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COMMUNITY BASED FACTORS AFFECTING COMMUNITY WILDLIFE CONSERVANCY IN ACHIEVING ECOTOURISM, MERTI SUB- COUNTY, ISIOLO COUNTY, KENYA

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ABSTRACT

This study focused on the challenges facing community wildlife conservancy in promoting ecotourism in Isiolo County, Kenya. Community based wildlife conservancy has become a popular approach especially in Africa since it has been found to be effective in conservation of wildlife outside protected areas and for ecotourism developments. However, the community based wildlife conservation approach faces a number of challenges undermining its achievement of goals in ecotourism activities. Thus, the study establishes challenged and appropriate remedies to enhance the benefits for the community and the nation as well as sustain the biodiversity for future generation. The objectives of the study were to establish community based factors that affect community wildlife conservancy in achieving ecotourism. This study was guided by two theories; Rational Choice Theory and Social Exchange Theory.. It had a sample size of 120 respondents recruited through stratified random sampling. Data for this study was obtained from both secondary and primary sources. The data from the fieldwork was collected through both interview schedules and focus group discussion. Data collected from the field was analyzed using SPSS and Excel, and presented in percentages, tables, bar graphs, frequency tables and pie charts. This study revealed that ecotourism promotion by community wildlife conservancy was challenged by both community and cultural based factors which can be avoided and eradicated. The study also revealed that, community needs to be informed on the benefits of wildlife conservation and the procedures of compensation in the event of human wildlife conflict this will eliminate issues of revenge attack and wildlife poisoning. The study recommends inclusion of wildlife conservation and ecotourism study in school curriculum.. The study also recommends strong local community and all stakeholders' participation to eradicate challenges in ecotourism promotion by community wildlife conservancies to earn maximum benefits from the initiative.

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INTRODUCTION

This paper provides an insight into the problem of biodiversity conservation that has been a global concern due to the fact that unless proper measures are put in place, the endangered species of flora and fauna might extinct in the near future. It has been universally agreed that tourism is the world's fastest expanding industry creating jobs for millions and sustaining livelihoods, but at the same time some of the limitation has also been attributed to the destruction of the same resources that it intends to conserve. Ideally ecotourism encourages natural resource conservation in return for local and national economic benefits, in addition to offering local, national and international tourists an opportunity to enjoy and learn about nature while respecting local culture (Harris & Harris, 2002).

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The damages to the ecosystem attributed to the mass tourism are mainly habitat destruction, land degradation and pollution. Ecotourism has been globally adopted as an alternative to mass tourism (Foskett & Foskett, 1991). Some players in tourism industries have introduced a new concept of compensation called Eco-labeling to substitute for any environmental disturbances that might be caused by tourist during their stay (Lanza, Markaya, & Piglian, 1989). The United Nations declared 2002 as the International Year of Ecotourism (IYE). Ecotourism has been defined by the International Ecotourism Society (IES) as responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and sustains the well-being of local people. This international definition implies that all activities carried out under community based wildlife conservancy (CBWC) fall under this type of tourism. Ecotourism concentrate on visitors who like to tour wildlife and local population in their original ecosystem (lindersay, *et al*, 2007).

Rutten (2004) stated that wildlife conservation by local communities has drastically transformed in Africa especially Tanzania, Zimbabwe, Kenya, Botswana, Namibia and South Africa because several community based wildlife conservancy have emerged as from late 1980s and early 1990s improving livelihood and preserving nature adopting community based natural resource management (CBNRM) program. According to Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS, 2010), more than 70% of the country's wildlife lives outside protected areas which include the national parks, reserves and sanctuaries. The protected area covers 8% of the Kenya land mass. The greater percentage of wildlife which are found outside protected areas has given an opportunity to the communities living around parks and reserve areas to initiate community based wildlife conservancies to protect wildlife and engage in ecotourism enterprise for financial gains in return for protection and to utilize their uses without compromising consumption of the same resources by future generations, to accrue and conserving the same for future generation as sustainable livelihood alternative.

