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**THE INFLUENCE OF CHURCHES AND RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS ON
ELECTORAL PEACE IN KENYA**

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Dedication

To my Mum and Dad Marit Vandeskog and Eystein Vandeskog Eliassen, had you never believed in me, I would never be where I am right now. I owe you everything I have, and I am. You saw the potential in me and pushed me to achieve. I love you to death. Challenges have not stopped me; instead, they sharpened me to push harder.

Abstract

This study explored the nuanced church's influence on peace during and after elections in Kenya, specifically focusing on the pivotal 2007 electoral events and subsequent elections. Employing a systematic literature review methodology, seventeen carefully selected articles from various databases were analysed to explore the multifaceted dynamics of the church's role and influence during the electoral period through peacebuilding processes. The study's findings illuminate the diverse activities of churches and church-based institutions to foster peace in the Kenyan context. These initiatives, ranging from grassroots reconciliation efforts to community-building programs, underscore the proactive role of the church in contributing to societal stability during the tumultuous periods surrounding elections. However, the study uncovered instances of church partisanship. The engagement of the church in political alliances is identified as a factor that not only sowed discord but also contributed to heightened levels of violence during electoral periods. This revelation underscores the complexity of the church's involvement in political affairs, highlighting its potential as a peacemaker and the risks associated with partisan entanglements.

In light of these findings, the study advocates for a critical reevaluation of the role of the church and church-based institutions in the electoral process. Emphasising the pivotal position of these institutions in fostering peace, the study underscores the importance of preserving the non-partisan nature of these entities. The call to strategically engage the church and church-based institutions, acknowledging their potential for positive influence while mitigating the risks of partisanship, becomes a central recommendation for policymakers, community leaders, and those involved in electoral processes. This research contributes a nuanced understanding of the intricate interplay between religious institutions and electoral peacebuilding, shedding light on the church's constructive and potentially divisive roles in the Kenyan context.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

This study aims to evaluate the role and influence of churches and religious institutions in electoral peace in Kenya. To guide the study, the overarching research question is, “What role do the church and religious institutions play in influencing peace in civic elections in Kenya?” This section provides a background to the study. It evaluates extant literature to assess the expected or ideal role and influence of churches and religious institutions on electoral peace, which will form the basis for the justification of the study. Also, based on extant literature, the section will evaluate the actual actions of churches and religious institutions and the influence of such activities on discord and peace in societies. Finally, this part will discuss researcher positionality, which has the potential to influence the credibility and reliability of the study’s findings and conclusions.

1.2 Positionality

As an educated Kenyan adult male with a wide range of travel experiences, my perspective on churches and related institutions views them as important perpetrators of peace in our society. This viewpoint is a product of my exposure to diverse cultural and religious contexts and reflects the significant role those religious organisations have played in our country's history. My personal experiences and beliefs may influence how I approach data collection and interpretation when examining the role and influence of churches and faith-based institutions on electoral peace in Kenya.

From the insider-outsider researcher positionality perspective, I am an insider, which is likely to result in some biases in data collection and interpretation (Bukamal, 2022). My background as a Kenyan provides me with a deep understanding of our nation's complex social and political landscape. I am aware of the historical significance of religious institutions in our society, especially in promoting peace during times of conflict and political turmoil. These experiences are likely to influence data collection and interpretation.

However, my education has equipped me with critical thinking skills, enabling me to approach research with an open and analytical mind. Also, my extensive travel experiences have allowed me to witness how churches and faith-based institutions operate in different regions within Kenya and abroad. These experiences have exposed me to diverse religious practices, allowing me to appreciate the multifaceted nature of religious engagement and its impact on peace and stability. My perception that churches and faith-based institutions are perpetrators of peace may influence my data collection and interpretation in several ways. I may be inclined to seek out evidence that supports this viewpoint, potentially leading to confirmation bias. On the other hand, I might be more critical of data that contradicts this perspective.

I am committed to practising reflexivity throughout my research to mitigate the risk of biased data collection and interpretation. I will constantly engage in self-awareness and introspection, acknowledging my preconceived notions and biases. By recognising my predispositions, I can take deliberate steps to remain open to diverse perspectives and ensure that my research remains objective and impartial (Bukamal, 2022). I will also seek peer input and feedback on my work to challenge my assumptions and foster a more balanced approach to data collection and analysis. Furthermore, I will consciously consider alternative viewpoints, encouraging a well-rounded understanding of the subject. Therefore, as an educated and extensively travelled Kenyan adult male, I acknowledge that these experiences shape my perspective on the role of churches and faith-based institutions in promoting electoral peace in Kenya. While I hold a positive view of their role, I am committed to maintaining reflexivity in my research to ensure the integrity and impartiality of my data collection and interpretation.

1.3 Chapter Summary and Next Chapter

This chapter lays the foundation for the research by offering a comprehensive study background. It includes a thorough review of existing literature to gain insights into the current state of knowledge within the field. This critical analysis also provides the necessary context for this study. The subsequent chapter transitions into the core of the research work. The chapter introduces the study by delving into various aspects such as the context of the study, the rationale behind the chosen research topic, the research aims and questions that will guide the investigation, the significance of the research in contributing to the field, the nature of the study in terms of its methodology and approach, and finally, the scope and limitations of the study. Additionally, the chapter provides a structured overview of the organisation and approach adopted for the study, ensuring a clear roadmap for the readers to understand the research journey.

CHAPTER TWO: BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

2.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the background to the study (the context of electoral violence and how religious organisations play a role in promoting peaceful civic elections), research rationale, research aim and objectives, the significance of the study, the scope and delimitations of the study, and the dissertation structure.

2.1 Background to the Study

In Kenya, every election cycle has been marred by controversy because of a toxic political climate that frequently leads to violence and crises. This results in the nation becoming more divided, with ethnicity-based propaganda hurting Kenyans (Ndulili, 2022). Linke (2020) adds that Kenya has had a turbulent social, political, and economic environment since independence, particularly before and after the general elections. Because of this, every year of general elections has unavoidably shared some traits, including episodes of violence and suffering brought on by tribal conflicts. Consequently, the church has played a significant role in Kenyan politics due to the country's long history of political violence and misery. The church has been outspoken in sounding the alarm and denouncing violence connected to elections. The church is a unique place and acts as an ambassador of peace since churches in Kenya are an unself-conscious mix of ethnicities (Linke, 2020). The church, related institutions, and leaders have been instrumental in fostering peace and stability in Kenyan society.

Peacebuilding is a countermeasure for electoral violence or the lack of societal stability. In fact, according to Leonardsson and Rudd (2018), all efforts to advance peace and end violence are included in the lengthy process known as "peacebuilding." This viewpoint is mirrored by Njoroge (2011), who notes that establishing a culture of nonviolence and creating an institutional framework to support peace are the main components of peacebuilding. Dialogue, networking, facilitation, coordination, reconciliation, involvement, advocacy, mediation, negotiation, and problem-solving workshops (PSW) are a few of the tactics employed in reconciliation and peacebuilding (Njoroge, 2011). Reconciliation entails the process by which people who have been alienated and divided from one another begin to walk side by side once more toward a state of harmony and coherence. It refers to repairing damaged relationships or reunifying individuals alienated and cut off from one another due to conflict (Nets-Zehngut, 2007). Peacebuilding has different tenets that can help foster peace and stability in society.

