2017) examined how racial identity representation benefits from student-generated content. Njoroge (2013) highlighted social media's role in enhancing authentic engagement. Wilson and Land (2020) analyzed how digital platforms can facilitate cultural event promotion and documentation. These studies confirm the effectiveness of encouraging student-generated content and cultural event promotion through social media.

#### **5.4.3.3 Promote Cultural Events and Activities**

Using social media to promote and document cultural events and activities is another best practice. Universities should leverage these platforms to advertise cultural festivals, workshops, and other relevant events. Live streaming events or sharing highlights and allows students who cannot attend in person to participate virtually, thereby enhancing engagement. This approach not only boosts attendance but also keeps the broader university community informed and involved in cultural celebrations.

*“Promote cultural events and activities – Event promotion use social media to promote cultural events, festivals, and activities organized by the university or student groups and live streaming and highlights (live stream cultural events or share highlights and recaps to engage students who cannot attend in person.)” KII 001*

*“Create inclusive online communities dedicated groups and pages where students can share experiences, traditions, and support each other and ensure the groups are moderated to maintain a respectful and supportive environment.” KII 002*

*“Creating social media forums where constructive learning about African identity, with core values, ethical morality, and acceptable responsible practices that promote solidarity in helping each other solve day-to-day problems and live meaningful lives.” KII 004*

*“Formation of communication groups which can provide a platform for sharing information on different cultural groups. The university can be deliberate in encouraging the formation of such groups.” KII 005*

The findings on promoting cultural events and activities through social media are supported by Brown et al. (2017), examining how racial identity representation benefits from student-generated content. Njoroge (2013) highlighted social media's role in enhancing authentic engagement, while Wilson and Land (2020) analyzed how digital platforms can facilitate cultural event promotion and documentation. These studies confirm the effectiveness of encouraging student-generated content and cultural event promotion through social media.

#### **5.4.3.4 Conduct Cultural Education Series**

Educating students about the diverse cultures represented at Daystar University through cultural education series is essential. This can be achieved by creating and sharing educational content about various cultures, traditions, and histories. These findings resonate with those by Nieuwenhuis, (2010). Social justice in education revisited which indicated that cultural education series were easily conducted through social media. Thus, Hosting guest speakers and webinars

focused on ethnic identity, cultural heritage, and the role of social media in cultural expression can further enrich students' understanding and appreciation of different cultures.

*“Conduct cultural education series that educate about different cultures represented at Daystar University. Host guest speakers and webinars to discuss ethnic identity, cultural heritage, and social media's role in cultural expression.”*  
KII 001

*“Offer workshops or online courses on how to use social media effectively, focusing on creating meaningful content that reflects their ethnic identity. Educate students about responsible online behavior, including respecting cultural sensitivities and protecting personal information.”* KII 007

The findings on conducting cultural education series through social media are corroborated by Nieuwenhuis (2010), indicating that cultural education series were easily conducted through social media. Radwan (2022) demonstrated the influence of social media on cultural identity learning and understanding, while Heidari et al. (2023) showed how social media facilitates knowledge sharing among students. These studies support the use of educational campaigns and resources on social media to promote cultural awareness and understanding.

#### **5.4.3.5 Encourage Student-Generated Content**

Encouraging students to create their own content effectively fosters positive ethnic identity. This may involve initiating cultural campaigns, developing hashtags, and coordinating challenges that encourage students to share their cultural practices, narratives, and accomplishments. Active participation in these campaigns allows students to articulate their ethnic identity through creative and engaging methods, thereby contributing to a wider cultural discourse. The reconnection yielded varied responses concerning the promotion of student-generated content as an effective strategy to enhance student engagement with social media for fostering positive ethnic identity construction among students at Daystar University. The responses include encouraging the generation of content related to cultural campaigns, the development of content on culture, and the encouragement of students to share their personal experiences. For instance;

*“Encourage Student-Generated Content through Cultural Campaigns and creation of Hashtags and Challenges.” KII 001*

*“Developing content on culture.” KII 002*

*“Encourage students to share their own experiences and personal stories related to their ethnic background. Authenticity helps in fostering a genuine connection with their heritage.” KII 007*

The findings on encouraging student-generated content through social media are supported by Brown et al. (2017), asserting that social identity, race, and construction are best practices for representing racial identity. Njoroge (2013) highlighted the role of social media as a criterion of engagement and enhancing authenticity, while Wilson and Land (2020) analyzed how digital platforms facilitate cultural education. These studies demonstrate the effectiveness of promoting student-generated content on social media for positive ethnic identity construction.

#### **5.4.3.6 Highlight Student Achievements and Stories**

Featuring student achievements and personal stories on social media can significantly bolster ethnic identity construction. Recognizing and celebrating students’ accomplishments and contributions, whether academic, professional, or community-oriented, provides positive reinforcement and visibility. Student spotlights and alumni features serve as motivational examples and showcase the diverse talents and successes within the ethnic community. Based on the responses, three key informants indicated that there is need to highlight student achievements, creation of data and promoting achievement.

*“Highlight Student Achievements and Stories through Student Spotlights and Alumni Features.” KII 007*

*“Best practices include data creation as a carrier, advertisement of successful stories for others to emulate as mentors, showcase Daystar who have succeeded through social media.” KII 006*

*“Promote achievements and contributions of students and community members that reflect their cultural values and identity.” KII 007*

#### **5.4.3.7 Foster Inter-Cultural Dialogue**

Promoting intercultural dialogue through discussion panels and intercultural projects can facilitate understanding and cooperation among students from different ethnic backgrounds. Organizing events where students can discuss cultural differences, share perspectives, and collaborate on projects helps in breaking down stereotypes and building solidarity. This practice encourages students to engage in meaningful conversations about their ethnic identities and fosters a more inclusive campus environment.

The key informants indicated that there is a need for fostering inter-cultural approach, developing interest and diffusing existing stereotypes through social media.

*“Foster intercultural dialogue through organizing discussion panels and promoting inter-cultural projects.” KII 001*

*“Developing interest in the cultures of others. Participating in charitable activities that bring people together.” KII 002*

*“This would help in diffusing existing stereotypes among communities.” KII 005*

#### **5.4.3.8 Encourage Authenticity and Critical Engagement**

Key informants indicated that there is need to encourage individuals to have critical engagement authenticity in cultural expression and with social media content is fundamental. Students should be motivated to share their personal experiences and real-life achievements that reflect their ethnic background. These results are supported by those of Njoroge, (2013), highlighting the role of social media as a criterion of engagement and enhancing authenticity. Additionally, training on responsible online behavior and digital citizenship will help students navigate social media in a way that respects cultural sensitivities and protects their personal information.

*“Highlight a wide range of student voices, experiences, and cultural traditions. Celebrate the richness of different ethnic identities. Understand the significance of cultural practices before sharing them.” KII 003*

*“Encourage students to critically analyze racial differences and understand the nature of racism. Encourage students to share their own experiences and personal stories related to their ethnic background. As well as educating students about responsible online behavior, including respecting cultural sensitivities and protecting personal information.” KII 007*

The findings regarding the promotion of authentic participation and critical analysis through social media are corroborated by Njoroge (2013), illustrating the role of social media in promoting genuine cultural expression and engagement. Koiranen et al. (2020) demonstrate that social media facilitates genuine cultural connections, while Duncheon (2020) analyzed the impact of social environments on the expression of authentic identity in online contexts. These studies underscore the significance of promoting genuine cultural expression and fostering critical engagement.

#### **5.4.3.9 Create and Share Culturally Relevant Content**

Lastly, promoting culturally relevant content is key. This includes highlighting traditional practices, festivals, arts, and languages through rich visuals and engaging narratives. Featuring cultural heroes and role models who have made significant contributions in various fields can also inspire students and provide positive examples of how ethnic identity can be celebrated and leveraged effectively.

*“I can recommend that the content creators to focus on cultures, music, dress.” KII 001*

*“Create and share culturally relevant content, highlighting cultural practices to share content related to traditional practices, festivals, arts, and languages. Use rich visuals and engaging narratives to bring these elements to life. Also, promote Cultural Heroes: Feature influential figures and role models from the ethnic community who have made significant contributions in various fields.” KII 007*

The findings regarding the creation and dissemination of culturally relevant content align with research by Velasquez and LaRose (2015), demonstrating that social media facilitates the creation and dissemination of cultural content. Yau et al. (2020) illustrates the role of social media in the documentation of cultural heritage, while Hu et al. (2020) demonstrate the role of social media in facilitating the exchange of cultural knowledge. These studies underscore the significance of disseminating culturally relevant content via social media.

#### **5.4.4 Determine how University Students in Kenya Construct, (Re) Negotiate and Make Meaning of Their Ethnic Identities on Social Media**

The fourth objective was to determine how university students in Kenya construct, (re) negotiate, and make meaning of their ethnic identities on social media. To achieve this objective the researcher used five questions to analyse this objective using thematic analysis. On the first question the participants were asked to explain how social media influence communication with other members of the same ethnic group. The responses were analyzed and from the findings three themes were identified which include connection and sense of belonging, cultural exchange and identity exploration, and mutual support and advocacy.

##### **5.4.4.1 Connection and Sense of Belonging**

The results indicated that social media fosters a sense of connection and belonging by facilitating interactions among individuals of similar social status and ethnic backgrounds, thereby providing assurance of shared cultural experiences. The shared identity fosters a robust community connection. The findings on connection and sense of belonging through social media are corroborated by Talukdar and Mete (2021), illustrating that social media promotes tribal values and traditions within ethnic communities, reinforcing a sense of connection and belonging among members of the same ethnic group. Evelina and Safitri (2021) showed how social media enables the assembly of individuals from various demographic and geographical backgrounds, enhancing its function in fortifying community connections among individuals with shared ethnic identities. These studies indicate that students use platforms like WhatsApp, Facebook, and Instagram as virtual centers for ethnic community engagement.

#### **5.4.4.2 Community Engagement**

Social media has significantly increased access to cultural information by offering vast, easily accessible resources. Users can participate in cultural discussions, learn about their tribe's traditions with just a few clicks, and stay connected with fellow members of their ethnic group. Platforms facilitate maintaining a strong sense of community, the sharing of heritage news, and cultural events regardless of geographic location. For instance,

*"Social media has made it much easier for us to stay in touch with members of our ethnic group, regardless of where they are. We can share news, cultural events, and even participate in discussions about our heritage, which helps maintain a strong sense of community." FGD 001*

*"Social media has influenced my access to information about my ethnic culture and traditions through interaction with shared posts and videos in various platforms such as YouTube and TikTok." FGD 003*

*"Social media has vast information about my ethnicity's culture and traditions. Accessing this information is incredibly simple because all it takes is the click of a few buttons." FGD 005*

The findings on community engagement through social media are supported by Radwan (2022), demonstrating the influence of social media on the expression and preservation of cultural identity. Jordan (2020) showed how social media serves as a facilitator of cultural exchange and understanding, while Arora et al. (2021) investigated social media's impact on cross-cultural collaboration. These studies illustrate how students utilize social media for cultural exchange, advocacy, and awareness promotion.

#### **5.4.4.3 Diversity and Exposure**

On the themes of diversity and exposure, social media platforms have created an environment for exposure to the diverse cultural aspects through various media such as text, photos, videos, and live streams. This visibility allows users to discover lesser-known cultural practices and connect

with people who provide first-hand, authentic accounts, which were previously limited by traditional media. These findings are supported by those of Bosire, and Fiseha, (2022). According to this study the ethno-politics has taken roots thus there is need for diversification of ethnic issues. For instance;

*“Social media platforms have allowed me to share aspects of my culture through text, photos, videos, and live streams. This provides a wider audience with access to information that may not have been readily available before.” FGD 003*

*“Social media can connect you with people from lesser-known ethnic communities, allowing you to explore cultural traditions you might not have encountered otherwise.” FGD 003*

*“First-hand accounts: I have gained valuable insights from people directly involved in the culture. This has provided a more nuanced and authentic perspective compared to traditional media portrayals.” FDG 003*

The findings regarding diversity and exposure are supported by the reviewed literature. Bosire and Fiseha (2022) emphasized the necessity of diversifying ethnic issues within ethno-politics, supporting the study's conclusions that social media platforms facilitate exposure to a variety of cultural elements through different media formats. Putra et al. (2021) demonstrated that indigenous communities utilize social media to reinforce and disseminate their cultural identities, thereby supporting the notion that social media facilitates the discovery of lesser-known cultural practices and fosters connections with individuals who offer authentic, first-hand accounts. Alnaghaimshi and Pearson (2023) illustrated the role of social media in enhancing cultural expression and preservation. Their findings indicate that social media platforms enable users to disseminate elements of their culture via text, photos, videos, and live streams, thereby granting a broader audience access to previously less accessible information. Talukdar and Mete (2021) demonstrated that social media facilitates the promotion of tribal values and traditions, allowing students to disseminate cultural content such as music, dance, and traditional recipes via platforms like TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube. The studies indicate that students utilize various media formats

on social media to present diverse cultural aspects and practices, thereby enhancing their understanding of different ethnic communities and traditions.