Kenya's wildlife population is declining at an alarming rate due to several factors including habitat loss, poaching, human wildlife conflict, natural calamities and disease and the decline will always affect the tourism in our country as Kenya is popular for wildlife viewing (Kiarie, 2013). Wildlife conservation in Kenya greatly depends on the performance of private and community initiatives as the best approach (Butler, 2012). The idea of community based wildlife conservancy was borrowed from Southern Africa countries after success stories were registered from several community centered wildlife managements by the name Communal Management Programme for Indigenous Resources (CAMPFIRE). The initiative was introduced in Merti Sub- County by Ian Crag in 2007 under the auspices of Northern Rangeland Trust (NRT) as Biliqo-Bulesa community wildlife conservancy.

Community wildlife conservancy (CWC) entails protecting wildlife in their natural habitat. These include continuous monitoring and security surveillance, provision of veterinary services and control grazing areas to avoid competition over pastures with livestock. Otiende *et al* (1991) Observed that wildlife and aquatic life are essential in the country's economic development which needs to be protected to achieve full potentials and realization of vision 2030. The community needs enlightening to gain maximum benefits from this noble initiative by eradicating challenges on the way to the success of the initiative.

Literature Review

Community Based factors challenging promotion of ecotourism by community wildlife conservancy

The United Nation Environmental Programme (UNEP) and World Tourism Organization (WTO) have outlined general futures of ecotourism as travel that will not only appreciate nature but also local community that undertakes conservation and their culture as part of travelers' experience, containing education and interpretation as part of tourist offer, generally organized and coordinated by small group who owns it, minimizes negative impacts on natural and socioeconomic environment, provide an alternative income and employment opportunities for local community, supporting the protection of natural areas by generating economic benefits for managers

of natural areas, increasing locals and visitors awareness of conservation (Denman, 2001). Community based factors are day to day community livelihood activities that in one way or another contribute to either destruction of environment, displacement or elimination of wildlife species. Ecotourism must generate enough revenues to motivate the community to continue the process of conservation and using the same resources without affecting the productivity of the same to provide for future generation (Harris & Harris, 2002). The level of poverty in the community is one of the major obstacles to the promotion of ecotourism in Merti sub-county. According to Isiolo county development profile (2013), seventy one percent of the county population lives below poverty line and the rural folks are the ones affected most. Having this situation in mind, certain wild herbivorous species some which are rare and endangered were targeted as an alternative source of food and poached for subsistence in Merti wildlife conservation areas. The culture of subsistence poaching is widely tolerated among locals in Merti sub-county; the traditions allow consumption of bush meat especially during drought and famine conditions as an alternative to malnourished livestock.

Frequent droughts condition and ever changing climatical phenomenon has made subsistence poaching to go beyond domestic consumptions to commercialization of bush meat by the poachers, gravy zebra and reticulated giraffe both of which are endangered and only available in Biliqo-Bulesa wildlife conservancy are the most targeted wild herbivorous species. Uncontrolled subsistence poaching of wildlife will out rightly lead to imbalances in the wildlife ecosystem, near extinction of rare species and disturbance in the wildlife food chain. With a probable decrease of herbivorous in the specific ecological areas then the natural predators will suffer and hence automatic catastrophe of death from hunger.

Herbivorous such as antelope, giraffe, buffalo, gazelles and zebra will decrease with poachers killing them indiscriminately, employing several barbaric and primitive ways, like snaring, spearing and others attacking them at night where it is believed that these species are having low night visions or are night blind. Unregulated use of wildlife resources becomes only second to habitat destruction and the major reason for wildlife extinction in many places (Baldu, 2009). The community possesses mindset of exploiting common property resources for their personal or individual's interests for the lack of defined ownership (Muchira & Onyari, 1996). There is an urgent need to stop the culture of subsistence poaching in Biliqo -Bulesa conservancy for the prosperity of the community conservation initiative. Carnivorous are largely safe from substance poaching as the culture detest their consumptions, this is the reason why their populations are increasing at higher rate in the conservancy areas.