Because peace and reconciliation represent an exceptional duty, churches have been among peacebuilding actors in places of interethnic violence. Churches act as a unifying factor that unites many people. Due to its international appeal, the church must delve deep into people's inner selves. The Church has a divine mandate to actualise the potential for fostering peace and reconciliation. Therefore, reconciliation is a component of every Christian ministry and the mission of the Church (Njoroge, 2011). The Church's primary source of authority is the Bible. It emphasises several reconciliation and peacebuilding tenets, such as justice, love, peace, and forgiveness. They praise the worth of human life and the legitimacy of the law. The term "body of Christ" refers to the Church. Churches must promote love and harmony among their members to retain their integrity. The cohesion of society and the integrity of the church are threatened by ethnic strife. John Paul II declared that violence is wrong, cannot be used as a solution to issues and is unworthy of a man in the name of his faith in Christ. Because it contradicts the reality of our humanity, violence is a deception. Violence undercuts the principles it claims to support, such as respect for life, freedom, and the dignity of others (Leremore, 2013).

The Church was established on Christ, whom Christians revere as the "Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:1-6, Luke 2:14; 19:38, Ephesians 2:14, 2 Thessalonians 3:16). In John 10:10, He claimed that He had come to give the world abundant life. Therefore, the Church and peace are interdependent. Christ summarised his teachings in the beatitudes: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God" (Matthew 5:9). Reconciliation and peace are mutually exclusive. For the church to fulfil its goal, it is necessary to reduce tensions. In areas of Africa where there are non-governmental organisations (NGOs), the church, ethnic conflicts, and church-based organisations (CBOs) like Caritas, Church of Sweden, Covenant Church, Swedish Ecumenical Women Council, Diakonia, Inter-life, Swedish Mission, and Swedish Mission Council have been working to build peace (Njoroge, 2011).

In the same way, the Church has contributed to peace-making and reconciliation in Kenya. The All-Africa Council of Churches (AACC), the National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCCK), and the Catholic Justice and Peace Commission (CJPC) for the Roman Catholic Church, as well as the All-Africa Council of Churches and several Protestant churches, have all bolstered the Church's involvement in peacebuilding in Kenya. The church, especially the Roman Catholic church, has offered food and shelter to those afflicted by racial unrest to promote peace. This extraordinary deed, unfortunately, makes things easier physically. A clear indication that such efforts to achieve sustainable peace have failed is the resurgence of ethnic hostilities. Additionally, the church has been charged with encouraging murder in other places, like Rwanda. This reveals the limitations of reconciliation and peacebuilding (Leremore, 2013). During the post-election violence in Kenya in 2007, this was also seen as some church leaders and churches faced accusations of being partisan (Daily Nation, 28th January 2008).

However, churches in Kenya have also been contested to be a melting pot where ethnicities are blurred, and Christian identity transcends ethnic identity. The church is generally regarded as a promoter of good morals in society. Therefore, its role in society exhibiting signs of extreme moral decadence cannot be overlooked. Society decays if the church does not promote good morals and peace, and the peaceful co-existence between ethnic groups deteriorates (Cheeseman et al., 2014). Since religious identity and religion can be utilised to foster disintegration, religious actors can, in turn, be instrumental in creating cohesion. Church leaders can help to promote peace even in circumstances that do not have a spiritual component (Linke, 2020). According to Cheeseman et al. (2014), actors should bring on board religious leaders to assist in engaging local communities to participate in politics and spread national cohesion messages to communities. Religious leaders' willingness to be involved in peacebuilding and politics sometimes differ.

In Kenya, for instance, there has been an expansion in religious actors over the past few decades who are either reformists or charismatic. This group of religious leaders has less predisposition than leaders from the recognised churches to participate in political debates and contribute to inter or intrareligious dialogue, reconciliation, and mediation. On the contrary, these religious leaders focus on building their resource base and following. Religious actors' interest can determine their role in supporting democracy and political change (Brown & Sriram, 2012). In Kenya, religious leaders have implicitly supported peaceful elections through emblematic acts like public prayers for a peaceful transition and all candidates. Besides, religious leaders from different and combined settings have been more active in openly encouraging religious tolerance (Cheeseman et al., 2014). This paper will primarily be based on this premise and will analyse how religious leaders are critical in influencing peaceful elections in Kenya.

2.2 Early Research

Churches and church-based institutions have traditionally been regarded as bastions of moral values, compassion, and community cohesion. They are expected to spearhead efforts to foster community peace and stability. These institutions contribute to peace through various means, including interfaith dialogue and reconciliation. In diverse societies, churches, through ecumenical activities, serve as bridges between different faiths, bringing religious leaders together to promote understanding and cooperation. An illustrative example is the aftermath of the Bosnian War when religious leaders from Christian and Muslim communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina engaged in dialogue to heal deep-seated divisions and promote lasting peace.

2.2.1 Positive Influence on Peace and Stability

In fact, over the years, different scholars have evaluated the role of churches and related institutions in peace and stability. For instance, the positive role and influence of churches and religious institutions are captured in extant literature. For example, according to Cox et al. (2015), religious leaders and other religious actors can play significant roles in fostering cohesion, given that religious identity and religion can be exploited to generate fragmentation. Obi (2018) agreed that religious leaders can promote peace even in crises without a religious element. Similarly, according to Mandaville and Nozell (2017), religious leaders can assist development actors in mobilising local communities for political involvement and spreading themes of national cohesion. Religious leaders are ideally suited to participate in campaigns to prevent violence, primarily political and electoral violence, and advance peace since they possess various traits and skills. Religious leaders epitomise credibility and dependability. Religious leaders are frequently seen as credible and dependable because of their well-established community positions. They exude confidence, have moral authority, and are close to the parties engaged in culture and practicality (Haider, 2016). According to Paffenholz (2015), case studies show that religious leaders and community endorsements can legitimise new organisations and social norms. This way, churches and church-based institutions can positively influence societal peace and stability.

The scriptures and doctrines that focus on values like reconciliation, compassion, healing, and forgiveness can inspire people to change their attitudes and behaviours. Additionally, they can rehumanise and alter how people view the "other" (Silvestri & Fba, 2015). Spiritual leaders have a unique leverage that enables them to influence communities. According to case studies, religious leaders can change how sacred texts are understood to delegitimise using violence as a strategy. Understanding the local environment, being present in the local community, and having local legitimacy are all factors that religious leaders usually possess. These factors enable them to mobilise support and perform well at the grassroots level. They occasionally also understand the root causes of conflict and have in-depth contextual knowledge (Cox et al., 2015). These factors uniquely place leaders in positions to foster peace in societies.

Other scholars have identified other tenets of churches and church-based institutions that can foster their positive influence on peace and stability in societies. For example, Omer and Tarusarira (2023) argued churches have access to different power levels, such as societal, governmental and international, which allows them to handle issues on multiple levels. Haider (2016) observed that churches and church-based institutions' large congregations, networks, and affiliations provide efficient communication channels. These institutions can use these attributes to foster community support for peace projects and work with development organisations to access communities and community leaders. From another perspective, in a study conducted in Senegal, Paffenholz (2015) observed that religious actors in Senegal have metaphorically embraced reforming the electoral programs by praying publicly for all candidates and peaceful elections since democracy has effectively pursued public policies in line with religious beliefs. In a study conducted in Nigeria, Dowd (2014) discussed another aspect of churches and related institutions' influence on peace and stability. Dowd (2014) observed that geographical elements can affect peace and stability because religious leaders of all faiths, including Christians and Muslims, who reside in inclusive and diverse religious environments are more likely to promote religious tolerance than those who do not live in such environments.