#### **5.4.4.4 Increased Awareness**

From the responses, it revealed that social media significantly promoted ethnic activities through increasing awareness regarding upcoming cultural events. This has been through announcements, visual content, and live streaming, which allows people to stay informed about ethnic events, even if they cannot attend in person. Sharing photos and videos of past events creates excitement and inspires participation in future activities. This wide reach encourages more involvement, especially for those who may not have been engaged before. For instance, they indicated that;

*"Social media has influenced my participation in ethnic activities and events by keeping me updated on upcoming events such as drama festivals and cultural week." FGD 003*

*"Social media allows ethnic organizations and individuals to easily announce upcoming cultural events and activities. This can reach a wider audience and encourage participation." FGD 001*

*"Sharing photos and videos of past events can create excitement and motivate people to attend future ones." FGD 003*

*"Live streaming of cultural events can allow people who are geographically distant or unable to attend in person to still participate virtually." FGD 004*

The literature reviewed provides support for the findings regarding increased awareness. Putra et al. (2021) illustrated the utilization of social media by indigenous communities to enhance and disseminate their cultural identities, supporting the study's conclusions that social media plays a crucial role in promoting ethnic activities by raising awareness of forthcoming cultural events. Alnaghaimshi and Pearson (2023) demonstrated that social media facilitates cultural expression and preservation. Their findings indicate that announcements, visual content, and live streaming on social media enable individuals to remain informed about ethnic events, even in the absence of

physical attendance. Talukdar and Mete (2021) found that social media enhances tribal values and traditions, allowing students to share cultural content and fostering excitement and participation in future activities. Francis et al. (2019) examined the influence of social platforms on cultural awareness and education, supporting the notion that social media enhances awareness and promotes greater participation in ethnic activities and events, particularly among previously disengaged individuals. These studies illustrate the ways in which students utilize social media to remain informed about forthcoming cultural events, disseminate photos and videos from previous events, and engage virtually through live streaming.

#### **5.4.4.5 Building Community and Encouraging Participation**

Social media was also found to have improved community building and a sense of belonging enhancing ethnic group connection and sharing of experiences. Thus, providing a platform to find others interested in creating networks, ethnic activities, and encouraging collective participation. These can be supported by responses such as:

*"Social media has made it much easier for us to stay in touch with members of our ethnic group, regardless of where they are. We can share news, cultural events, and even participate in discussions about our heritage, which helps maintain a strong sense of community." FGD 002*

*"Social media can help people find others interested in their ethnic activities and events, fostering a sense of community and belonging. As well as seeing friends and family participating in events on social media can inspire others to get involved and overcome hesitation." " FGD 003*

*"People can share their experiences at events online, creating a sense of shared identity and encouraging continued participation." FGD 004*

The findings on building community and encouraging participation through social media are corroborated by Radwan (2022), demonstrating the influence of social media on the expression and preservation of cultural identity. Jordan (2020) showed how social media serves as a facilitator of cultural exchange and understanding, while Arora et al. (2021) investigated social media's

influence on cross-cultural collaboration. These studies illustrate that students utilize social media to maintain connections with their ethnic group, disseminate news and cultural events, and engage in discussions regarding their heritage, thereby promoting a robust sense of community and facilitating collective involvement in ethnic activities and events.

#### **5.4.4.6 Limited Participation Despite Accessibility**

While social media provides opportunities for participation, not everyone engages with ethnic activities and events, even with the convenience it offers. Some individuals may still choose not to participate, reflecting that social media alone may not be enough to motivate involvement in cultural events for everyone. For instance;

*"Social media has not influenced my participation in ethnic activities and events because I don't attend or participate in them." FGD 001*

The participants were asked to respond to how social media has influenced their sense of belonging to their ethnic group. In response to this question, only two focus group discussions indicated strengthening community and mutual support as key themes. Social media has diminished geographical barriers, allowing individuals to engage with others from their ethnic group and promoting a sense of belonging. Online communities focused on ethnic groups facilitate the exchange of shared experiences, traditions, and cultural heritage. These interactions reinforce unity and a shared identity among individuals of the same ethnic background.

*"Social media has enabled me to meet many people from my ethnic group. I get to interact with them freely because of the common ground that connects us, the common ground being our ethnic group. This gives a sense of belonging since there is assurance that people like me are out there." FGD 001*

*"Social media has allowed me to connect with others who share my ethnicity regardless of location, fostering a sense of belonging even if geographically distant from your cultural roots." FGD 003*

*"I have joined groups specifically dedicated to my ethnicity, providing a safe space to share experiences, traditions, and celebrate my heritage." FDG 005*

The literature reviewed provides support for the findings regarding limited participation despite accessibility. The study indicates that, despite the convenience of social media platforms facilitating participation in ethnic activities and events, engagement is not universal among users. This finding aligns with the intricate dynamics of social media engagement as outlined in existing literature. Chetty and Alathur (2018) concluded that social media can foster social disharmony through the dissemination of hate speech, indicating the potential for social media to create divisive and hostile environments that may discourage participation in ethnic activities and events. Gerbaudo (2018) observes that social media can enhance connections while also intensifying divisions, illustrating the intricate dynamics influencing individuals' choices to participate in or abstain from ethnic activities and events on these platforms.

#### **5.4.4.7 Cultural Exploration**

Results also indicated that the students use social media to share experiences and traditions. It enables them to share and explore their cultural identity, promoting cultural awareness and offering a platform for learning from diverse perspectives within the same ethnic group. Additionally, it serves as connecting people with role models and those facing similar cultural challenges and space for mutual support, which strengthens the collective sense of belonging and shared achievement. These responses are as follows;

*"Social media has allowed us to share aspects of my culture with others, promoting cultural awareness and strengthening my own sense of identity. We have been able to connect with others from my ethnicity who have different backgrounds or experiences, broadening my understanding of my cultural heritage. Social media has connected me with successful individuals from my ethnicity, providing inspiration and a sense of shared achievement. "I have been able to connect with others who face similar challenges related to my ethnicity, offering and receiving support in navigating these issues." FGD 003.*

The findings on cultural exploration through social media are supported by Arora, Sadhwani, and Shah (2021), suggesting that social media provides an opportunity to navigate social and ethnic identity. Putra et al. (2021) demonstrated how indigenous communities use social media to reinforce their identities, while Alnaghaimshi and Pearson (2023) showed how social media empowers cultural expression and preservation. These studies validate how students use social media to share experiences and traditions, explore their cultural identity, and connect with role models facing similar cultural challenges.

#### **5.4.4.8 Celebrating Cultural Achievements**

Social media can be used to enhance and celebrate cultural achievements and pride in one's ethnic group by providing a platform to showcase and celebrate the accomplishments of people from the community. Individuals feel a stronger connection to their heritage through sharing successes and milestones. Visibility of ethnic role models, particularly those excelling in various fields, inspires pride in the collective achievements of the ethnic group. This narrative can be supported by the responses such as

*“Social media can be used by individuals and communities to share achievements, awards, or milestones of people from their ethnic group. This fosters pride in shared heritage and accomplishments. Seeing successful people from your ethnicity can be inspiring and contribute to a sense of pride in your cultural background.” FGD 003*

*"I feel a sense of pride whenever I come across amazing achievements made by people from my ethnic community on social media. For example, breaking world records in athletics." FGD 005*

The findings on celebrating cultural achievements through social media are corroborated by Behm-Morawitz (2020), indicating that media use in the development of ethnic identities, if not well used, may create stereotypes. Velasquez and LaRose (2015) identified social media platforms as essential for students to advocate for political efficacy and activism, enhancing the relevance of student activist groups in society. These studies support how social media can be used to enhance and celebrate cultural achievements and pride in one's ethnic group.

#### 5.4.4.9 Cultural Expression and Identity Exploration

Social media can be used to foster identity exploration by providing opportunities to learn about one's cultural heritage and share it with others. This can be done through education on history, traditions, and language where individuals deepen their connection to their ethnic identity. Sharing cultural aspects like music, art, and cuisine allows users to celebrate their heritage while promoting pride in their ethnic identity. For instance, they indicated that:

*“Yes, Social media should be used to promote ethnic identity. This is because most young people today don’t identify with their ethnicity. In this modernized society I think it’s important to do everything possible to preserve ethnic cultures and communities.” FGD 001*

*Yes, we use social media to raise awareness about issues affecting our ethnic group. This includes sharing information about cultural events, discussing challenges facing our community, and promoting initiatives that support our heritage. FGD 002*

*"Social media can connect you with others who share your ethnicity and can teach you more about your cultural traditions, history, and language. This new-found knowledge can deepen your sense of pride. Moreover, platforms can offer opportunities to share aspects of your culture like music, art, or cuisine, allowing you to celebrate your heritage and educate others." FGD 003*

*"Social media has influenced my sense of belonging to my ethnic group by educating me on my culture and traditions, encouraging me to take part in sharing experiences with other individuals in the same ethnic community." FGD 005*

The responses from key informants corroborated this narrative by highlighting various methods that enable university students in Kenya to construct, (re) negotiate, and interpret their ethnic identities through intercultural dialogue on social media at Daystar University. This is crucial for mitigating ethnic conflicts and tensions among students. Establishing secure online platforms for open dialogue enables students to articulate their experiences and viewpoints within a respectful

and regulated context, thereby promoting a sense of community and mutual respect. Virtual panels and question-and-answer sessions with experts or community leaders enhance dialogue by providing students direct access to informed perspectives, enabling them to ask questions and express concerns. This aids in clarifying misunderstandings and fosters empathy and deeper understanding among various ethnic groups.

Additionally, involving leaders and influencers accountable for model cohesion and integration within the university. Social media can foster positive behaviors and attitudes among students by presenting examples of unity and respect among diverse ethnic and international groups. This active engagement fosters team spirit, viewing all members as part of a unified group, thereby mitigating ethnic tensions and promoting inclusivity and peace. The focus on managing diversity through peaceful means underscores the potential of social media as an effective instrument for uniting students and fostering a more harmonious campus atmosphere. The validity of these narratives is supported by the following responses:

*“Establish online forums or discussion groups where students can openly discuss their experiences and perspectives in a moderated, respectful environment. Organize virtual panels with experts, community leaders, or facilitators to address ethnic conflicts and answer questions in real-time. KII 001*

*“Use social media to educate students about the consequences of ethnic conflicts and the importance of unity. Learning how to manage diversity in peace. Promoting team spirit where everyone is united as a family.” KII 003*

*“Modelling cohesion and integration of the diversity experienced in Daystar, not only of different ethnic groups represented but also the international communities from around the world.” KII 004*

#### **5.4.4.10 Promoting Educational Campaigns and Resources**

Educational campaigns and resources disseminated via social media are essential for increasing awareness and providing students with the necessary knowledge to address ethnic conflicts and tensions. Social media platforms can educate students on the root causes and potential solutions to

ethnic conflicts by disseminating articles, videos, and info-graphics that address their history, context, and dynamics. The knowledge base is enhanced through lectures and positive ethnic content provided by faculty, allowing students to engage and deepen their understanding for application in daily interactions. Educational initiatives are crucial for preventing the continuation of stereotypes and fostering a more informed and empathetic student body. Furthermore, offering conflict resolution resources, including interactive quizzes and scenarios, enables students to engage with the material and practise managing ethnic conflicts in a secure and structured environment. The capacity of social media to provide affirmations of new identity categories significantly influences the development of positive ethnic identities among students. Daystar University can utilize social media to enhance educational tools and resources, fostering a more resilient student community capable of addressing ethnic tensions and promoting a culture of peace and understanding on campus.