Infrastructure was cited as one of the obstacle to achievement of ecotourism goals in Merti Sub County, According to Isiolo county development profile (2013), Isiolo County has a road network of 975.5km, out of which 3% are bituminized. Seventy seven percent of the roads are earth surface which are impassable during rainy seasons. The communication network is very poor since only 7% of the county has mobile network coverage. The roads network in the wildlife conservancy areas has remained in pathetic condition. For a longtime, there is no routine maintenance and the washed away sections are not

reinforced with gabions and other erosion control measures. Human wildlife conflict was cited as one of the major problems in promotion of ecotourism development in Merti-Sub County. Ouma (1970) noted that, herders take care of their livestock against wildlife while farmers protect their crops against possible destruction by wildlife. Community takes caution by constructing a circular structure made of thorny tree branches to secure livestock from predators at night and strict surveillance during daytime grazing in the conservancy zones. Kipkeu *et al* (2014) lamented that, human activities within Amboseli ecosystem have led to massive ecological disturbances which needed to be stopped.

According to Isiolo District Vision & Strategy (2005-2015), Human wildlife conflict was observed as a big problem in promotion of ecotourism development in Merti Sub -County. Pastoralist communities have long history of human wildlife conflict usually arising when wild animals attack their livelihood sources. Conservation increases population of predators threatening livestock and hence complains by the farmers increases risking the carnivores being killed by the affected farmer (Suich, Child, & Spencely, 2009). Revenge attack has been common in Merti wildlife conservation zones in absence of clear compensation policy and proper civic education on the benefits of wildlife. Locals resort to avenge for every livestock killed by the wild carnivores in Biliqo-Bulesa conservancy areas. Education is one of the most important human needs but also regarded as a universal human right. It is a constitutional right of every citizen male and female to access education as it was declared by government free primary and subsidized secondary education. According to Kenya population and housing census of 2009. Illiteracy rate in the county stands at above 70%, this was attributed to nomadic life style, the culture of children labour, where young boys and girls are being trained at a tender age to be herders rather than taking them to the learning institution. Education is essential to poverty eradication and improvement of livelihood that need to expand and the illiteracy level gap filled as soon as is applicable.

Security of the tourists and the visitors is also another challenging factor as the ecotourism enterprises cannot thrive in the hostile and conflict prone areas. (Achebe, 1984, as cited in Reid, 1999), emphasized several factors which discourage tourism mainly reputation of a destination, attitudes and behavior of hosts also pricing of the tourism product and political stability. Buhali and Costa (2006) indicated that, people will not travel to areas that they feel unsafe and hence will either cancel their travelling plans or travel to another destination. Merti has been one of the volatile places when it comes to insecurity and ethnic conflict with the people of the neighboring district and hence need to redeem its image to attract tourists. Security must be guaranteed for the ecotourism projects to prosper by engaging locals in security issues and reconciliation with the neighbors as the same kind of community wildlife initiatives are also on going in the adjacent counties.

According to Isiolo District Vision & Strategy (2005-2015) loss of biodiversity, lack of security for wildlife and tourists are cited as some of the major problems preventing the district from enjoying full benefits of wildlife inside its borders. With proper security mechanism in place the locals are willing to take responsibility and team up with security agencies to enhance security for wildlife and visitors.

Tourism is one of the very delicate products that need to be taken care of since destination background, security and safety concerns could alter the change of mind by tourist heading there and hence leading to loss of funds for community projects (Erickson, 2003).