Other studies have also demonstrated that the effectiveness of religious leaders in resolving violent conflict varies. People who live in areas with a thick layer of religious institutions were more informed about complaints among adherents and better able to coordinate attempts to resolve conflicts. Within religious groups, a thick layer of institutions strengthens contacts and networks horizontally and vertically. Horizontal networks comprise shared religious ideals, signs, and behaviours, such as performing religious ceremonies and festivals, incorporating shared religious standards, symbols, and behaviours, such as performing religious traditions and festivals spanning non-religious divisions (De Juan et al., 2015). Vertical networks, such as religious services and prayer groups, link religious leaders and followers. Such routine interactions between religious leaders and followers allow believers to alert them to escalating tensions before they become public, and they also enable religious leaders to denounce violence and urge restraint and peace (De Juan et al., 2015). Nepal's Muslim, Hindu, and Buddhist populations have all benefited from the mediation and conflict-resolution efforts of local religious institutions and actors. Strong networks are necessary for them to serve this role, in part. In Lombok, Indonesia, Kingsley (2012) discovered that organisational networks that encourage allegiance and patronage sources frequently support the dominance of Muslim religious leaders, such as social services provision and Islamic boarding schools.

The way a given religion is organised affects how influential religious leaders are. The capacity of religious leaders to mobilise religious identities varies. According to Chhibber and Sekhon (2016), this is due to the organisational structure of the religion. In congregational beliefs, religious leaders who deliver sermons are more likely capable of mobilising citizens along religious lines than individuals with a more constrained role. In contrast to Hindus, they found that Muslims have more faith in such electoral petitions when their leaders utilise religious (Muslim) signals in their Muslim and Hindu reactions to an Indian Get-Out-To-Vote experiment study. They relate this to the unique design of Hindu temples, where worshippers frequently go to pray alone, and Hindu priests have limited functions. In contrast, as demonstrated by Chhibber and Sekhon (2016), mosques are gathering spaces where community members can gather to hear sermons on religion or social and political topics that are significant to the community from the religious leader (the imam).

The readiness of religious leaders to participate in politics and peacebuilding may vary. In recent decades, there has been an increase in new religious players, many of whom are charismatic or reformists, particularly in African nations, including Kenya. They have shown less willingness to participate in political discussions and to engage in inter- or intra-religious dialogue, mediation, or reconciliation than leaders from traditional churches. Instead, they have concentrated on increasing their congregations and resource networks (Cooke, 2015). Their objectives can influence religious institutions and leaders' roles in promoting political reform. Democracy can affect religious players' role in promoting political reform and democracy. Villalón (2015) demonstrates that in addition to ideology, appraisals of one's benefits and drawbacks significantly influence the motivations and postures of religious actors.

Indeed, different studies have articulated specific actions that churches and related institutions take to foster peace and stability. These institutions engage in peace messaging (Abu-Nimer, 2015; Afolabi & Avasiloae, 2019; Alava & Ssentongo, 2018; Downie, 2015; Haider, 2016; Mandaville & Nozell, 2017; Omer & Tarusarira, 2023; Suprpto, 2015). For example, Suprpto (2015) concluded in a study of the elections in Lombok, Indonesia, in 2008 that the active role played by Muslim religious leaders (Tuan Guru) was significantly responsible for the absence of violence on election day and throughout the transitional period between the election and the installation of the new government. The Tuan Guru oversees the mosques and elsewhere on the island. By employing religious teachings and explicit instructions that were aired over the mosque's loudspeakers to followers, they were successful in their attempts to deter violence. A study in Uganda made similar conclusions. In Uganda, independent religious leaders have traditionally taken a more active interest in political matters than interfaith organisations or particular faiths or denominations. For instance, Bishop Zac Niringiye of the Anglican Church pushed for political change in his sermons by calling for a procedure for elections and for President Museveni to resign and cede power peacefully (Alava & Ssentongo, 2018). However, as Downie (2015) emphasises, such vocal religious figures who take on social and political issues still need to be clarified.

Another critical avenue through which churches and related institutions influence peace and stability is through debates, civic education, and election monitoring. Studies have demonstrated that religious leaders have frequently contributed to civic education, presidential debates, and electoral monitoring through more significant groupings (Afolabi & Avasiloae, 2019; Downie, 2015; Haider, 2016; Kadayifci-Orellana, 2013). For instance, the Ugandan Christian Council (UJCC), a confederation of Christian groups, has been participating in election observation and civic education in Uganda (Haider, 2016). Similarly, to lessen the possibility of election-related violence, DREP, an NGO created in 2013 by Christian religious leaders and co-chaired by Christian and Muslim leaders, held civic education programs throughout Nigeria in 2015. It sought to lessen the number of invalid votes, a significant potential source of disagreement. To encourage young voters to obtain voter cards from the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and cast their ballots, DREP also sponsored awareness-raising activities with them (Afolabi & Avasiloae, 2019). In Tanzania, as Downie (2015) observed, candidates from the major ruling party reacted angrily to the Catholic Church's initiatives to promote civic education during the 2010 election campaign. Although the candidates' pastoral letter on civic education only urged readers to make informed political decisions based on candidates' suitability for government, the candidates mistook the stern language on corruption for a hostile intervention because they believed it to be an implied criticism of their performance in office. Then, President-elect Jakaya Kikwete condemned such publications, claiming they would persuade Tanzanians to vote by the precepts of their religions. These trends demonstrate the churches and related institutions' capacity to influence societal peace and stability positively.

Other specific actions by churches and related institutions have been identified in numerous publications. For example, churches and related institutions have participated in dialogue for peace (Abu-Nimer, 2015; Afolabi & Avasiloae, 2019; Cox et al., 2015; Dowd, 2014; Haider, 2016; Kadayifci-Orellana, 2013; Mandaville & Nozell, 2017; Steen-Johnsen, 2020; Tarusarira, 2020; UNDP, 2014).

For example, according to Abu-Nimer (2015), in Sri Lanka, attempts have also been made to engage religious leaders in inter-religious work to advance reconciliation and peace, focusing on fostering horizontal connections between communities, including developing relationships through interactions and collaboration on modest, concrete tasks. Along with prayer sessions, panel discussions, and workshops, there has also been an emphasis on all religions' benevolent teachings and universal truths. However, clergy participating in such forums could not convey ideas, tenets, and problems from other faiths to their congregants. Similarly, according to Tarusarira (2020), in Zimbabwe, during the politically charged years of 2008–2009, a group of church leaders from several Christian faiths met to discuss how their churches could help reduce tensions. They founded the Ecumenical Church Leaders Forum (ECLF), which later brought together community and religious leaders from all around the nation to support regional peace discussions and outreach. To help local religious leaders gain knowledge and skills in conflict prevention, management, resolution, and change, UNDP in Zimbabwe began working with ECLF in 2009. Due to this capacity-building, ECLF organised community gatherings for peace and social cohesion, including police, traditional leaders, local councils, and local council leaders.