*“Disseminate articles, videos, and info-graphics that educate students about the history, context, and dynamics of ethnic conflicts and tensions. Lecturers’ can post content on positive ethnicity that students can use for learning purposes.” KII 001*

*“Use interactive content like quizzes or scenarios to educate students on handling ethnic conflicts and tensions. Through new identity category affirmations on social media.” KII 002*

*“Share stories and perspectives from individuals affected by ethnic conflicts to build empathy and understanding.” KII 005*

#### **5.4.4.11 Celebrating Diversity and Collaboration**

The celebration of diversity and the promotion of collaboration via social media can effectively reduce ethnic conflicts and tensions among students at Daystar University. Social media platforms can showcase the diversity of the university community by presenting student profiles, interviews, and success stories from various ethnic backgrounds. This fosters a favourable depiction of diverse cultures and promotes students' appreciation and celebration of each other's distinct heritages. Virtual cultural exchanges and events facilitated by social media enhance this celebration by

enabling students to participate in cultural activities, share traditions, and learn from one another in an interactive manner. These initiatives promote pride and unity among students, thereby decreasing the potential for ethnic tensions. Collaboration via community projects and creative mediums such as drama and music are essential for dismantling stereotypes and fostering trust among students from diverse ethnic backgrounds. Collaborative efforts among students towards shared objectives foster a sense of achievement and cultivate relationships that surpass ethnic distinctions. Social media enhances collaborative efforts by highlighting projects and their positive outcomes, thereby fostering a narrative of unity and peaceful coexistence. Integrating creative and collaborative approaches allows Daystar University to utilize social media for fostering a more inclusive and harmonious campus environment, where diversity is acknowledged and conflicts are addressed constructively.

*“Feature student profiles, interviews, and success stories from various ethnic backgrounds promoting and celebrating diversity. Organize virtual events or campaigns that celebrate cultural heritage and traditions.” KII 001*

*“Collaboration and teamwork on community projects through social media, when students work together, they build trust and break down stereotypes. Joint Initiatives: Facilitate collaborative projects that bring together students from different ethnic backgrounds to work on common goals, such as community service or creative endeavors.” KII 002*

*“Through drama, music, and other creative mediums to promote understanding and unity. Social media can be used to model peaceful coexistence and positive engagement among students.” KII 004*

The research indicates that celebrating diversity and fostering collaboration through social media can effectively reduce ethnic conflicts and tensions among students at Daystar University, as supported by the reviewed literature. Putra et al. (2021) illustrated the utilization of social media by indigenous communities to reinforce and disseminate their cultural identities. The study's findings support the notion that showcasing student profiles, interviews, and success stories from diverse ethnic backgrounds on social media platforms can emphasize the university community's

diversity and foster students' appreciation and celebration of each other's distinct heritages. Alnaghaimshi and Pearson (2023) demonstrated that social media facilitates cultural expression and preservation. Their study indicates that virtual cultural exchanges and events organised via social media enhance diversity celebrations by enabling student participation in cultural activities, sharing traditions, and interactive learning. This process fosters pride and unity among students while diminishing the potential for ethnic tensions. Talukdar and Mete (2021) demonstrated that social media promotes tribal values and traditions, reinforcing the notion that collaboration via community projects and creative expressions such as drama and music can dismantle stereotypes and foster trust among students from diverse ethnic backgrounds. Francis et al. (2019) examined the influence of social platforms on cultural awareness and education, supporting the assertion that social media fosters understanding and unity among students. The studies indicate that Daystar University can utilize social media to enhance inclusivity and harmony on campus by promoting diversity, encouraging collaboration, and constructively resolving conflicts.

#### **5.4.5 Students Awareness of Seemingly Inherent Ethnic Identity Tensions Between Kenya's Diverse Communities Expressed on Social Media.**

The fifth objective was to establish whether university students are aware of the seemingly inherent ethnic identity tensions between Kenya's diverse communities expressed on social media. To achieve this objective, the FDG was asked four questions to assess this objective.

The first question was how they feel that social media posts help sustain their ethnic identity. The responses from the FGDs were thematically analysis. From their responses the three responses revealed that the students have found content on social media about their ethnic group. Also, the post has enabled them to sustain their ethnic identity. Lastly, they noted that these posts have enabled them to sustain their ethnic identity by giving them a sense of pride and belonging to a particular community. These findings are in line with those by Hassanli, Walters, and Williamson, (2021) who found that social media can be an important platform to express ethnic pride and hence develop a sense of belonging. These narratives are supported by their responses as follows.

*“Yes, I have found a lot of content on social media about my ethnic group. Especially video posts on traditional music and dances, weddings and rite of passage ceremonies.” FGD 001*

*“Authentic and well-informed posts that sustain my ethnic identity but others do not as they contain falsified information.” FGD 003*

*“Yes, I feel that social media posts help sustain my ethnic identity by giving me a sense of pride and belonging in my ethnic community.” FGD 005*

Additionally, participants were asked to indicate whether social media has facilitated a better understanding of other ethnic groups. Responses indicate that social media significantly contributes to a deeper understanding of various ethnic groups. This is achieved through the provision of exposure to various traditions, cultures, and perspectives. Participants note the extensive availability of information regarding various ethnic communities, with platforms effectively representing ethnic diversity. Engaging with a variety of accounts enables individuals to gain insights into the customs, challenges, and societal contributions of various ethnic groups. These findings align with those of Chris (2015) who notes that university students are aware of social media issues and their potential to foster unity. The quality of understanding is contingent upon the legitimacy and intent of the shared information; content that is well-intentioned promotes authentic cross-cultural learning and appreciation. Social media functions as an effective instrument for enhancing cultural awareness and fostering appreciation of ethnic diversity. For instance:

*“Social media portrays ethnic diversity perfectly. There is a lot of information about many ethnic groups readily available. Moreover, a lot of communities are well represented on many main social media platforms.” FGD 001*

*“Definitely. Social media exposes us to a variety of cultures and perspectives. By following diverse accounts and engaging with content from different ethnic groups, we learn more about their traditions, challenges, and contributions to society.” FGD 002*

*“To an extent it does especially when the person uploading the information is out to teach about that particular ethnic group. As long as the information is authentic and the intention is for others to learn one gain a better understanding of other ethnic groups via social media” FGD 003*

*“Yes, social media helps different individuals to gain understanding of other ethnic groups and in turn appreciate the presence of ethnic communities.” FGD 005*

The response was also ascertained on whether they are comfortable using social media posts on ethnic matters. The responses indicated some were acceptable while others were not. Some participants felt comfortable and viewed social media as a platform for sharing cultural information and accurately representing their ethnic group and raising awareness about cultural practices. These individuals see social media as a positive tool for promoting and preserving their traditions. On the other hand, some express discomfort due to the open and public nature of social media, which makes posts susceptible to negative or uninformed reactions from the broader audience. This highlights a concern about how ethnic content might be misunderstood or criticized by those outside the cultural group. For instance, they indicated as follows:

*“Yes. I’m happy to provide information about my ethnicity’s culture and traditions. This also helps to ensure that my ethnic group is accurately represented on social media.” FGD 001*

*“No, this is because the information is easily accessible by the general public and people out there have different perspectives and most times their opinions may be negative towards your post instead of being critical or inquisitive.” FGD 003*

*“Yes I am. I believe that interaction with social media posts on ethnic matters is a useful tool in raising awareness on certain cultural practices.” FGD 005*

The final question pertained to whether the participants feel that social media posts on ethnic issues was being backwards. Based on the responses some participants do not perceive social media posts on ethnic issues as backward. On the other hand, only, a few felt otherwise. Those who felt it not, showed that these posts as opportunities to promote awareness, and cultural pride. They believe

that this can be used to shed light on ethnic matters. Thus, social media can help address issues and foster a better understanding of diverse cultures. However, there is recognition that the impact of such posts depends on the intent behind them. Posts that are open-minded and informative are seen as beneficial, while those from individuals with extreme or divisive views are considered regressive and potentially harmful. This assertion can be supported by their responses as follows:

*“No. I think it promotes awareness and sheds light on these issues. Some of these issues can actually be solved if more people are aware of them.” FGD 001*

*“Not entirely as the posts vary I think a post from an open-minded person about ethnicity will be quite informative and it will have a positive impact. However, if the post is from a diehard or an anarchist in terms of ethnicity then that post will most definitely be backward and will have a negative impact.” FGD 003*

*“No, I do not find social media posts on ethnic issues to be backwards. They are often informative, and they provide individuals with a sense of pride and education on practices of various cultures.” FGD 005*

The findings regarding students' awareness of inherent ethnic identity tensions among Kenya's diverse communities as expressed on social media are supported by the reviewed literature. Hassanli, Walters, and Williamson (2021) identified social media as a significant platform for expressing ethnic pride and fostering a sense of belonging. Their study indicates that students encounter content related to their ethnic group on social media, which facilitates the maintenance of their ethnic identity by instilling a sense of pride and community affiliation. Additionally, Chris (2015) noted that university students recognize social media issues and its potential to foster unity, which aligns with the study's findings that social media significantly contributes to a deeper understanding of various ethnic groups by providing exposure to diverse traditions, cultures, and perspectives.

#### **5.4.6 Inherent Ethnic Tensions that Influence the Utilization of Various Online Social Networks**

The sixth objective was to investigate how inherent ethnic tensions affect the use of different online social networks by university participants. Five questions were utilized to support this objective. The initial question posed to the participants was to identify the ways in which Daystar University students utilize social media to engage with members of other ethnic groups. The findings indicate that students at Daystar University utilize social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook, and Snapchat to engage with members of their ethnic groups, frequently participating in ethnic-based groups and communities. These platforms facilitate connections among students and their family and friends who share a common cultural heritage. Sharing cultural events and celebrations promotes a sense of belonging, while university-specific and ethnic group hashtags facilitate connections among individuals with similar backgrounds. It also promotes discourse on ethnic matters and social events. Students utilize social media to investigate their cultural identity, engage with their ethnic language, and enhance their understanding of their heritage, both in Kenya and internationally. These results contradict those of Elsayed (2021), who indicated that social media has negative effects on social identity among adolescents. This analysis is substantiated by the subsequent responses:

*“They use social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook and Snapchat to communicate and connect with each other.” FGD 001*

*“Many of us use social media platforms like WhatsApp, Instagram and even some Facebook to join groups and communities related to our ethnic background. These platforms help us stay connected with family and friends who share our cultural heritage, even if they are geographically distant.” FGD 003*

*Many social media platforms have private or public groups dedicated to specific ethnicities or cultures. Daystar students can search for these groups based on their heritage or interests. Hashtags specific to the university and denoting ethnicity” FGD 004*

*“I have been a student at Daystar University for two semesters, equivalent to one academic year.” FGD 005*

The participants were asked to respond on the challenges they face in balancing their use of social media with maintaining their ethnic cultural identity. They revealed that some of the challenges are that social media's diverse interactions can lead to the dilution or compromise of one's ethnic identity as participants may be influenced by other cultures, leading to the integration of foreign practices into their own. The global culture promoted on social media can overshadow traditional ethnic values, risking cultural appropriation and misrepresentation. Additionally, the pressure to conform to stereotypes or portray a curated version of ethnic identity online can result in inauthentic representations. Sometimes participants struggle with social comparison, negative portrayal and isolation based on their ethnicity. This affects their mental health. Another challenge is time management, with social media often distracting participants from engaging in meaningful cultural activities offline. Balancing these pressures requires mindful consumption of online content, offline cultural engagement, and setting healthy boundaries with social media. These narratives are supported by the following responses.