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in Merti Sub- County in Isiolo County of Kenya. The Sub-County comprises of three divisions, namely Merti, Cherrab and Kom, it borders, Isiolo Sub- County to the South, Garbatulla to the East and North East, Wajir and Marsabit to the North and Samburu to the West. It is located in northern part of the county and classified as one of the Arid and Semi-Arid lands (ASALs) in Kenya. According to Kenya Population and housing census of 2009, it had an estimated population of 20,341 with a total household of 4,294 and an area of 12,623km² Interview schedule and Focus group discussions were used as a primary data collection method. Interviews schedules were used to collect data from respondents while focus group discussions were used to provide in-depth information from opinion leaders. These methods were applied in the context of sustainability to the kind of data they can effectively generate. The responses which included typical statements relevant to the current study problem were noted in a field note book. The sample size was calculated by estimating proportion using Kothari formula. Kothari (2004) affirms that, if the items in the population are homogeneous, a small sample can be used to describe the population. Kathuri (1993) suggest that a minimum of 100 respondents is sufficient sample for a survey research. To find the sample size using Kothari (2004) formula, the first thing is to specify precision and the confidence level.

RESULTS

Community based factors hindering promotion of ecotourism by community wildlife conservancy

Poverty

The level of poverty in the county generally is too high. It stands at 71% with majority of residence living with less than a dollar a day. Most of rural population lives in object poverty because of recurrent drought which in most cases wipes off their livelihood bases. Because of the high rate of illiteracy, the chance to formal employment was minimal as majority of locals do not have any academic qualifications. Most of schools going children drop out of school because they cannot be provided with subsistence unless they also remain in livestock manyattas where they can trek for several kilometers before they arrive at school and going back the same root in the evening not withstanding their personal security from wild animals and snakes. Majority of the respondents affirmed that poverty is a major obstacle in promotion of ecotourism in the study area as shown by the Table 4.2 below.

Table 4.2. Is poverty level in the community a challenge to ecotourism development?

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	117	97.5
No	3	2.5

Source: Field data (2015)

The study reveals that 97.5% of the respondent affirms that poverty level in the community was a challenge to ecotourism development and an insignificant number, 2.5%, said poverty was not a challenge. When the respondent were further questioned on how poverty level affects ecotourism, majority claimed that some wild animals are hunted for food hence decreasing populations of certain species, the hunters are not selective in killing for bush meat, they can kill babies and even breast feeding mothers since they are either after meat or trophy. As shown by Table 4.3.

Table 4.3. How does poverty level a challenge to ecotourism development?

	Frequency	Percent
Wild animals are hunted for food	105	87.5
Wild animals are poached for trophies	12	10.0
Not relevant	3	2.5

Source: Field data (2015)

The study findings showed that, when the respondents were further asked how poverty level poses challenge to ecotourism, 87.5% said that wild animals were hunted for food. This happens especially during famine when livestock become weak and no longer provide enough milk and meat provision hence wild animals become an obvious substitute. Some members of the community are habitual hunters for bush meat, animals such as antelopes, gazelles, zebra, buffalos, and giraffe are most targeted while birds like ostrich are also killed for their tender meats, eggs and most valued oil which is said to be remedy for some tough sickness. A second major effect of poverty was that wild animals were poached for trophies. This is because Rhino horn and Elephant ivory are deemed to fetch good money in illegal animal trophy trade. This is one of the major reasons as to why people are killing these humble and beautiful innocent animals.

Infrastructure development (roads and communication network)

Isiolo County has a road network of 975.5km, out of which 3% are bituminized. Seventy seven percent of the roads are earth surface which are impassable during rainy seasons. The communication network is very poor since only 7% of the county has mobile network coverage. The roads network in the study areas has remained in a pathetic condition for a longtime, there is no routine maintenance and the washed away sections are not reinforced with gabions and other erosion control measures. The only bridge linking Isiolo town with the study area which is at Gotu is low lying patched on the river bed which is also unused during floods and rainy seasons hence hindering free movement of visitors to and from the conservancy zones. The bridge itself was constructed by British during colonial days. When asked if the road network is well developed in the conservancy areas, majority of the respondent said not well developed, implying the roads are in pathetic condition and something needed to be done to improve standards. As show by Table 4.4.

Table 4.4: Is the road network well developed in the conservancy ecotourism area?