Finally, different studies have demonstrated another critical role of churches and related institutions in fostering societal peace and stability. These institutions have been involved in implementing binding codes of conduct and behaviour. According to Haider (2016), implementing a code of behaviour can stop tensions from turning into violent conflict by having all parties publicly commit to nonviolence. Indeed, in Guyana, the Inter-Religious Organisation started a campaign and worked to promote a peaceful election in 2006. It encouraged creating and adhering to a Political Party Elections Code of Conduct that firmly focused on a commitment to nonviolence. It chose a highly regarded facilitator (a professor from the University of Guyana) to collaborate with the main political parties on creating the code of conduct. The Elections Commission was also involved. The IRO organised a public campaign for the Code's signing with the Elections Commission, significant donor governments, and development organisations. Despite not signing the Code, the main opposition coalition vowed to uphold its spirit and principles. According to Haider (2016), one of the main reasons the program was successful was because the IRO included a collaborative religious appeal to the populace that cut over the political and racial barriers that encourage violence tied to elections in Guyana.

DREP brought together the three front-runners for governor in the 2015 elections in Nigeria to sign a Peace Accord in which they expressed their desire for free and fair elections and pledged to accept the outcome.

2.2.2 Negative Influence on Peace and Stability

While churches and related institutions have traditionally been expected to be bastions of peace and stability, in some instances, they have been involved in activities that foster discord to the detriment of peace and stability in societies. The divisive role of churches, church-related institutions, and leaders worldwide has also been documented in extant literature. For example, according to Haider (2016), religion and ties between religious groups are not inherently violent, but spiritual entrepreneurs can exploit religion to stir up conflict. In such cases, conflicts may take on religious aspects even when ideological or religious disagreements are not the root of a dispute. According to some researchers, religious undertones exist in almost half of all military confrontations. Although religion can be linked to violence, Chhibber and Sekhon (2016) emphasise that violent religious conflicts only make up a small portion of all armed conflicts. In many places, religious leaders have affected the mobilisation of religious identities (Chhibber and Sekhon, 2016). Case studies show that religious authorities can incite violence. For example, according to a survey of political violence committed by Jews and Muslims in Israel, relative economic and political hardship only encourages violence when interpreted violently by religious authorities (Canetti et al., 2015). In this way, churches, religious institutions, and leaders can potentially cause or exacerbate discord and violence in society.

Other studies have also articulated the divisive role of churches, religious institutions, and leaders and their contribution to violence in societies. According to Basedou and Koos (2015), a literature study concluded that religious leaders may provoke violence and defend it when rivals threaten them and want to maintain and grow their power among followers or political figures. The analysis also emphasises how context is crucial in deciding whether or not religious leaders will advocate violence. The likelihood of calls for violence is predicted to increase in response to close ties between religious and political leaders, existing group disparities, forms of marginalisation, including the marginalisation of religious leaders themselves, and individual beliefs opposed to secularism and tolerance of other faiths.

Further, it is observable that there are numerous instances of religious leaders getting involved in political and electoral unrest and violence. For example, Muslim and Christian religious leaders have allegedly used their ability to limit the social and political dominance of the rival religion in Nigeria to win over followers and influence (Dowd, 2014). This competition has impacted election politics. Religious leaders of the Christian faith in Rivers State were charged with accepting kickbacks while opposing the Muslim candidate for president, General Muhammadu Buhari, by disseminating a pamphlet meant to incite concerns about the country becoming more Islamized under his rule. According to Afolabi and Avasiloae (2019), such activities are thought to have heightened tensions. Religious leaders in Nigeria have been charged with undermining free and fair elections in addition to failing to condemn vote rigging by permitting politicians who won fraudulent elections to organise thanksgiving services in mosques and churches to show gratitude to God for his generosity and suzerainty (Haider, 2016). Religious leaders have occasionally made overt attempts to engage in politics. For instance, Neo-Pentecostal clergy members have taken part in national and local elections in Guatemala, adopting a conservative stance and upholding authoritarian principles. Voter turnout has been increased through the usage of religious ideology. As a result, as Cox et al. (2015) observed, there are now more gaps across communities.

2.3 Research Rationale

Many studies have been conducted to determine the cause of election-related violence and how to find lasting solutions. Some of these studies have focused on the drivers of conflict and have identified some of the contributors to violence, such as the fear of excluding some ethnic groups from power and, as such, the need to access resources. Other studies have shown that the primary enabler for this exclusion is corruption and clientelism, which undermine issue-based politics and expose the political elite's peace and reform process to manipulation. Additionally, other studies have focused on the research topic but have done so in different contexts. For instance, Nyakundi (2021) studied “the influence of the church on peaceful civic elections in Borabu Sub-County, Nyamira County, Kenya”. Other researchers have studied related topics. For instance, Haider (2016) studied “Religious leaders and the prevention of electoral violence.” From the literature, no study has investigated the church’s influence on electoral peace in Kenya in the context of the 2007 to 2022 elections. Therefore, this research bridges this gap by studying how the church as a political stakeholder influences peaceful civic elections in Kenya.

2.4 Research Aim and Question

This paper aims to determine the churches' role and influence on peaceful civic elections and post-election peace and stability in Kenya. Accordingly, the central question of this research is: What role do the church and religious institutions play in influencing peace in civic elections in Kenya? To support the realisation of the overall aim of the study, the specific research questions are:

1. To what extent do churches and religious leaders in Kenya actively endorse specific political candidates or parties during civic elections, and how does this influence the voting behaviour of their congregants?
2. How do churches and church leaders in Kenya contribute to fostering interfaith dialogue and cooperation during civic elections, and to what extent does this collaborative effort contribute to the overall peace and stability of the electoral process?
3. What are the perceived impacts of Christian teachings and values on the attitudes and behaviours of voters in Kenya, particularly concerning issues related to peace, justice, and civic responsibility during the electoral period?

2.5 Significance of the Research

The research findings will have implications for the development of policy on peaceful elections across the country from a religious perspective. Although religion is a major player in influencing peaceful civic elections, there needs to be a clear policy to help harness the potential of religious organisations and leaders in addressing the issue of recurrent conflicts in the country. Civic education on the importance of peaceful elections has been a preserve of the government and international organisations. Religious individuals and organisations participate in this process voluntarily or to complement the efforts of other players. Therefore, it is essential to conduct more research on the subject and identify ways the church can be integrated into the efforts to enhance peaceful elections in Kenya. This research finding will help policymakers develop policies for a more coordinated system that allows religious entities to contribute to peaceful elections.

2.6 Nature of the Study

Employing a systematic literature review for data collection and analysis, this qualitative study investigates how the church supports peaceful civic elections in Kenya. Systematic reviews are intended to consider all currently available data, assess the quality of that evidence, and provide a precise, repeatable answer to a particular research issue. The SR methodology relies on explicit, systematic techniques to eliminate bias in the selection and inclusion of studies, assess the calibre of the included studies, and objectively summarise them. This method seeks to increase transparency and lessen the danger of bias at each stage of the review procedure (Lame, 2019).