*“Social media is filled with people from all walks of life. Maintaining the integrity of your ethnic cultural identity can prove to be challenging when you constantly interact with people from different ethnic groups on social media.” FGD 001*

*One challenge we face is the potential for social media to promote a more homogenized, global culture, which can sometimes overshadow traditional ethnic practices and values. Additionally, there is the risk of cultural appropriation or misrepresentation of ethnic identities on social media.” FGD, 002*

*“Online interactions can perpetuate stereotypes about certain ethnicities. Daystarians might feel obligated to conform to these stereotypes or be misrepresented by others online. Exposure to negative stereotypes or online harassment targeting their ethnicity can be detrimental to mental health and self-esteem. The constant allure of social media can lead to students spending excessive time online, neglecting their studies or cultural activities that might strengthen their ethnic identity in a more meaningful way.” FGD 003*

*“Daystar University uses social media to connect with various ethnic groups by sharing cultural events such as culture week in WhatsApp groups promoting diversity programs by*

*funding programs such as culture dinners and posting the beauty of different traditions on the school's social media pages.” FGD 005*

The participants were asked to respond whether, they think the student's ethnic membership influences one's use and joining, being accepted. The responses suggest that a student's ethnic membership can both directly and indirectly influence their use and acceptance on social media, though the impact varies. On one hand, ethnic membership can foster a sense of belonging and community, leading students to join and feel accepted in groups that align with their cultural background. These groups often offer cultural support, share relevant content, and organize events, making ethnicity a significant factor in group affiliation. However, the influence of ethnicity is not always direct. Many students seek communities based on shared interests and values rather than ethnic identity alone. Additionally, factors like digital literacy, accessibility, and cultural norms around online interaction can also affect social media use and engagement. Thus, while ethnicity can shape social media experiences, it is one of several factors influencing how students join and are accepted into online communities. For instance,

*“I don't think one's ethnic membership influences joining or being accepted into any social space on social media. Most people just want to find a community of people that they click with. They seek a sense of belonging regardless of ethnic membership. Social media platforms enable like-minded people to find each other and create their own community.” FGD 001*

*Yes, ethnic membership can significantly influence social media use. Many of us join groups that are specific to our ethnic communities, where we feel a sense of belonging and acceptance. These groups offer support, share relevant cultural content, and organize events. FGD 002*

*“Social media platforms can be hubs for cultural communities. Students from a particular ethnicity might gravitate towards platforms where they find others who share their language, interests, or traditions. Cultural norms and attitudes towards online interaction can differ. Some ethnic communities may be more comfortable with self-disclosure and*

*online communication, while others might be more reserved. This can influence how readily students engage with social media in general.” FGD 003*

*“Yes, a student’s ethnic membership can influence their use and joining of social media groups, as well as their acceptance into these groups. A shared cultural background can cultivate a sense of community and belonging, encouraging students to join these groups to feel more integrated and connected.” FGD 004*

*Further the study sought to establish some of the positive and negative aspects of global media consumption for ethnic people.*

The positive aspect showed that global media offers increased visibility and representation of ethnic cultures, which can foster pride, awareness, and cultural exchange. It allows ethnic groups to share their own cultures, learn about others, and use media platforms for advocacy and raising awareness about their issues. This promotes cultural understanding and can empower communities to challenge discrimination and advocate for social change. This can be supported by the narrative that

*“The benefits of global media often accrue to large corporations rather than the ethnic communities themselves, perpetuating economic disparities.” FGD 001*

*“Positive aspects include increased visibility and representation of ethnic cultures, which can foster pride and awareness.” FGD 002*

*“Exposure to diverse cultures through media can broaden perspectives and break down stereotypes. Ethnic people can learn about other cultures and share their own, promoting cultural exchange and understanding. Social media platforms can be used for advocacy and raising awareness about issues faced by ethnic groups. This can empower them to challenge discrimination and promote social change.” FGD 003*

*“One positive aspect of global media consumption for ethnic people is the promotion of cultural exchange among people belonging to different ethnic groups. This creates awareness on different cultural practices as well as promoting unity and mutual understanding. FGD 004*

On the other hand, there are notable negative aspects. Economic inequities arise as global media benefits often favor large corporations rather than ethnic communities themselves. Additionally, global media can lead to cultural homogenization, where unique cultural identities are diluted. The portrayal of ethnic cultures can be stereotypical or simplified, leading to negative perceptions and cultural appropriation. Ethnic groups may also face online harassment and discrimination, which can harm self-esteem and perpetuate tribal conflicts. Overall, while global media offers significant opportunities for cultural visibility and exchange, it also poses risks of misrepresentation and harm to ethnic identities. This narrative can be supported by the following responses;

*“Negative aspects include the risk of cultural homogenization, where unique cultural identities may be diluted, and the spread of stereotypes or misinformation.” FGD 002*

*“Global media can often portray ethnic cultures in a stereotypical or simplified way, neglecting their complexities and nuances. This can lead to negative perceptions and cultural appropriation. Ethnic groups can be targets for online harassment and discrimination on social media platforms. This can create negativity and damage self-esteem.” FGD 003*

*“A negative aspect is that there can arise tribal conflicts caused by negative information as well as stereotyping other cultures.” FGD 004*

The last question was to establish whether, social media can be used to promote positive ethnic identity construction. The result revealed that they agreed that social media can be a valuable tool for promoting positive ethnic identity construction. Social media offers an ability of shared heritage, foster a sense of belonging and by connecting individuals from the same ethnic background regardless of their physical location. It facilitates cultural exchange and education, allowing people to share traditions, languages, which helps preserve cultural heritage for future generations. Additionally, it can serve as a platform for advocacy, to raise awareness about issues faced by ethnic groups to inspire younger generations. These narratives can be supported by the following responses;

*“Yes, social media can be effectively used to promote positive ethnic identity construction. Social media has the potential to be a powerful tool for promoting positive ethnic identity construction. By providing platforms for cultural pride, education, community building, advocacy, intercultural dialogue, heritage preservation, and personal exploration, social media can help individuals and communities foster a stronger, more positive sense of ethnic identity.” FGD 002*

*“Yes, social media can be a powerful tool for promoting positive ethnic identity construction. Social media allows people from the same ethnic background to connect regardless of location. This fosters a sense of belonging, shared heritage, and cultural exchange. Also, sharing traditions, languages, and achievements online can raise awareness about the ethnic group and promote cultural preservation for future generations. Lastly, it can be used for advocacy and raising awareness about issues faced by ethnic groups. Sharing stories of resilience and success can inspire younger generations.” FGD 003*

*“Yes, Social media can promote positive ethnic identity construction by providing a platform for individuals, especially those who lack a cultural upbringing, to learn about and understand their own culture as well as that of others.” FGD 004*

The key informant's narrative regarding this objective corroborates the findings from the FGDs. Key informants were solicited to identify common pitfalls to avoid when utilizing social media for the promotion of positive tribal identity construction among students at Daystar University. The research demonstrates that inherent ethnic tensions significantly affect the use of different online social networks among participants at Daystar University. The research indicated that students utilize social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook, and Snapchat to engage with their ethnic communities. They frequently join ethnic-based groups to maintain connections with family and friends who share their cultural background, promote a sense of belonging, and enable discussions on ethnic matters and social events. This finding aligns with Alruwaili (2017), who illustrated that social media facilitates student connections with their communities and

identity expression in virtual environments, and with Evelina and Safitri (2021), who observed that social media allows individuals to gather despite demographic and geographical disparities.

The study identified that diverse interactions on social media can pose challenges to the preservation of ethnic cultural identity. These challenges include the potential dilution or compromise of individual identity due to the influence of other cultures, the overshadowing of traditional ethnic values by the global culture prevalent on social media, and the pressure to conform to stereotypes or present a curated version of ethnic identity in online spaces. The findings align with the research of Elsayed (2021), which indicated that social media can negatively impact social identity among adolescents, and Gerbaudo (2018), who observed that social media has the capacity to both enhance connections and intensify divisions.

The findings of the study regarding the impact of ethnic membership on social media usage and acceptance are corroborated by existing literature. Ethnic membership can enhance belonging and community, encouraging students to join groups that reflect their cultural background. However, the impact of ethnicity is not always straightforward, as many students pursue communities based on shared interests and values rather than solely on ethnic identity. This finding aligns with the research conducted by Duncheon (2020) and Musitha and Mafukata (2020), which illustrates that social media engagement is influenced by a complex interplay of factors, such as individual preferences, motivations, and the capacity of social media to foster both inclusive and divisive environments for the expression and engagement of ethnic identity.

The findings of the study regarding the positive and negative dimensions of global media consumption for ethnic groups are strongly corroborated by existing literature. Global media enhances visibility and representation of ethnic cultures, promoting pride, awareness, and cultural exchange. However, it may also result in economic disparities, cultural homogenization, oversimplified portrayals of ethnic cultures, and instances of online harassment and discrimination. The findings align with the research conducted by Chetty and Alathur (2018), which concluded that social media can promote social disharmony via the spread of hate speech, and Gerbaudo (2018), who observed that social media has the capacity to both enhance connections and intensify divisions.

The study's finding that social media can promote positive ethnic identity construction by connecting individuals from the same ethnic background, facilitating cultural exchange and education, and serving as a platform for advocacy and raising awareness about issues faced by ethnic groups is substantiated by research from Putra et al. (2021), Alnaghaimshi and Pearson (2023), and Talukdar and Mete (2021). These studies illustrate how social media can strengthen and disseminate cultural identities, empower cultural expression and preservation, and enhance tribal values and traditions. These studies substantiate the findings regarding the intricate dynamics of social media in shaping ethnic identities and affecting the use of diverse online social networks among university students in Kenya. Four themes were identified based on the responses: avoidance of cultural appropriation and misrepresentation, prevention of stereotyping and generalizations, maintenance of privacy and sensitivity, and integration of offline contexts with continuous engagement.

#### **5.4.6.1 Avoiding Cultural Appropriation and Misrepresentation**

Cultural appropriation and misrepresentation are significant risks when using social media to promote ethnic identity. Cultural appropriation occurs when elements of a culture, such as symbols, practices, or attire, are used out of context or without understanding their significance, often in a manner that disrespects or diminishes the culture. This can lead to feelings of exploitation and harm among those whose culture is being misrepresented. To avoid this, it is crucial to engage with cultural content respectfully, ensuring that any portrayal is accurate and honors the traditions and values of the culture. Involving members of the cultural community in the creation and review of content can help prevent misrepresentation and ensure that cultural elements are depicted in a manner that is both respectful and authentic. This narrative is supported by those of Evelina, and Safitri, (2021). According to this study, effective branding of a community results from the usage of social media interaction.

*“Avoiding cultural appropriation and misrepresentation, prevention of stereotyping and generalizations, maintaining privacy and sensitivity and integrating offline contexts and continuous engagement.” KII 001*

*“Avoid misrepresentation as it can lead to cultural appropriation and disrespect and respectful engagement.”* KII 002

*“Understand the significance of cultural practices before sharing them.”* KII 003

*“Respect traditions: Be mindful of how cultural elements are portrayed and used. Avoid appropriating cultural symbols or practices in ways that may be disrespectful or out of context. Also, authentic representation: Make sure that cultural representations are accurate and respectful, and involve community members in the creation and review of content.”* KII 007

The study results concur with Evelina and Safitri (2021) who demonstrated that effective branding of a community arises from social media interaction. Their study indicates that respectful engagement with cultural content, accurate portrayal of traditions and values, and involvement of cultural community members in content creation and review are essential for preventing misrepresentation and ensuring that cultural elements are depicted respectfully and authentically. Putra et al. (2021) and Alnaghaimshi and Pearson (2023) illustrate the potential of social media to enhance and disseminate cultural identities, as well as to empower cultural expression and preservation, provided it is utilized responsibly and involves members of the cultural community. These studies substantiate the findings regarding the necessity of preventing cultural appropriation and misrepresentation in social media promotion of ethnic identity. They offer significant insights into best practices for depicting cultural elements respectfully and authentically. Engaging with cultural content in a respectful manner, ensuring accurate representation of traditions and values, and involving cultural community members in content creation and review allows universities and other institutions to utilize social media effectively. This approach promotes positive ethnic identity construction and enhances understanding and appreciation of diverse cultures.

#### **5.4.6.2 Preventing Stereotyping and Generalizations**

Stereotyping and generalization are common pitfalls that can reinforce harmful misconceptions about ethnic groups. Social media content that oversimplifies or generalizes the identity of an ethnic group can perpetuate stereotypes, leading to a limited and often distorted understanding of

the group's culture. It is essential to avoid content that promotes a monolithic view of any ethnic group and instead highlight the diversity and complexity within each culture. By showcasing a wide range of voices, experiences, and traditions, social media can be used as a tool to celebrate the richness of cultural identities, promoting a more inclusive and accurate representation of different ethnic groups. These results resonate with those by Behm-Morawitz, (2020) who indicated that that media use in the development of ethnic identities if not well used may create stereotype.