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	4	3.3
No	116	96.7

Source: Field data (2015)

The study confirms the fact that, infrastructure development is a challenge to promotion of the ecotourism in the study areas. Majority of the respondents, 96.7%, said that the road networks are not developed in the conservancy ecotourism area. Female respondent remarked that:

'There is no road at all, what is available is just path, what kind of road is it that takes some one traversing a distance of less than two hundred kilometers for twelve hours, the concerned ministry needs to visit and experience the suffering we are going through, I think some measures should be taken to improve on road conditions if we are to gain from ecotourism programs in our areas'

(Source: Female respondent, 40 years old, 2015)

An insignificant number, 3.3%, said that the roads were developed in the ecotourism area. The individual who claimed that the roads were not developed said that the existing roads were in bad state.

Human wildlife conflict

Human wildlife conflict is known to be obvious and anticipated challenge because in the event of having wildlife and livestock conserved in the same geographical areas, the challenges are eminent and unavoidable, Wild carnivores are flesh eating and the livestock is an alternative food basket for them, however, the herders will not take it lying down but will avenge for any livestock killed by wild animals either by killing them or poisoning the carcasses of the dead to cause mass killing of any predator who might come to feed on the carcass. Human in most cases are culprit in the conflict with wild animals by either encroaching on their habitat or poaching them for food or trophies as shown by Table 4.5 below.

Table 4.5. Are there cases of human wildlife conflict in the conservancy?

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	119	99.2
No	1	0.8

Source: Field data (2015)

The study reveals that a significant number of respondents at 99.2% agreed that there existed human wildlife conflict in the conservancy. The mostly reported cases are lions, hyenas, and leopards killing livestock in the areas adjacent and in conservancy zone despite precautions taken by the livestock farmers, normally herders construct a semi-circular structures made of thorny trunks of tree branches to make boma for livestock for the purposes of protecting them from wild carnivores especially at night. But reported cases of wild animals, killing or injuring human are minimal.

Only 0.8% of the respondent claimed that there was no human wildlife conflict in the conservancy. When further asked how human wildlife cases are handled, majority of the respondents said compensation by KWS others said revenge attack could be a solution while some claimed that there is no plan to handle such cases as shown by Table 4.6 below. The study showed that majority of respondent, when further asked on how human wildlife conflict cases are handled, 81.7% said compensation. This has been so because community had discovered killing or poisoning of killer wild carnivore does not help in replacing the killed livestock, so the best option was to photograph the carcasses and report to Kenya wildlife

Table 4.6. How is the human wildlife conflict cases handled?

	Frequency	Percent
Compensation	98	81.7
Revenge attacks	7	5.8
No action	15	12.5

Source: Field data (2015)

service county compensation board to verify the claim and compensate them accordingly, while 5.8% of the respondent said revenge attack could be a solution while 12.5% claimed that there is no action taken in to handle human wildlife conflict.

Tourist security in the conservancy area

Isiolo county and specifically the study area is the most turbulent security zone because of frequent cattle rustling, banditry and robbery along Isiolo-Wajir road. Security of the tourist and visitors is paramount for the continuity of the eco-tourism product and the image of the destination to the stakeholders. Several cases of the attack on the tourist heading to Shaba Game Park had devastating economic effects on the revenue collection of the Isiolo county government in the past. Security of the visitors is actually what will market the spot and give it clean bill of health if carefully protected. Many respondents attested to the fact that visitors are not safe in the conservancy areas; this is because of the delicate security situation of the areas and the fact that conservancy zones are open area without any fence and also far flung from the security provision agencies as shown by Table 4.7.

Table 4.7. Are visitors and tourists safe in the conservancy?