Typically, systematic literature reviews involve a thorough search to locate all relevant unpublished and published research regarding a topic, a systematic search results integration, and a criticism of the quantity, type, and calibre of evidence about a particular issue (Snyder, 2019). This approach involves a six-step process for gathering and analysing pertinent data, including defining the research question, finding studies (using a search strategy), screening the studies that were retrieved using inclusion and exclusion criteria, evaluating the quality of the studies included, extracting the data, analysing and presenting the data, and deriving conclusions (Lame, 2019). This study will follow these specified processes to gather and analyse relevant data on the subject to respond to the research question.

2.7 Scope and Limitations of the Study

This study will explore the church's role in influencing peaceful civic elections in Kenya. The study will focus on the approaches or strategies used by the church to control peaceful civic polls focusing on the 2007 to 2022 elections. Therefore, the study will be limited to these election periods. Also, the study will focus on the role of NCKK as the religious organisation in Kenya charged with the mandate of peacebuilding during and after elections, among other responsibilities. In this way, the study will be limited to getting diversified perspectives from other religious-based organisations and their influence on peaceful civic elections in Kenya.

2.8 Organization of the Study

The first chapter of this dissertation serves as the gateway to the research. It offers an introductory overview that delineates the core purpose and objectives of the study and establishes the researcher's positionality within the research paradigm. It serves as a compass for navigating the subsequent chapters, providing readers with a clear understanding of the study's scope, significance, and the researcher's perspective.

Following the introduction, the second chapter discusses the background information, contextualising the study. This chapter draws upon biblical references, identifies thematic elements, and extensively explores existing literature to construct a strong foundation for understanding the complex interplay between churches and related institutions and their impact on peace and societal stability. Drawing upon biblical narratives and themes, this chapter provides a historical backdrop and elucidates the study's ethical and moral dimensions.

The third chapter describes the methodological strategies adopted for the study. It elucidates the chosen approach and theoretical framework that guide the research. This chapter outlines the research methods employed, the rationale behind their selection, and their alignment with the study's objectives. Simultaneously, it describes the theoretical underpinnings that scaffold the research, offering a conceptual lens through which the findings will be interpreted. This methodological and theoretical discourse lays the groundwork for a systematic and rigorous investigation.

The fourth chapter presents the empirical findings of the systematic review research approach. It presents the raw data, evidence, and observations collected during the study. Through a structured presentation, this chapter provides readers with a comprehensive snapshot of the study's findings, setting the stage for the subsequent chapter's in-depth analysis.

The fifth chapter presents and discusses the nuanced implications of the study's findings. It goes beyond the surface, exploring the empirical evidence's intricacies, patterns, and potential implications. This chapter engages in a scholarly dialogue through a critical lens, offering insights and interpretations that contribute to the broader understanding of the study's subject matter based on the adopted theoretical underpinnings.

The final chapter, Chapter Six, is the culmination of the research journey. It draws conclusions based on the study's findings, aligning them with the overarching research aim and specific research questions. This concluding chapter synthesises the findings from the study, providing a cohesive narrative that resonates with the study's purpose. It offers a reflective space for the researcher to draw implications, suggest avenues for future research, and ultimately, bring the research endeavour to a meaningful and insightful close through specific recommendations and a call for action.

2.9 Summary and Next Chapter

This introductory chapter serves as the bedrock of this research. It provides a thorough foundation for understanding the study's context, significance, and rationale. The background section contextualises the research problem within the broader socio-political landscape of Kenya, shedding light on the historical and contemporary factors that have paved the way for exploring the church and religious institutions' role in civic elections. This section offers readers a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter's relevance and timeliness. The justification and rationale articulate the reasons behind this research, emphasising the societal and scholarly gaps the study seeks to address. It delineates why an investigation into the influence of the church and religious institutions on peace in civic elections in Kenya is not only pertinent but also crucial for a nuanced comprehension of the electoral dynamics. The problem statement discusses the research gap and the issue the study aims to address. It outlines the key issues that prompt the research, setting the stage for the subsequent research questions. The research objective delineated the overarching goal and specific targets the study endeavours to achieve, providing a roadmap for the research process. The scope of the study outlines the boundaries and limitations within which the research will operate. This section describes the specific aspects, geographical regions, and temporal constraints that define the study's focus. It clarifies what falls within the purview of the investigation and what lies beyond its intended scope.

The introductory chapter also reviews extant research to provide a holistic perspective and situate the current study within the existing body of knowledge. This literature review critically analyses relevant studies and empirical findings contributing to understanding the interplay between churches and related institutions and civic elections in Kenya. This synthesis of existing knowledge informs the study's context and highlights gaps that the present research aims to fill. The subsequent chapter, the methodology chapter, will act as the blueprint for the research process. It will explore the research methods employed, detailing the rationale behind their selection and alignment with the research objectives. This chapter will present a comprehensive discussion of the systematic literature review methodology. This will describe the criteria for literature selection, data extraction processes, and the analytical framework employed to synthesise and interpret the findings from the existing body of knowledge. The methodology chapter will guide the systematic and rigorous execution of the research, ensuring the reliability and validity of the study's outcomes.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Introduction

This study investigated the role and influence of churches and related organisations on peace and stability in Kenya during and after elections, focusing on the 2007 and subsequent elections. To evaluate earlier studies and offer a response to the research question, the study used a qualitative systematic review methodology. Using different tools, such as COVIDENCE and Mendeley, content analysis was used to narratively synthesise the independent research findings in the systematic review methodological approach (Xiao & Watson, 2019). The author developed the study topic and goal and looked for pertinent prior material, adhering to the six standard steps for preparing a systematic review study. In line with the postulations of Xiao and Watson (2019), the researcher also extracted and analysed data and assessed the primary study's advantages.

3.2 Systematic Review Methodology Description

Different research methods and strategies are available for conducting different research studies. Research methods and strategies can be qualitative or quantitative, taking different approaches in line with the specific method adopted for the study. For this study, the systematic literature review methodology was adopted. According to Snyder (2019), a systematic review is a method and strategy for discovering, analysing, and combining data from significant research. Further, according to Snyder (2019), a systematic review aims to locate all empirical data that satisfies the inclusion criteria and addresses a specific research question or hypothesis. Bias can be averted, and trustworthy results that allow for judgments may be generated by employing precise and systematic approaches for assessing articles and other pertinent data.

Further, according to Lame (2019), systematic reviews combine scientific data to provide a clear, repeatable response to a specific research topic. These reviews aim to include all relevant data on the subject and evaluate the quality of this data. The SR approach relies on transparent, systematic methods to reduce bias in the selection and inclusion of research studies, to assess the calibre of each study included, and to objectively sum up those studies to minimise the risk for bias and increase transparency at every stage of the review process (Lame, 2019). Because it will help to reduce bias, as observed by Snyder (2019), while critically analysing the body of existing research to address the research question, this research methodology is appropriate for this study.

3.2 Justification for the Selection of the Systematic Review Methodology

Various methods and strategies are at researchers' disposal, each tailored to address specific inquiries and objectives. In the context of this study, the adoption of the systematic literature review method was deemed particularly fitting. It is worth noting that systematic reviews have historically been less common in the social sciences (Petticrew & Roberts, 2008). However, the scholarly landscape has continued to evolve. Systematic reviews have become increasingly recognised and used in social sciences. Snyder (2019) articulated that systematic reviews represent a meticulous approach to synthesising empirical evidence. This method involves the systematic collection, analysis, description, critical appraisal, and summarisation of interpretations from various studies. Positioned at the top of the hierarchy of evidence (Daly et al., 2007), systematic reviews inherently carry a weight of reliability and robustness. The assignment of levels of evidence is based on factors such as research design, study quality, and relevance to patient care, with higher levels indicating a lower risk of bias.