*“Avoid stereotyping and generalizations; avoid content that perpetuates stereotypes or generalizes about a particular ethnic group and use inclusive and varied narratives that reflect the complexity and richness of each culture.” KII 001*

*“Highlight a wide range of student voices, experiences, and cultural traditions. Celebrate the richness of different ethnic identities. Also, encourage students to critically analyse racial differences and understand the nature of racism.” KII 003*

*“In Kenya, negative ethnicity and labeling along ethnic groups have been a serious problem. Therefore, those aspects should be avoided as they can cause divisive conflicts that can easily escalate to violent conflicts as experienced in the post-election violence in 2007/8.” KII 004*

*“Avoid communication that would promote negative ethnicity and ethnocentrism.” KII 005*

Behm-Morawitz (2020) noted that unmanaged media use in the formation of ethnic identities can lead to the emergence of stereotypes. This is consistent with the study's findings that social media content which oversimplifies or generalizes an ethnic group's identity can perpetuate stereotypes, resulting in a restricted and frequently distorted comprehension of the group's culture. The study's recommendations for preventing stereotyping and generalizations, including the avoidance of content that promotes a monolithic view of any ethnic group and the emphasis on the diversity and complexity within each culture, align with best practices identified in the literature. Putra et al. (2021) and Alnaghaimshi and Pearson (2023) illustrate the potential of social media to enhance and disseminate cultural identities, as well as to empower cultural expression and preservation, provided it is utilized responsibly and focuses on highlighting the richness and complexity of

various ethnic groups. The study's findings emphasize the significance of presenting diverse voices, experiences, and traditions to enhance the richness of cultural identities and foster a more inclusive and accurate representation of various ethnic groups, a conclusion that is well-supported by existing literature. Musitha and Mafukata (2020) and Eubank (2019) emphasize the importance of social media in fostering cultural awareness and understanding, provided it is utilized responsibly and prioritizes diverse representation. These studies reinforce the findings regarding the necessity of preventing stereotyping and generalizations in the use of social media for promoting ethnic identity. By eschewing content that endorses a singular perspective of any ethnic group, emphasizing the diversity and intricacy inherent in each culture, and presenting a broad spectrum of voices, experiences, and traditions, universities and other institutions can utilize social media to enhance positive ethnic identity formation and cultivate a deeper understanding and appreciation of diverse cultures.

#### **5.4.6.3 Maintaining Privacy and Sensitivity**

Privacy and sensitivity are critical considerations when sharing personal stories, photos, or videos on social media. Neglecting privacy can lead to the unintentional exposure of personal or sensitive information, potentially compromising the security of the individuals involved. This is particularly important in an academic setting where students' personal information must be handled with care. Obtaining informed consent from students before sharing their stories or images is a fundamental practice to protect their privacy. Additionally, it is important to avoid sharing content that may be insensitive or offensive to any cultural or ethnic group. Ensuring that content is respectful and does not harm or alienate any group is essential to maintaining a positive and inclusive online environment.

*“Do not include pictures and videos of minors, children whose consent is not sought. Nudity and irresponsible language, remember social media is a presence just like physical and values must be maintained. Social bullying is a pitfall.” KII 006*

*“Ignoring privacy and security concerns, be cautious about sharing personal details or sensitive information that could compromise students’ privacy or security. Provide*

*guidance on how to manage privacy settings and protect personal information online.” KII 007*

The findings on maintaining privacy and sensitivity through social media are corroborated by Chetty and Alathur (2018), illustrating the capacity of social media to promote social discord via the spread of hate speech and divisive material, emphasizing the necessity of upholding privacy and sensitivity in the sharing of personal narratives, images, or videos on these platforms. Gerbaudo (2018) observes that social media can enhance connections while also intensifying divisions, highlighting the necessity for caution in the dissemination of sensitive information online. These studies substantiate the findings regarding the significance of preserving privacy and sensitivity in the use of social media for promoting ethnic identity.

#### **5.4.6.4 Integrating Offline Contexts and Continuous Engagement**

Relying solely on social media for cultural expression can lead to the exclusion of important offline contexts and support systems. While social media is a powerful tool for promoting cultural identity, it should be integrated with offline activities to create a more holistic approach to cultural engagement. Offline initiatives, such as cultural events, workshops, and discussions, complement online efforts and provide opportunities for more personal and meaningful interactions. Moreover, social media strategies should be dynamic and adaptable, avoiding stagnation by continuously evolving with new ideas, trends, and platforms. This approach ensures that cultural expression remains relevant and engaging while avoiding the promotion of negative ethnicity or ethnocentrism. By staying open to innovation and integrating various platforms, the university can foster a more inclusive and effective environment for cultural expression and identity construction.

*“Avoid treating social media as the only platform for cultural expression. Integrate online initiatives with offline activities and support systems and avoid continuous change and open to new ideas, trends, and platforms that can enhance cultural expression and engagement.”*

KII 001

To respond to this narrative four themes were established which include cultural appropriation and misrepresentation, digital divide, oversimplification and cyber bullying. The study illustrates the

importance of integrating social media with offline activities to foster a comprehensive approach to cultural engagement, thereby avoiding the perception of social media as the sole platform for cultural expression, which aligns with established best practices in the literature. The findings on integrating offline contexts and continuous engagement through social media are supported by Putra et al. (2021) and Alnaghaimshi and Pearson (2023), illustrating the potential of social media to enhance and disseminate cultural identities, as well as to empower cultural expression and preservation, particularly when integrated with offline initiatives like cultural events, workshops, and discussions. Jordan (2020) and Arora et al. (2021) highlight the necessity for social media strategies to remain adaptable and responsive to evolving cultural contexts and technological advancements to effectively foster positive ethnic identity construction. These studies substantiate the findings regarding the significance of incorporating offline contexts and sustained engagement in the use of social media for the promotion of ethnic identity.

#### **5.4.6.5 Cultural Appropriation**

One significant challenge students at Daystar University face on social media is the risk of cultural appropriation, where elements of their ethnic culture may be misused or misrepresented by others. This can dilute the essence of their cultural practices and lead to a distorted understanding of their heritage. Additionally, the prevalence of stereotypes and prejudice online can create a hostile environment, making it difficult for students to express their cultural identity authentically. Misrepresentation can also lead to the spread of inaccurate or harmful narratives about specific ethnic groups, which students then must navigate and address.

*“The risk of cultural elements being misused or misrepresented by others on social media can lead to cultural appropriation, which can dilute or distort the true essence of the culture. Also, the students may encounter negative stereotypes or prejudiced comments online, which can be discouraging and create a hostile environment for expressing cultural identity.” KII 001*

*“Social media can perpetuate stereotypes about specific ethnic groups. Students may encounter biased content or face misrepresentation. Social media can sometimes lead to*

*the dilution of ethnic cultural practices. As students engage with a global audience, they may prioritize mainstream trends over their own cultural heritage.” KII 003*

*“Students may encounter issues with cultural appropriation, where non-members use or misrepresent ethnic symbols and practices inappropriately. As well as there can be a tension between authentic cultural expression and the need to present a culturally appealing image for social media engagement. And lastly, the risk of stereotypes and misrepresentations can lead to a distorted view of ethnic cultures, which can be challenging for students to address and correct.” KII 007*

The study highlights the risks associated with the misuse or misrepresentation of cultural elements on social media, which can result in the dilution of cultural practices and a distorted understanding of cultural heritage. This aligns with the concerns articulated by scholars such as Chetty and Alathur (2018) and Gerbaudo (2018). These scholars emphasize the capacity of social media to reinforce stereotypes, disseminate misinformation, and propagate divisive content, which may contribute to social discord and negatively impact ethnic identities. Cultural appropriation is characterized by the use of cultural elements in contexts that lack understanding of their significance, often resulting in disrespect or diminished culture. This practice can evoke feelings of exploitation and harm among individuals whose culture is misrepresented. The study's findings indicate that the prevalence of online stereotypes and prejudice contributes to a hostile environment, hindering students' ability to authentically express their cultural identity, a conclusion that is well-supported by existing literature. Musitha and Mafukata (2020) and Eubank (2019) examine the influence of ethnic perceptions on online engagement and the risk of social media reinforcing stereotypes and misinformation when misused. The study's findings indicate that misrepresentation poses risks that contribute to the dissemination of inaccurate or harmful narratives regarding specific ethnic groups, which students must navigate and address. This aligns with the concerns articulated by scholars such as Matamoros-Fernández and Farkas (2021) and Mishra (2020). These scholars analyse the privacy risks linked to digital cultural expression and the capacity of social media to enable cultural appropriation and misrepresentation in the absence of adequate protection for sensitive information. The studies substantiate the findings regarding the challenges of cultural appropriation in the context of using social media to promote ethnic

identity. Recognizing the risks associated with the misuse or misrepresentation of cultural elements on social media, the prevalence of stereotypes and prejudice that foster a hostile environment, and the potential for misrepresentation to propagate inaccurate or harmful narratives about specific ethnic groups, universities and other institutions can formulate strategies to address these challenges and encourage positive ethnic identity construction through responsible engagement on social media.

#### **5.4.4.6 Digital Divide and Accessibility**

A further challenge is the digital divide, characterized by unequal access to social media and the internet among students. Individuals from rural or economically disadvantaged backgrounds may encounter difficulties in engaging with their ethnic communities online, resulting in disparities in opportunities for cultural expression and education. The lack of access may impede certain students' full participation in social media-driven cultural activities, potentially leading to their isolation from peers and cultural heritage. The key informant's responses regarding the challenges and opportunities that social media presents for students at Daystar University in maintaining and promoting their tribal cultural identity, supports the narrative that inherent ethnic tensions influence the utilization of various online social networks by university students. Additional challenges were identified concerning accessibility to social media. This included the digital divide, as not all students were proficient in social media. Other respondents noted the establishment of a digital divide.

*“Some of the students are not conversant with their culture or ethnic identity. Others follow international celebrities who are far removed from their culture. Thus, it is not easy to focus on one culture. Majority having been raised in Nairobi, do not know their vernacular languages.” KII, 002*

*“Not all students have equal access to technology and social media platforms. Economic disparities can affect participation and representation.” KII, 003*

*“Access to social media and the internet can be limited for some students, especially those from rural or economically disadvantaged backgrounds, leading to unequal opportunities for cultural expression and connection.” KII, 004*

#### 5.4.4.7 Oversimplification and Privacy Concerns

The nature of social media often favors simplified content, which can lead to the oversimplification of complex cultural traditions and practices. This reductionist approach can strip cultural expressions of their depth and significance, presenting a superficial view of what are often rich and nuanced traditions. Additionally, privacy concerns arise when students share personal and cultural information online, as this can lead to unintended exposure or exploitation of sensitive cultural knowledge. Students must navigate the balance between sharing their culture and protecting it from misuse.

*“The nature of social media often favors short, simplified content, which can result in the oversimplification of complex cultural practices and traditions. Also, sharing personal and cultural information online can lead to privacy issues, where sensitive cultural knowledge might be exposed to unintended audiences.” KII 001*

*“Social media can create pressure for students to conform to certain stereotypes or expectations about their culture, which may not align with their personal experiences. Also, there can be a tension between authentic cultural expression and the need to present a culturally appealing image for social media engagement.” KII. 007*

*“The opportunity of social media is using it to share personal and cultural information online can lead to privacy concerns and the risk of exploitation or harassment. Further, respondents indicated that students must be cautious about sharing sensitive information that could be misused or misrepresented.” KII 007*

The study highlights the tendency of social media to favor simplified content, potentially leading to the oversimplification of intricate cultural traditions and practices. This superficial perspective on rich and nuanced traditions aligns with concerns raised by Chetty and Alathur (2018) and Gerbaudo (2018), who emphasize social media's capacity to reinforce stereotypes and spread misinformation through reductionist portrayals of cultural practices. These scholars argue that social media's emphasis on brief, easily consumable content may diminish the depth and significance of cultural expressions, resulting in distorted perceptions of ethnic identities.