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	27	22.5
No	86	71.7
No idea	7	5.8

Source: Field data (2015)

The findings revealed that, most of the respondents at 71.7%, felt that visitors and tourists were not safe spending, camping and touring the conservancy. While 22.5% of the respondents felt that the visitors and tourists were safe in the conservancy, while 5.8% of the respondents did not have any idea about the safety of visitors and tourists. When further enquired on what are some of the threats to the security of the tourists and visitors, majority of the respondent identified banditry as a major threat; bandit attack mostly happen along the road to the conservancy zones and occasionally in the conservancy areas. The proliferation of small arms in the area after the fall of Somali government in 1991 had influenced acquisition of the same by locals and neighboring communities hunting for uses either in cattle rustling, robbery, and poaching wildlife either for subsistence or trophies. The threats to the visitors' security are as shown by Table 4.8 below.

Table 4.8. Threats to the safety of visitors and tourists

	Frequency	Percent
Banditry	70	58.3
Robbers	12	10.0
Rivalry between communities	4	3.3
No idea	7	5.8
Not relevant	27	22.5

Source: Field data (2015)

According to the findings of this study, 58.3% of the individuals interviewed cited banditry as the biggest threat to safety of visitors and tourists. This is followed by robbers at 10%. A small group at 3.3% said that rivalry between communities was also a threat to safety of visitors and tourists. 22.5 % said that the question of threat to the security of the visitors was not relevant, while 5.8% said they have no ideas on any kind of threat to visitors and tourists in the conservancy.

Livestock wildlife resource competitions

Wildlife and livestock are kept on the same geographical areas although the later has to migrate and settle in the restricted conservancy areas during dry seasons when pastures in their usual grazing areas are exhausted. This proximity between wildlife and livestock are not encouraged by the conservancy managers because they claim the closeness might bring several cases of human wildlife conflict and hence disadvantage wild herbivorous by easily finishing grass and water in their habitat same times livestock are denied access to some water spots which had unlimited access by wildlife. This treatment resent the community in some occasions to forcefully graze and use water in those wildlife designated water pan. When asked if there was competition for pasture and water in the conservancy, majority of the respondent confirmed in affirmative as shown by Table 4.9 below.

Table 4.9. Is there competition for pasture between wild animals and livestock

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	119	99.2
No	1	0.8

Source: Field data (2015)

The study findings reveal that, 99.2% of respondent agreed that there existed competition for pasture between wild animals and livestock. This was attributed to uncontrolled grazing routine and inefficient monitoring programmes. The competitions usually happen during droughts when livestock invade the conservancy zones. A male respondent claimed that:

'The conservancy segregate against our live stocks because there limiting our grazing zones to those areas where there are no plenty of rich pastures, the rich pasture zones are reserved for wildlife and hence limiting our access to the best grazing grounds, also the conservancy some other times introduces a certain pest which were not tolerated by livestock to force us leave the entire grazing areas for wildlife this unorthodox behavior need to be stopped for all of us to share available resources equitably'

(Source: Male respondent, 39 years old, 2015)

The extent of competition for pastures between livestock and wild herbivorous was so great that sometimes it almost lead to deadly confrontations, locals in the study area felt that the conservation area managers need to equally allow livestock free grazing movement in the conservancy as they use to enjoy before the inception of the conservancy, they also call for free access to water point that were lately enclosed and the entrances only opened at night when livestock could not move to have water for the fear of wild animals.

Insignificant number of the respondent 0.8% claimed that there was no competition for water and pasture in the conservancy areas. When further asked on how the competition for pasture and water was managed in the conservancy, majority of the respondent claimed that there was no management plan for the control of competition which the study pointed out as one of the bigger challenges to ecotourism development as shown by Table 4.10 below.

Table 4.10. How is the competition for pasture managed?

	Frequency	Percent
No plan	72	60.0
Grazing on rotational basis	7	5.8
Specific area designated	40	33.3
Not relevant	1	0.8

Source: Field data (2015)

The study showed that 60% of the respondents claimed that there was no particular plan on how to handle the competition for pasture between the wild animals and livestock in the conservancy which could be the possible reasons as to why most of the human wildlife conflicts happen during dry seasons. There was need to put in place an efficient and elaborate grazing pattern to avoid competition and unnecessary human wildlife conflict. 33.3% of the respondents said that the competition was handled by having areas specifically designated for grazing while 5.8% said the competition was handled by having rotational grazing plans.