Given the array of studies in the social sciences that have explored the role and influence of churches on peace during and after elections in Kenya, the decision to employ a systematic review is driven by a desire to move beyond duplicative methodologies. As observed, various research methodologies have been employed in these studies, making the synthesis of findings challenging. In this context, a systematic review becomes a methodologically sound choice for collating and distilling diverse research outcomes into a cohesive body of evidence. As highlighted by Petticrew and Roberts (2008) and Daly et al. (2007), this enables the derivation of concrete, evidence-based recommendations, contributing substantially to the scholarly field.

Moreover, incorporating the systematic review methodology aligns with a conscientious recognition of the researcher's positionality and the commitment to reflexivity. Addressing potential biases and ensuring a rigorous and scientific approach to synthesising existing literature further fortifies the appropriateness of this methodology. By explicitly acknowledging the role of the researcher in shaping the study and continuously reflecting on potential biases, the systematic review method becomes a robust and transparent means of advancing knowledge in a field where the researcher's subjectivity can play a crucial role. In essence, this study's adoption of systematic reviews is a methodologically sound and theoretically grounded approach. It builds on the strengths of existing research and contributes to the scientific rigour of the study. It offers a platform for concrete recommendations that can guide the actions of churches and related institutions in fostering peace and stability during electoral periods in Kenya.

3.3 Data Collection

The overarching aim of this study is to investigate the role and influence of churches and related institutions as a stakeholder in Kenyan society on peaceful civic elections in Kenya during and after the elections. In line with the data collection approach applied in systematic reviews, the first phase of the methodology involved identifying articles for inclusion in the study. The researcher searched the literature from different databases to find the articles used for the review. Databases such as CINAHL, Google Scholar, JSTOR, and EMBASE are common databases used in identifying and selecting the literature to be included in a systematic review (Hristidis et al., 2003). Further, according to Hristidis et al. (2003), in major databases such as JSTOR and Scopus, millions of scientific publications are added annually to the existing pool of research papers. This makes it increasingly difficult for researchers to identify the most relevant publication for their study. Using keywords and phrases helps narrow the search and saves time wading through millions of articles in a database (Hristidis et al., 2003). Accordingly, different Boolean phrases "AND" and "OR" as well as the keywords "religious leaders' initiatives", "the role of the church", "Kenya elections 2013/2017/2022", "religious leaders influence", "NCKK role in Kenya's peaceful elections" were utilised. The search results also contained synonyms for these phrases.

3.3.1 Study Selection (Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria)

Importantly, in systematic literature reviews, it is critical to establish inclusion and exclusion criteria to determine which articles to include and exclude from the study. Inclusion and exclusion criteria are critical in secondary research because they help the researcher ensure that the selected data sources align with the study objectives and contribute to study reliability and validity (Xiao & Watson, 2019). These criteria are crucial, especially in literature search and study selection processes, as they help the research focus on high-quality information sources. Lame (2019) further added that inclusion and exclusion criteria are necessary for five reasons: ensuring consistency, quality control, reducing bias, and helping the researcher to remain focused. The literature chosen for the study must directly address one of the two review questions listed above. Search terms should, therefore, contain things like privatisation, public entities, Kuwait, impact, and service quality. This guidance on the setting of the inclusion and exclusion criteria formed the basis for developing the standards for this study.

Accordingly, the papers identified and evaluated for inclusion in the study were screened using the inclusion and exclusion criteria. The screening criteria include all English-language articles published between 2007 and 2023 that address the research problem. Articles published before 2007 that cannot be read in their entirety are not in English, and do not connect to or answer the study's questions were eliminated. The table below shows the PICOS that were used for the initial search.

P: Population	The Church (NCCCK)
I: Phenomenon of interest	2007-2022 Kenya civic elections
Co: Context	Church influence on peaceful civic elections in Kenya
S: Types of studies	English language, publication done between 2007 and 2023, and available in full text

Table 1: PICOS Criteria

3.3.2 Quality Assessment

In the crucial task of evaluating the quality of the included studies, a comprehensive and multi-faceted approach was employed. The assessment was structured based on various parameters that collectively contribute to the reliability and validity of research studies. Fundamental tenets such as the source's reliability, the authors' credentials, the original study's methodology, and the coherence and clarity of the conclusions were methodically scrutinised (Hristidis et al., 2003). These elements played a pivotal role in shaping the quality rating assigned to each study and subsequent inclusion in the review.

The reliability of the source was a crucial consideration in this evaluation process. Rigorous attention was paid to the reputation and credibility of the publications, journals, or platforms from which the studies were sourced, which is further described in the presentation of findings. This criterion ensured that the information utilised in the thesis was sourced from reputable and authoritative publications. This approach bolstered the overall trustworthiness of the findings. Equally significant in this evaluation was an assessment of the author's credentials. The academic and professional backgrounds of the authors were considered. It involved weighing their expertise and experience in the field. This criterion was a vital indicator of the study's potential reliability and the authority to present the findings.

A critical examination of the original study's methodology was also pivotal in fostering the robustness of the quality assessment process. The quality evaluation process scrutinised the robustness, appropriateness, and transparency of the research design, data collection methods, and analysis techniques. This methodological scrutiny aimed to ascertain the validity of the study's outcomes and the extent to which the research aligns with accepted standards and best practices in scholarly activities.

Finally, the coherence and clarity of the conclusions drawn in each study played a decisive role in the overall quality rating. The ability of the authors to present clear, logically structured, and well-supported conclusions contributed to the reliability of the evidence derived from the studies. The cumulative quality ratings assigned to each study were then strategically employed in shaping the overall evaluation and findings of the dissertation. This systematic and comprehensive methodology ensured that the weight allocated to each study was proportionate to its quality, thereby contributing to the overall robustness and credibility of the synthesised literature. The methodology employed demonstrates a commitment to a systematic, thorough, and objective assessment of the body of literature. This approach is vital, as observed by Hristidis et al., 2003, in achieving a nuanced understanding of the subject matter. By carefully evaluating the quality of included studies, the research methodology becomes a reliable foundation for deriving meaningful insights, drawing well-informed conclusions, and making recommendations in this specific area of study.

3.4 Data Extraction

After selecting the final papers for inclusion in the study, the focus shifted to the critical data extraction phase. This step in the research process focused on the overarching elements and objectives that defined the study using COVIDENCE and Mendeley. The data extraction strategy was aligned with the specific research questions of the research. This strategy ensured that the collected information addressed the research questions and objectives. The focus was on extracting information that resonated with each study's unique context and nuances in line with this study's focus (Petticrew & Roberts, 2008). The findings of each paper were systematically evaluated to identify the key insights, trends, and outcomes that emerged from the research. This systematic approach allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the different perspectives presented in extant literature.