Furthermore, Mishra (2020) and Matamoros-Fernández and Farkas (2021) examined the privacy risks associated with digital cultural expression and the potential for social media to enable cultural appropriation and misrepresentation in the absence of adequate safeguards for sensitive information. These findings underscore the importance of addressing the challenges of oversimplification, privacy concerns, and stereotyping associated with using social media for promoting ethnic identity. By recognizing these dynamics, universities and other institutions can develop strategies to mitigate these challenges and foster authentic and respectful constructions of ethnic identity through responsible social media engagement.

#### **5.4.4.8 Cyberbullying and Cultural Commodification**

Cyberbullying is a serious concern for students who express their cultural identity online. Negative comments, harassment, and bullying can discourage students from sharing their heritage, impacting their mental health and self-esteem. Furthermore, the commodification of culture on social media, where cultural elements are commercialized for profit, poses a risk of trivializing or disrespecting cultural practices. This can lead to the exploitation of ethnic cultures without proper understanding or respect, further distancing students from their cultural roots. These findings are in line with those by Connelly, (2019) who according to this study found out that the adolescent is at risk of cyberbullying without proper utilization of the social media.

*“Students may face cyberbullying or harassment for expressing their cultural identity online, which can negatively impact their mental health and willingness to share their culture. Also, there is a risk of cultural elements being commercialized for profit by individuals or companies without proper respect or understanding of the culture. KII 001*

*“Challenges include social bullying, depression, isolation, and passing of negative habits”  
KII 003*

*“Students who connect on social media are distracted from negative acts such as taking drugs. KII, 007*

The findings on cyberbullying and cultural commodification through social media are corroborated by Connelly (2019) and Chetty and Alathur (2018), emphasizing the capacity of social media to promote social discord and establish hostile settings for the expression of ethnic identity by facilitating the spread of hate speech and divisive content. Matamoros-Fernández and Farkas (2021) and Mishra (2020) examine the capacity of social media to enable cultural appropriation and misrepresentation, particularly when cultural elements are commodified and exploited for commercial purposes. These studies corroborate the findings regarding the challenges of cyberbullying and cultural commodification in the context of using social media for the promotion of ethnic identity.

#### **5.4.4.9 Visibility and Representation**

Social media offers significant opportunities for increasing the visibility and representation of under-represented ethnic cultures. Students can share their stories, traditions, and practices with a global audience, raising awareness and fostering appreciation for their cultural heritage. This visibility can lead to a greater understanding and respect for diverse cultures, providing students with a platform to proudly showcase their identity.

*“Social media facilitates interaction and hence an important platform for maintaining identity since groups can keep supporting each other to preserve their cultural identity. In the same vein, the same media does help in the diffusion of cultures thus neutralizing ethnic and cultural values, promoting cultural diversity that is cosmopolitan” KII, 005*

The findings on visibility and representation through social media are supported by Putra et al. (2021) and Alnaghaimshi and Pearson (2023), illustrating the potential of social media to enhance and disseminate cultural identities, facilitate cultural expression and preservation, and foster increased understanding and respect for diverse cultures. Dutta (2017) and Arora et al. (2021) investigated the capacity of social media to foster inclusive identities via meaningful participation and cross-cultural interactions, emphasizing the potential for students to engage with peers who share similar cultural backgrounds, thereby enhancing community and belonging. The studies substantiate the findings regarding the potential for enhancing visibility and representation of under-represented ethnic cultures via social media.

#### 5.4.4.10 Community Building and Cultural Preservation

Social media allows students to connect with ethnic members and others who share their cultural background, fostering a sense of community and belonging. These virtual communities can be a source of support and solidarity, especially for students who are geographically distant from their ethnic roots. Additionally, social media serves as a tool for cultural preservation, enabling students to document and share cultural practices, stories, and languages, ensuring that these traditions are passed down to future generations. These findings are in line with those by Dutta, (2017). According the study social media help in creating inclusive identity through meaningful participation.

*“Students can educate others about their ethnic culture. By sharing information, they contribute to cultural awareness and understanding.” KII 003*

Students can use social media as an educational platform to share information about their ethnic cultures, dispelling myths and stereotypes, and raising awareness about cultural and social issues. This can contribute to greater cultural understanding and promote dialogue across different communities. Social media also empowers students by allowing them to challenge stereotypes, reclaim their narratives, and assert their ethnic identity in a space that reaches far beyond their immediate environment.

*“Sharing cultural content and connecting with others who appreciate and celebrate their culture can empower students and instil a sense of pride in their heritage. Social media allows students to challenge stereotypes and reclaim their narratives. They can assert their ethnic identity proudly. Could be a good way to nurture African identity, values, and a sense of belonging.” KII 001*

*“Awareness and education: Students can educate others about their ethnic culture. By sharing information, they contribute to cultural awareness and understanding. Empowerment: Social media allows students to challenge stereotypes and reclaim their narratives. They can assert their ethnic identity proudly. Also, students can collaborate*

*with peers from different tribes. Cross-cultural exchanges promote unity and appreciation for diversity.” KII, 003*

The findings on community building and cultural preservation through social media are corroborated by Dutta (2017) and Talukdar and Mete (2021), illustrating the capacity of social media to foster inclusive identities via meaningful participation and to strengthen tribal values and traditions within ethnic communities. Jordan (2020) and Arora et al. (2021) investigated the function of social media in promoting cultural awareness and understanding, emphasizing the potential for students to confront stereotypes, reclaim their narratives, and assert their ethnic identities in a context that extends beyond their immediate surroundings. The studies substantiate the findings regarding the potential for community building and cultural preservation facilitated by social media.

#### **5.4.4.11 Creative Expression and Activism**

Platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube provide creative outlets for students to express their cultural identity through various forms of media, such as art, music, dance, and storytelling. These platforms also offer opportunities for activism and advocacy, enabling students to organize campaigns, share petitions, and mobilize support for cultural rights and social justice issues. By leveraging social media for creative expression and activism, students can engage in meaningful work that promotes and protects their cultural heritage. This finding, as supported by those by Jordan, (2020), who indicated that online ethnic identity can be expressed through different social media platforms

*“Platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube provide creative outlets for students to express their cultural identity through art, music, dance, storytelling, and other forms of media.” KII 001*

In summary, social media poses challenges such as cultural appropriation, cyberbullying, and the digital divide, while simultaneously providing significant opportunities for visibility, community building, education, and activism. Students at Daystar University can address these challenges and utilize the opportunities to sustain and enhance their ethnic cultural identities in a globalized,

digital environment. They recognize the inherent ethnic identity tensions among Kenya's diverse communities, facilitated by social media opportunities. The findings on creative expression and activism through social media are supported by Jordan (2020) and Arora et al. (2021), examining the role of social media in facilitating cultural expression and identity formation. Velasquez and LaRose (2015) and Goodman et al. (2018) examined the impact of social media on social change and advocacy, highlighting students' ability to leverage online platforms to raise awareness of community issues and promote initiatives that support their heritage. The studies corroborate the findings regarding the capacity for creative expression and activism enabled by social media.

### **5.5 Summary of the Findings**

This chapter presents the result of the findings. Despite advancements in education and students' access to social media, ethnic segregation continues to be a significant issue, influenced by various contributing factors. Historical divisions with deep roots in Kenyan society are a primary reason. These divisions frequently arise from colonial legacies in which boundaries were established without consideration for the ethnic diversity of populations. Colonial powers established arbitrary borders and policies that often favoured one ethnic group, resulting in enduring rivalries and mistrust that continue to exist today. Cultural preservation contributes to the maintenance of ethnic segregation. Numerous communities emphasize the preservation of their cultural identity, language, and traditions, which may unintentionally result in segregation. Communities may isolate themselves from broader society to safeguard their cultural practices when they perceive these practices as threatened. This may establish obstacles to integration and interaction with other ethnic groups, thereby reinforcing divisions. Additionally, community and family loyalty to beliefs regarding tribal allegiance is frequently transmitted across generations, with numerous parents and clans promoting the idea that their children should remain within their ethnic groups.

Furthermore, economic inequalities frequently intensify ethnic segregation. Access to resources, opportunities, and services is often distributed unevenly across ethnic groups. Economic inequalities can generate tensions and promote segregation, as marginalized groups may be compelled to reside in specific geographic areas or socio-economic strata, resulting in diminished interaction and understanding among various ethnic groups. This economic segregation reinforces

social boundaries and obstructs initiatives aimed at fostering more inclusive communities. The presence of biases and stereotypes regarding other ethnic groups results in the avoidance of interactions with individuals from diverse backgrounds.

Political leaders occasionally manipulate ethnic divisions to achieve electoral advantages, employing identity politics to garner support. The entrenchment of ethnic segregation results in groups coalescing around their ethnic identities. Political strategies may hinder efforts to address the underlying causes of segregation and promote unity. The significance of education and socialization is paramount. In contexts where educational frameworks or societal structures fail to foster inclusivity or promote inter-ethnic comprehension, segregation may become entrenched. Individuals raised in segregated communities or attending schools with insufficient diversity may experience restricted exposure to various ethnic groups, resulting in the continuation of stereotypes, prejudices, and segregationist attitudes.

## CHAPTER SIX

### SUMMARY OF THE FINDING, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 6.1 Introduction

The chapter presents the summary of the finding based on the focus of the study which was the nexus between social media and ethnic identity: a study of students at Daystar University, Nairobi, Kenya. The chapter present the summary of the themes emerging from the findings of the study regarding the major questions of the study. Lastly the chapter presents the conclusions and the study recommendation on areas for further study.

#### 6.2 Summary of the Findings

This study examines the relationship between social media and ethnic identity among students at Daystar University in Nairobi, Kenya. Six objectives were employed to establish these relationships, which include:

- I. Establish what motivates university students to use social media as a space for economic, social, and political identification in Kenya.
- II. Find out how university students use social media to construct their different social identities.
- III. Reveal different forms of social identifications that university students use on social media.
- IV. Determine how university students in Kenya construct, (re) negotiate, and make meaning of their ethnic identities on social media.
- V. Establish whether university students are aware of the seemingly inherent ethnic identity tensions between Kenya's diverse communities expressed on social media.
- VI. Find out how these inherent ethnic tensions influence the utilization of various online social networks by students in universities.

Five focused group discussions were conducted, each consisting of eight students from Daystar University in Kenya. Additionally, five key informant interviews were carried out with eight heads of department from the university's eight schools. Four main themes were established based on the results: cultural identity and preservation, historical and political tensions, stereotypes and

perceptions of 'otherness,' and social media and group dynamics. In the first theme regarding cultural identity, many students perceive a significant connection between social media and their ethnic identities, which aids them in seeking and preserving their cultural heritage. Despite exposure to social media and a multicultural environment, students tend to maintain their roots, leading them to primarily associate with peers from similar backgrounds. Social media serves as a tool for the preservation and protection of cultural identities within a context often viewed as homogenizing.

The second theme addresses historical and political tensions, with students suggesting that ethnic conflicts in Kenya's history are primarily driven by political motivations, significantly shaping their perceptions and interactions with others. Historical tensions have fostered mistrust and competition among various ethnic groups, including within academic institutions. Political and historical factors reinforce social boundaries, resulting in persistent ethnic division among university students. Responses indicated that stereotypes and preconceived notions regarding 'Otherness' are frequently constructed by students, who shape narratives about ethnic groups within the university context, thereby impeding integration. Stereotypes establish barriers and influence social interactions, leading students to avoid peers due to fear and perceived differences. The phenomenon of 'Othering' arises when individuals view members of different ethnic groups as outsiders. This narrative reinforces divisions, fosters isolation, and limits opportunities for cross-cultural understanding.

Finally, social media and group dynamics have facilitated efforts to bridge existing gaps. Social media provides avenues for connection while simultaneously reinforcing social segregation through echo chambers, wherein students interact primarily with their own ethnic perspectives. Social media amplifies divisive narratives, fostering an environment in which students from the same community feel more secure engaging within their own cultural circles. This has led to increased online engagement that influences peer groups, perpetuating social divisions and limiting the effectiveness of exposure to diversity.