4.7 Discussion

Community based factors affecting community wildlife conservancy in achieving ecotourism

The findings of this study confirmed conclusions made by Isiolo county development profile (2013), on the county poverty level. The study concur that majority of the respondent in the study area lives below poverty line, this necessitated locals to target a certain wild herbivorous species some which are rare and endangered as an alternative source of food and poached them for subsistence in Mertu wildlife conservation areas. The study also revealed that the culture of subsistence poaching is widely tolerated among locals in Mertu sub-county the customs allow consumption of bush meat especially during drought and famine conditions as an alternative to malnourished livestock.

The findings of the study revealed that, locals in the study area have formed a habit of commercializing bush meat to earn cash to be used in purchasing of some other basic necessities. The study urges that uncontrolled subsistence and commercial poaching of wildlife will cause species disturbance and imbalances in the wildlife ecosystem, The study further revealed that a probable decrease of herbivorous in specific ecological area implies the natural predators will suffer and hence obvious catastrophe of death from starvation. The study confirmed poaching is one of the major challenge faced by all wildlife conservation agencies which Biliqo-Bulesa conservancy is not an exception. It's upon all stakeholders to employ urgent measures to control poaching for prosperity of all. The findings of this study are in some respect similar to Kipkeu *et al* (2014) who reported that, human wildlife conflict as one of the major problems in promotion of ecotourism development this was because human activities in Mertu Sub-

County has lead to widespread habitat destructions, reduction in wildlife dispersal areas and an increased conflicts due to competition for the scarce resources. Human wildlife conflict was observed as a big problem in promotion of ecotourism development in Mertu Sub- County. The findings of the current study confirmed that illiteracy rate in the county is too high; this was attributed to nomadic life style, the culture of children labour, where young boys and girls are being trained at a tender age to be herders rather than taking them to the learning institution. Education is essential to poverty eradication and improvement of livelihood that need to be expanded and the illiteracy level gap filled as soon as is applicable.

The findings of the study concurred with Buhali and Costa (2006) who indicated that, people will not travel to areas that they feel unsafe and hence will either cancel their travelling plans or travel to another destination. Mertu Sub- County is one of the volatile places when it comes to insecurity and ethnic conflict with the people of the neighboring districts and hence needed to redeem its image to attract tourists. The study argue that security must be guaranteed for both wildlife and visitors for ecotourism projects to prosper by engaging locals in security issues and reconciliation with the neighbors because same kind of community wildlife initiatives are also on going in the adjacent counties. In this regard the study further urged that security of the tourists and the visitors as a big challenge because ecotourism enterprises cannot thrive in the hostile and conflict prone areas, several factors have been identified as an obstacle to the ecotourism visit this include reputation of a destination, attitudes, behavior of hosts, pricing of the tourism product and political stability.

Conclusion and Implications

In light of the study findings and observations, it may be concluded that the challenges effecting ecotourism performance are many and most of them are either communal or cultural. Bush meat consumption is encouraged by the community belief that there is an alternative subsistence to livestock. Poverty played a big role in accelerating the rate of subsistence poaching. Specific species are hunted making them endangered. Gravy Zebra, a rare species, was targeted for long for subsistence leading to the decline in their numbers.

Based on the concepts of Rational Choice Theory and social exchange theory, the research findings link community with the environment conservation focusing the role of community in protecting nature and gaining sustainable livelihood through wildlife enterprises. The relationship between community and environment is symbiotic. However, environmental destruction and ecological disturbances will automatically lead to Human displacement and livelihood disruption. Thus equilibrium must be maintained as it is the policy; we maintain forest and water towers for the benefits of human and wildlife for prosperity of both. In line with social science understandings of the mutual interaction between human society, human productive activity, and the environment, need to interrelate and coordinate community's entire organ to succeed in attaining better results from conservation initiatives for its own sustainable livelihood survival.

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