Further, the methodology used in each study was a central consideration during the data extraction process. Recognising the significance of methodology in shaping the reliability and validity of findings, especially the research designs, sampling techniques, and analytical methods employed by the authors, is critical in systematic reviews (Hristidis et al., 2003). In this study, this approach ensured that the extracted data captured the outcomes and reflected the methodological rigour underpinning the studies. The extraction of data was customised. It focused on ensuring the approach aligned with this study's specific nuances and objectives. This precision was instrumental in capturing the richness of information embedded in each paper, contributing to the depth and breadth of the synthesised data set.

The data extraction process served as a bridge between the selected studies and the research's overarching objective and specific questions. It was an endeavour guided by the need to glean meaningful insights from the findings of each study while respecting the unique methodologies employed. This focused approach to data extraction positioned the study to derive a nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the subject matter. It laid the foundation for insightful analysis and interpretation in subsequent phases of the research.

3.6 Data Synthesis and Analysis

The data analysis was done using an integrative methodology, and the end product is a summary that can be utilised for presentation and compilation. This study aimed to characterise, extract, and summarise the data from various publications using the pre-existing literature discovered throughout the search process (Boland et al., 2017). Content analysis will be the study's primary method of data analysis for the information it will find during the search process. The chosen material is organised through content analysis in such a way that, despite its consciousness and clarity, its informativeness emerges. Because it renders the source material more accessible to understand and enables making clear conclusions about the subject being examined, qualitative content analysis was specifically chosen for this study (Devi Prasad, 2019).

For this review, the data-driven qualitative content analysis was divided into three sections: grouping, reducing, and creating theoretical conceptions. All information in the data unrelated to the study will be removed during the reduction step. To accomplish this, the opening sentences of the articles will be highlighted and provided in a single file, along with the sentences that address the thesis question. The reduced expressions extracted in the first stage must be reviewed and combined into groups according to the phenomenon they will describe in the second stage. There will, therefore, be subcategories with names corresponding to their contents. The higher categories formed from subcategories will then be joined to form the primary types, which will then be combined to form linking categories connected to the research problem. The last stage will combine the categories based on the recently developed theoretical ideas. The study's research question will be answered using several theoretical perspectives (Devi Prasad, 2019).

3.3 Theoretical Framework

3.3.1 Peacebuilding Theory

This paper will apply the Peacebuilding theory to analyse church leaders' role in influencing the peaceful civic election in Kenya. The idea of peacebuilding followed Galtung's inaugural usage of the phrase "peacebuilding" and was coined by Lederach in 1997 (Gawerc, 2006). According to Ndeche and Iroye (2022), peacebuilding is a dynamic approach and framework for promoting peaceful third-party contacts in which different actors engage in various concurrent or successive activities. Proactive peacebuilding calls for third-party interveners to attempt to intervene before a dispute starts to prevent the house from catching fire (Ndeche & Iroye, 2022).

Holistic peacebuilding is regularly carried out for global and regional governance to address the underlying root causes of disputes, from avoidance to settlement and reformation. According to the peacebuilding theory, a conflict must exist until a third party can get involved proactively or reactively. According to theory and practice, peacebuilding entails multilateral rather than unilateral civic engagement through proactive prosocial behaviours (author, forthcoming). While Longpoe (2020) contends that peacebuilding theory targets the root causes of violent conflict to make them less likely in the future, Gawerc (2006) argued that peacebuilding must concurrently combine the essential elements of conflict resolution and social justice.

This modern theory is helpful at all conflict analysis and intervention stages to de-escalate the situation and bring about lasting peace. In particular, it offers a conceptual and practical framework for distributive, restorative justice after mass violence, armed conflict, or human rights breaches (Ndeche & Iroye, 2022). This theory is relevant to the study because it will aid in understanding Kenya's national church council and other religious-based institutions' role in fostering peaceful elections through peacebuilding tactics.

3.3.2 Secularism

Secularism's theoretical perspective will also be a part of the theoretical underpinning of this study. The word "secularisation," which laid the foundation for the development of the secularism theory, first came into use in 1648, thirty years after the beginning of the European Wars (Reaves, 2012). It pertains to the rulers being given sole possession of church property. Tallier informed the French National Assembly later in 1789 that all religious items were ready for distribution throughout the nation following the French Revolution. Additionally, George Jack Holyoaked launched a national protest movement and coined the term "Secularism" in 1851. Secularisation was a part of the progress of the revolution. Despite being no more than a disintegrating and flawed process, secularisation has maintained a positive element.

Secularisation today, according to Peter Berger, is the process of removing particular facets of society and culture from the domination of religious institutions and emblems (Reaves, 2012). George Ostler's definition of the word "secular" in the Oxford Dictionary of Current English might thus be characterised as "worldly," simply having a link to things relevant to the current life. It is neither ecclesiastical nor does it appear in monastic viewpoints. When interpreted negatively, it implies separation from religion or religious doctrine (Reaves, 2012).

In the words of D.E. Smith, a secular state respects both private and institutional freedom of religion, accords equal treatment to all citizens, is not legally obligated to any particular religion, and neither strives to advance nor oppose it. According to V.P. Luthara, it is a state unattached to, unrelated to, and not dedicated to religion. Each individual is viewed by the secular state as a citizen, not as a member of a particular faith. When defining citizenship, religion loses importance because a person's religious convictions do not influence their liberties or responsibilities (Chishti, 2004).

Religious freedom is the unrestricted ability of an individual to consider and discuss with other people the relative advantages of various religions before concluding. This structure excludes the involvement of the state. The state cannot impose religious ideas on people or force them to practice a particular faith. It cannot compel him to pay taxes to support a specific religion. Therefore, there are only a few instances in which a secular state has a right to regulate religious expression for public morality, safety, or health (Reaves, 2012). In a secular state, individual freedom of conscience and freedom of association for religious purposes are strictly protected. All religious organisations have the freedom to plan and run their religious affairs.

Additionally, the church can buy property. Also, it can create and run philanthropic and educational institutions (Chishti, 2004). In a secular state, a person is not regarded as a citizen or a member of a particular religious group regarding citizenship. As Reaves (2012) observed, religion ceases to be relevant when defining citizenship. Secularism views the state's and religion's functions as distinct spheres of human action. A secular state has no business promoting, regulating, directing, or otherwise interfering with religion. In a limited sense, all religions are separate from the state and subordinate to it as voluntary associations of individuals (Reaves, 2012). Religious organisations are subject to state general laws and are in charge of properly carrying out their civil obligations. In this regard, the state sees religions as similar to other voluntary organisations founded on shared social, cultural, or economic goals. A secular state mandates that its citizens refrain from discriminating against any citizen based on religion, sex, caste, or any other category while upholding fundamental civil rights (Reaves, 2012). Additionally, it allows for the freedom of conscience and the free exercise of one's religion as long as it doesn't interfere with public morality, order, or health. In the interest of public decency and peace, a secular state may also reserve the power to pass laws restricting religious practices or making provisions for advancing socially backward communities (Chishti, 2004).

Therefore, from the secularism theoretical perspective, a secular state is always there to ensure the well-being of its citizens and give them equal opportunities for personal growth. Beyond this planet, it does not recognise any other worlds. Therefore, the following characteristics of a secular state may be listed (Reaves, 2012). This theory will help evaluate whether Kenya is a secular state and how this tenet has influenced the role and influence of churches in peacebuilding toward peace during and after elections.