### **6.3 Summary of the Research Questions**

The study tried to answer the following questions using the responses from both the FGDs and KII.

#### **6.3.1 What Motivates University Students to Use Social Media as a Space for Economic, Social and Political Identification in Kenya?**

This study established that social media contributes to the construction and reinforcement of ethnic identity among students at Daystar University. The findings from the focus group discussions indicate that the majority participated for social interaction, while others sought informative news, and some joined for entertainment purposes. Some individuals engage with social media for the purpose of professional advancement. The platform facilitates cultural expression, community building, identity formation, and advocacy, presenting both opportunities and challenges in the digital era. This aligns with the findings of Yau, Marder, and O'Donohoe (2020), who identified social media as a significant platform for students to strengthen their ethnic identity through advocacy and interaction with diverse communities and other ethnic groups.

#### **6.3.2 How Do University Students Use Social Media to Construct their Social Identities and How Does Indigenous Knowledge Systems Influence this Process?**

Results indicated that students utilize social media for content creation and live streaming of cultural events in their daily lives. Additionally, posting educational materials, including blogs and info-graphics, offers insights into cultural history and practices. Community-building initiatives encompass the formation of groups and the organization of events. The findings align with those of Arora, Sadhwani, and Shah (2021), who observed that the utilization of social media platforms facilitates the expression of identity, thereby creating opportunities for increased social collaboration. The findings from key informants regarding how students at Daystar University utilize social media to connect with ethnic peers, gain insights into their own and other cultures, and express their cultural identity have been emphasized. Four themes emerged from the responses: students utilizing social media to connect with fellow ethnic members, gaining insights

into their own and other cultures, expressing their cultural identity, and preserving and sharing cultural knowledge.

The study has shown that social media plays a significant role in the construction and preservation of ethnic identities, particularly in the context of Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS). University students have actively utilized digital platforms to connect with their cultural heritage, share indigenous knowledge, and challenge the colonial narratives that have historically marginalized their ethnic groups. The findings revealed that social media provides students with spaces to reclaim their cultural identities and foster a sense of belonging among members of their ethnic communities. Students actively participate in preserving oral traditions, indigenous languages, and traditional practices, using platforms like WhatsApp, Facebook, and Instagram to document and disseminate IKS that would otherwise be at risk of fading from contemporary consciousness. The ability of students to engage with elders, knowledge holders, and cultural practitioners across geographic boundaries has helped strengthen intergenerational knowledge sharing and enabled the revitalization of indigenous cultures.

The research also highlighted the way in which social media fosters cross-cultural dialogue and helps students navigate multiple identities in an increasingly globalized world. This was particularly evident in how students blend modern and traditional frameworks, creating hybrid identities that incorporate IKS into global conversations about sustainability, healthcare, and community development. Through their active use of social media, students engage in digital activism, raising awareness about the importance of IKS in contemporary life and challenging colonial stereotypes and misrepresentations. One of the key findings was that social media is an important tool for cultural preservation, allowing students to share cultural practices while also promoting a post-colonial resistance to the marginalization of indigenous ways of knowing. Furthermore, the digital space provides opportunities for economic empowerment, where students use IKS to promote traditional crafts, indigenous tourism, and cultural entrepreneurship, offering a platform for communities to address economic disparities that are rooted in colonial histories.

### **6.3.3 What Forms of Social Identification do University Students Use on Social Media?**

The responses from the FGDs revealed that social media can effectively promote ethnic identity by emphasizing the necessity of cultural preservation in contemporary society. Additionally, social

media serves as a platform for raising awareness and fostering a sense of pride within Kenyan society, particularly as cultural erosion occurs due to modernization. Additionally, responses from key informant interviews suggested that by adopting these best practices, Daystar University can assist students in utilizing social media to develop and enhance a positive ethnic identity, thereby promoting a more inclusive and culturally dynamic campus community. This finding corroborates the assertions of Brown et al. (2017), who posited that social identity, race, and self-construction are optimal practices for representing racial identity.

#### **6.3.4 How do University Students in Kenya (De)Construct, (Re)Negotiate and Make Meaning of their Ethnic Identities on Social Media?**

The responses from all focus group discussions suggest that social media can serve as a tool for promoting ethnic identity, highlighting the necessity of cultural preservation in contemporary society. Additionally, social media should be utilized to enhance awareness and foster a sense of pride within Kenyan society, as cultural erosion is occurring. The responses from key informants corroborated the notion that university students can utilize social media to promote diversity, and that fostering collaboration through these platforms can significantly reduce ethnic conflicts and tensions among students at Daystar University. Social media platforms can showcase the diversity of the university community by presenting student profiles, interviews, and success stories from various ethnic backgrounds. This promotes positive representation of diverse cultures and encourages students to appreciate and celebrate each other's unique heritage. Virtual cultural exchanges and events facilitated by social media enhance this celebration by enabling students to participate in cultural activities, share traditions, and learn from one another in an interactive manner. These initiatives promote pride and unity among students, thereby decreasing the potential for ethnic tensions.

#### **6.3.5 How Aware are University Students of the Seemingly Inherent Ethnic Identity Tensions Between Kenya's Plural Communities Expressed on Social Media?**

Analysis of the FGD responses indicates that three participants acknowledged their awareness of content related to their ethnic group on social media. The social media posts have facilitated the maintenance of their ethnic identity. Finally, it was observed that these posts have facilitated the

maintenance of their ethnic identity by fostering a sense of pride and belonging within a specific community. These findings align with those of Hassanli, Walters, and Williamson (2021), who identified social media as a significant platform for expressing ethnic pride and fostering a sense of belonging. Additionally, it was demonstrated that social media can assist in addressing issues and enhancing the understanding of diverse cultures. Nonetheless, it is acknowledged that the effect of such posts is contingent upon the underlying intent. Open-minded and informative posts are regarded as beneficial, whereas those expressing extreme or divisive views are perceived as regressive and potentially harmful.

### **6.3.6 How Does the Inherent Ethnic Tension Influence the Usage of Different Social Media Platforms by University Students?**

In response to this question, these social media platforms have helped students stay connected with family and friends who share their cultural heritage. Sharing cultural events and celebrations enhances a sense of belonging, while university-specific and ethnic group hashtags facilitate connections among individuals with similar backgrounds. It also promotes discourse on ethnic matters and social events. Students utilize social media to investigate their cultural identity, engage with their ethnic language, and enhance their understanding of their heritage, both in Kenya and internationally. The responses from key informant interviews indicated that social media, while presenting challenges such as cultural appropriation, cyberbullying, and the digital divide, also provides significant opportunities for visibility, community building, education, and activism. Students at Daystar University can address these challenges and utilize the opportunities to sustain and enhance their ethnic cultural identities in a globalized, digital environment. Furthermore, they recognize the inherent tensions related to ethnic identity among Kenya's diverse communities, facilitated by the opportunities presented by social media.

### **6.4 Limitations and Recommendation**

The study faced some limitations in the process of collecting data.

1. The students were hesitant to share information's regarding their ethnic identity referring themselves as the people who are born in the town thus, trying to conceal their ethnic

identity. This limitation was mitigated by explaining to the student the purpose of the study and what the researcher is looking forward to achieve.

2. Also, the students, in the focused group discussion were not responding to all questions. This limitation was mitigated by requesting the students to re-look at the questions and respond to those questions they failed to respond to. Further efforts were made to explain to them some other question and the meaning and the anticipated responses.

## **6.5 Recommendations**

The study recommends that universities implement programs to regulate social media use to mitigate social segregation and "othering" among students. The programs ought to promote intercultural dialogue and enhance self-understanding. Another recommendation is the establishment of structured university-wide initiatives, including cultural workshops, exchange programs, and events that bring together students from diverse backgrounds. These programs may facilitate positive collaborations and interactions, thereby dismantling the barriers of ethnic divisions. Incorporating elements of cultural awareness and diversity into the curriculum enhances students' appreciation and understanding of various cultural perspectives.

Furthermore, the integration of peer support systems and proactive mentorship into educational programs is essential. The establishment of mentorship programs that integrate students from diverse ethnic backgrounds can facilitate this objective. This can promote cross-cultural friendships and assist students in altering their perceptions of ethnic differences. Implementing peer leadership training programs can effectively equip students with skills that promote ethnic mediation, potentially reducing tensions among various ethnic groups by fostering inclusivity within their social circles.

Given the pivotal role of social media in shaping ethnic identities and preserving Indigenous Knowledge Systems, it should be recommended that universities actively integrate IKS into their academic curricula, particularly within ethnic studies and cultural heritage courses. This integration could take place across all levels of education, from undergraduate courses to postgraduate programs, where students could engage with IKS both academically and digitally. Universities should offer courses that not only teach traditional knowledge but also explore the role of digital platforms in the preservation and dissemination of IKS. Such courses could provide

students with the tools to critically engage with digital media, ensuring that they are equipped to advocate for the protection of indigenous knowledge and challenge cultural misappropriation. Additionally, universities should collaborate with indigenous communities and elders to develop educational programs that bridge the generational gap between traditional knowledge holders and younger generations who are adept in digital technology.

Further, universities should facilitate the creation of spaces for students to share their ethnic identities and engage with IKS in a supportive environment. This could include social media-based initiatives, cultural events, and forums where students from diverse backgrounds can showcase their cultural heritage and actively participate in the digital transmission of IKS. University-led projects could encourage students to use digital platforms as tools for social change, leveraging their access to technology to raise awareness about the importance of IKS in addressing modern challenges like climate change, sustainable agriculture, and healthcare. Establishing partnerships with organizations that focus on decolonization, cultural advocacy, and IKS protection could provide students with avenues to engage in digital activism that influences policy and supports indigenous rights on a global scale.

Universities should recognize the digital divide as a critical issue that affects the full participation of students in IKS advocacy and ethnic identity construction online. To address this challenge, universities should work to bridge the gap in access to digital resources, ensuring that all students have equal opportunities to participate in digital learning and social media engagement. This could involve providing affordable internet access, subsidized technology, and training programs that teach students how to use digital tools to preserve cultural knowledge and engage in digital storytelling. By promoting equal access to technology, universities would enable all students to contribute to the revitalization of IKS and affirmation of ethnic identities in the digital world, ensuring that no student is excluded from the process of cultural renewal and digital decolonization.

Universities should lead in educating against the use of social media to reinforce social divisions and promote its use for social cohesion. The university ought to implement digital literacy programs to facilitate responsible engagement of students on social platforms. University administration should encourage student engagement with social media to foster positive tribal

identity construction that promotes unity rather than division. Online monitoring is necessary to prevent the dissemination of harmful narratives, divisive messages, stereotypes, and misinformation. These efforts can be integrated with a proactive approach that promotes inclusivity within the university environment, both online and offline, thereby mitigating the adverse effects of social media in perpetuating ethnic segregation and tribalism.

Future research should employ both qualitative and quantitative methodologies to gain a more comprehensive understanding of social media's influence on ethnic identity construction among university students. While this study provides valuable qualitative insights into how students at Daystar University navigate ethnic identity in digital spaces, there remains a need for quantitative research that can measure the scope and scale of these phenomena across a broader student population. Future studies should utilize surveys and statistical analysis to quantify patterns of social media usage, track changes in ethnic identity formation over time, and measure the effectiveness of interventions aimed at promoting positive interethnic relationships online.

Additionally, comparative studies should be conducted across multiple universities to determine whether the findings from Daystar University reflect broader trends in Kenyan higher education. Longitudinal studies should also be undertaken to track how students' ethnic identity construction through social media evolves throughout their university experience. Mixed-methods approaches would be particularly valuable, combining quantitative measurements of social media behavior with qualitative insights into students' lived experiences. This dual approach would provide a more robust evidence base for developing effective strategies to harness social media's potential for fostering inclusive campus environments while mitigating its role in perpetuating ethnic divisions.

## **6.6 Conclusion**

In conclusion, the study finds that despite students' exposure to a diverse academic environment, social isolation and "othering" remain significant phenomena within the university setting. These behaviors are fundamentally linked to historical ethnic tensions, the preservation of cultural identity, and the impact of stereotypes. Students persist in forming groups based on ethnic affiliations to maintain their cultural heritage, resulting in the exclusion of others. The enduring political and ethnic conflicts in Kenya exacerbate divisions, leading to a deficiency in mutual understanding and trust among students from diverse ethnic backgrounds. The research indicates

that patterns of social segregation are influenced not only by student preferences but also by broader societal and historical factors ingrained in Kenyan society.

The study highlights the role of social media in facilitating and reinforcing social exclusion among students. While social media facilitates connection, it simultaneously restricts engagement with diverse ethnic groups. Students are more likely to engage with content and individuals that reflect their ethnic identities, which can perpetuate stereotypes and hinder significant cross-cultural interactions. Although initiatives to promote inclusivity exist, the findings indicate that additional targeted efforts are necessary to tackle the fundamental factors leading to social segregation. University administration should proactively establish opportunities for positive engagement and dialogue among diverse ethnic groups to address social divides and foster an integrated student community.

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# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX I: ETHICAL APPROVAL



09 July 2024

Francis Mutua Mutuku (221121786)  
School of Social Sciences  
Howard College Campus

Dear FM Mutuku,

Protocol reference number: HSSREC/00007208/2024

Project title: The nexus between social media and ethnic identity: a study of Daystar University students, Nairobi, Kenya.

Degree: PhD

### Approval Notification – Expedited Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application received on 21 May 2024 in connection with the above, was reviewed by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) and the protocol has been granted FULL APPROVAL.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

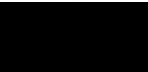
Incidents of adverse events and serious adverse events (AEs and SAEs) should be reported in writing to HSSREC, the study sponsors, and any regulatory authority (where appropriate), within 7 working days of the occurrence for local sites and 14 days for all other South African sites.

This approval is valid until 09 July 2025.

To ensure uninterrupted approval of this study beyond the approval expiry date, a progress report must be submitted to the Research Office on the appropriate form 2 - 3 months before the expiry date. A close-out report to be submitted when study is finished.

HSSREC is registered with the South African National Health Research Ethics Council (REC-040414-040).

Yours sincerely,



Professor Dipane Hlalele (Chair)  
/dd

### Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

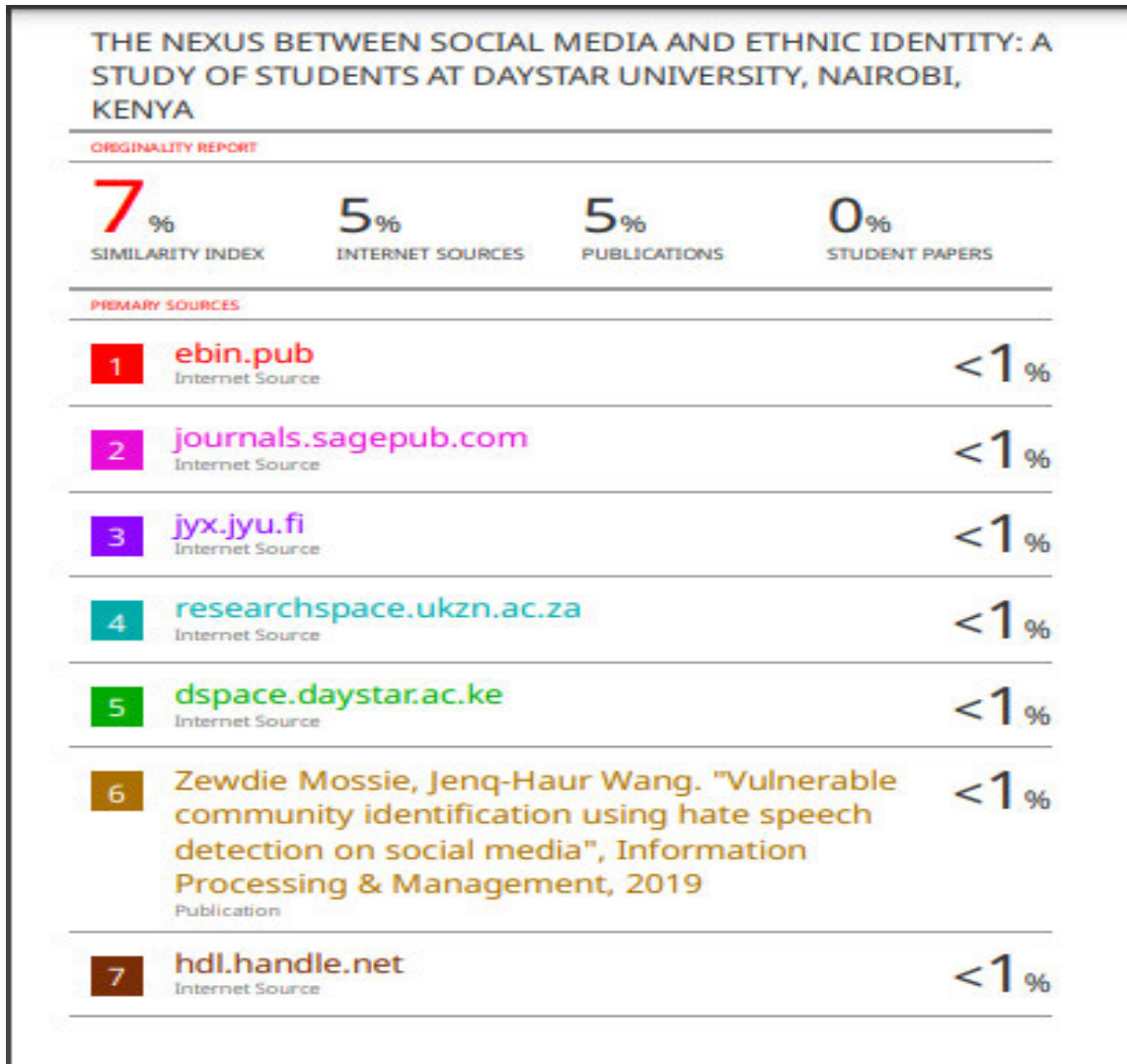
Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban, 4000, South Africa

Telephone: +27 (0)31 260 8350/4557/3587 Email: hssrec@ukzn.ac.za Website: <http://research.ukzn.ac.za/Research-Ethics>

Founding Campuses: Edgewood Howard College Medical School Pietermaritzburg Westville

INSPIRING GREATNESS

## APPENDIX II: TURNITIN REPORT



## **APPENDIX III: INSTRUMENT OF DATA COLLECTION**

### **TOOLS FOR: Interview Groups, Key Informants (for the Qualitative part of the Study),**

#### **Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and Key Informants Topics**

##### **Interview Guide for Focus Group Discussion**

The interview questions are for research purposes to investigate the nexus between social media and ethnic identity among students at Daystar University. Only students who have given consent will be taken through the interview. A respondent is at liberty to answer part of the questions or all of them. The respondent is free to ask questions and clarify anything that is not clear from the researcher. The interview will be administered in open public places such as in a hotel, cafés, or social halls.

The respondent is at liberty to stop participating in the interview at any time of choice. The researcher will audio-record the respondents' voices during the interview, after acquiring their consent first. Nonetheless, the respondent is at liberty to stop any further recording of his or her responses for any reason, without being stopped from participating in the interview later on.

The FGD participants are students of Daystar University. FGD questions should take ideally 1 to 1.5 hours, thus not too many topics.

##### **Focus group interview guide**

###### **Introduction**

1. How many years have you been a student?
2. How do Daystar University students use social media to connect with other ethnic members?
3. What challenges do Daystar University students face in balancing their use of social media with their desire to maintain their ethnic cultural identity?

###### **Nexus between social media and ethnic identity**

4. Do you think a student's ethnic membership influences one's use and joining, being accepted [requesting to join]?

5. How has social media influenced your communication with other members of your ethnic group?
6. How has social media influenced your access to information about your ethnic's culture and traditions?
7. How has social media influenced your participation in ethnic activities and events?
8. How has social media influenced your sense of belonging to your ethnic group?
9. How has social media influenced your sense of pride in your ethnic identity?
10. Do you think that social media should be used to promote ethnic identity?
11. Do you use social media to promote matters concerning ethnic issues?
12. Do you feel that social media posts help sustain your ethnic identity?
13. Does social media help to gain a better understanding of other ethnic groups?
14. Are you comfortable on using social media posts on ethnic matters?
15. Do you find social media posts on ethnic issues being backwards?

**The role of social media in promoting and reinforcing ethnic identities**

16. What are the positive and negative aspects of global media consumption for ethnic people?
17. What are some of the advantages of social media platforms to students? What makes students join and use social media platforms? Do you think being a member of an ethnic group compels some students to join and use certain social media platforms?
18. What are your thoughts on the future of social media use for promoting ethnic identity among students at Daystar University?
19. How has social media helped you to share your own ethnic culture and traditions with others?
20. What are some of the challenges and opportunities that social media presents for students at Daystar University in terms of promoting ethnic identity?
21. Do you think that social media can be used to promote positive ethnic identity construction?

## **Key informant interview schedule**

### **Introduction**

1. What is your name and position at Daystar University?
2. What is your area of expertise in relation to social media and ethnic identity?
3. What are your thoughts on the importance of social media for ethnic identity construction among students at Daystar University?

### **Social media use and ethnic identity construction**

1. What are some of the specific ways that students at Daystar University are using social media to connect with other ethnic members, learn about their own and other cultures, and express their cultural identity?
2. What are some of the challenges and opportunities that social media presents for students at Daystar University in terms of maintaining and promoting their ethnic cultural identity?
3. What are your recommendations for Daystar University administrators and faculty on how to support students in their use of social media to promote positive ethnic identity construction?
4. What are some of the best practices for using social media to promote positive ethnic identity construction among students at Daystar University?
5. What are some of the common pitfalls to avoid when using social media to promote positive ethnic identity construction among students at Daystar University?

### **Conclusion**

1. What are some of the ways that social media can be used to address ethnic conflicts and tensions among students at Daystar University?
2. How can social media be used to promote social cohesion and national unity among students at Daystar University?

## APPENDIX IV: AUTHORITY LETTER FROM DAYSTAR UNIVERSITY



Valley Road Campus  
P.O. Box 44400 - 00100,  
Nairobi, Kenya

Athi River Campus  
P.O. Box 17, Daystar University,  
90145, Athi River, Kenya

Tel: 0  
0  
0

Email: [admissions@daystar.ac.ke](mailto:admissions@daystar.ac.ke)  
[info@daystar.ac.ke](mailto:info@daystar.ac.ke)

Facebook: [daystar-university-official](https://www.facebook.com/daystar-university-official)

Twitter: [daystaruni](https://twitter.com/daystaruni)

[www.daystar.ac.ke](http://www.daystar.ac.ke)

October 9, 2023

Francis Mutua Mutuku  
School of Social Sciences  
University of Kwazulu Natal, S.A

Dear Mr. Mutua,

**RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT DAYSTAR UNIVERSITY**

Your request for permission to conduct your research entitled: *"The nexus between social media and tribal identity: A study of students at Daystar University in Kenya*, has been received.

We have examined your research proposal and have satisfactorily established the purpose of your research. We have also looked at your research tools critically and note that you have the relevant approval from your School.






Having done all the above, I wish to confirm that you have been granted permission to carry out the study. The permission granted is for a period of one year from the date of this letter. Kindly share with the university the findings of this study.

We wish you all the best in your data collection and eventual completion of your dissertation.

Yours sincerely,

Prof. Faith Nguru  
Deputy Vice-Chancellor – Academic, Research & Student Affairs

**APPENDIX V: RESEARCH PERMIT**

 <p><b>REPUBLIC OF KENYA</b></p>	 <p><b>NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY &amp; INNOVATION</b></p>
<b>Ref No: 437860</b>	<b>Date of Issue: 07/October/2023</b>
<b>RESEARCH LICENSE</b>	
	
<p><b>This is to Certify that Mr.. Francis Mutua Mutuku of University of KwaZulu-Natal, has been licensed to conduct research as per the provision of the Science, Technology and Innovation Act, 2013 (Rev.2014) in Nairobi on the topic: The nexus between social media and tribal identity: A study of students at Daystar University in Kenya for the period ending : 07/October/2024.</b></p>	
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<b>Applicant Identification Number</b> 437860	 <b>Director General</b> <b>NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY &amp; INNOVATION</b>
	<b>Verification QR Code</b> 
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