3.4 Justification of the Selected Theoretical Perspectives

The selection of theoretical frameworks is a critical decision in shaping the scholarly foundation of any study. Theories form the basis for interpreting a study's findings within broader scholarly pursuits (Gelso, 2006). In examining the role and influence of churches and related institutions on peace during and after elections in Kenya, adopting secularism and peacebuilding theories is a robust and justified choice.

As a theoretical lens, secularism provides a nuanced perspective on the relationship between religious institutions and the state (Reaves, 2012). In Kenya, where diverse religious affiliations coexist, secularism offers an analytical framework to understand the dynamics of the separation or collaboration between religious entities and political structures. By exploring the degree of secularism in the Kenyan political landscape, the study can elucidate how the autonomy or integration of religious institutions shapes their involvement in fostering peace during the election process. Secularism theory, therefore, becomes a pertinent tool for dissecting the intricate connections between religion and politics in Kenya, contributing to a comprehensive understanding of the contextual factors influencing peacebuilding efforts.

Complementing secularism, peacebuilding theory focuses on the mechanisms and processes contributing to peace establishment and maintenance. In the aftermath of elections, the role of churches in peacebuilding becomes pivotal. The peacebuilding theory provides a conceptual framework for assessing their impact. Peacebuilding theory discusses the multi-faceted dimensions of peace, including social, economic, and political aspects (Ndeche & Iroye, 2022; Gawerc, 2006). The research can systematically analyse how churches foster sustainable peace post-election by incorporating peacebuilding theories into the study. This theoretical approach identifies specific peacebuilding mechanisms that churches and related institutions employ, facilitating a comprehensive exploration of their impact on societal harmony.

Their compatibility with the research objectives further strengthens the justification for employing secularism and peacebuilding theories. Secularism, by examining the relationship between religious and political spheres, aligns with exploring the influence of churches in civic elections. Simultaneously, peacebuilding theories resonate with the study's aim to understand how churches contribute to peace during and after elections, providing a framework for dissecting the intricate dynamics of peace processes. These theories are not mutually exclusive; they can be integrated to offer a holistic understanding of the complex interplay between religious institutions, political structures, and the pursuit of peace. By adopting a dual-theoretical approach, the study gains the flexibility to capture the contextual intricacies of religious involvement in politics (through secularism) and the specific mechanisms through which peace is constructed and sustained (through peacebuilding theories). The use of secularism and peacebuilding theories in the study of the role and influence of churches and related institutions on peace during and after elections in Kenya is justified by their analytical relevance, alignment with research objectives, and capacity to provide a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted dynamics at play in this critical intersection of religion, politics, and peacebuilding.

3.4 Chapter Summary and the Next Chapter

Within this chapter, the research methodology of this study has been described in detail. A justification for the selected approach has also been discussed. The comprehensive methodological discussion serves as a guiding compass, delineating the systematic steps undertaken to gather, analyse, and interpret the wealth of data that underpins this research endeavour. This elucidation ensures transparency and clarifies the research process, offering readers a holistic understanding of the methodological rigour employed in the study.

The rationale underpinning the chosen methodology is vital. This rationale extends beyond explaining the procedures and methods used in the study. It critically addresses the appropriateness of the selected methods in the context of the study's objectives and the nuanced nature of the research question. By aligning the chosen methods with the research inquiry, the rationale demonstrates that the focus was a purposeful and tailored approach. It ensures that the data collected is relevant and can address the overarching research objectives.

In addition to the methodological discussion, this chapter delves into the theoretical framework that forms the intellectual scaffolding of the study. The theoretical underpinnings are conceptual elements integral to the research's foundation. As the study unfolds, these theoretical foundations will play a critical role in guiding the interpretation of data and framing the analysis within a broader scholarly discourse. The chosen theoretical framework provides a lens through which the complex interplay of variables and relationships can be understood. The theories add depth and theoretical rigour to the subsequent analysis.

Looking ahead, the upcoming chapter will present the findings of the study. The groundwork laid in this methodology chapter ensures that the research outcomes are robust and grounded in a methodologically sound and theoretically informed framework. As the narrative progresses to the findings, the methodological and theoretical threads intricately woven in this chapter will continue to shape the study. This approach will ensure a cohesive and insightful exploration of the role and influence of churches and related institutions on peace during and after elections.

CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

4.0 Introduction

In this chapter, the study's findings are presented. Building upon the groundwork laid in Chapter Three, where the methodological blueprint was described, this chapter provides a detailed description of identifying and including articles in the systematic review. The selection process, guided by the systematic approach outlined in Chapter Three, forms the foundation upon which the subsequent findings rest. The chapter begins by explaining the article identification and inclusion process, shedding light on the criteria employed to select articles that contribute meaningfully to the study. The reader is guided through the systematic steps undertaken to sift through the vast literature, ensuring that the chosen articles align with the research objectives and methodological rigour outlined in earlier chapters. This transparent exposition of the inclusion process serves as a record of methodological robustness and a reference point for readers seeking to understand the scope and selection criteria applied in assembling the study's body of articles.

Following the comprehensive discussion on article identification and inclusion, the chapter presents the findings based on the themes that emerged while evaluating the selected articles. Each theme is a basis for organising and presenting insights from the literature. The narrative flows seamlessly, guiding the reader through a thematic exploration of the diverse perspectives, patterns, and trends uncovered within the synthesised body of literature.

The findings are not mere data points. The chapter presents a nuanced and comprehensive account of the synthesised knowledge, offering a holistic view of the role and influence of churches and related institutions on peace during and after elections. Each theme is a subheading within the chapter, allowing for an in-depth exploration of specific aspects and ensuring that the findings are presented systematically and interpreted within the broader context of the research questions and theoretical framework. This chapter bridges the methodology and the upcoming analysis and discussion. It represents the culmination of a systematic and rigorous research process, where the identified articles are not building blocks that contribute to a deeper understanding of the complex dynamics at the intersection of religious institutions, elections, and peace. The chapter invites readers to journey through the synthesised findings, encouraging thoughtful reflection and engagement with the multifaceted dimensions of the study's subject matter.

4.1 Search and Inclusion Process

This section describes the process used to identify and include articles in the systematic literature review on the role of church and church institutions in peaceful elections in Kenya. The process involved an organised and systematic approach.

4.1.1 Databases Searched

The first stage of the systematic literature review process commenced with an extensive exploration of scholarly resources across three widely recognised and respected academic databases: Google Scholar, JSTOR, and EBSCO's Religion and Philosophy Database. This approach was designed to cast a wide net and capture a rich tapestry of academic literature about the focus research topic.

Google Scholar, being one of the most expansive and easily accessible search engines for academic content, served as a primary source for casting a broad net across diverse disciplines and sources (Gusenbauer & Haddaway, 2020). JSTOR, renowned for its extensive collection of peer-reviewed journals, offers a wealth of historical and contemporary academic writings (Dhakal Adhikari et al., 2020). It provided access to a repository of academic research spanning numerous fields, enriching the diversity of perspectives and methodologies available for examination in our systematic review. With its specialised focus on religious and philosophical studies, EBSCO's Religion and Philosophy Database added a distinctive dimension to our search. It ensured that the researcher explored religious perspectives, ethical considerations, and philosophical underpinnings relevant to the topic, which may have been less prominently featured in other databases (Fearrien, 2023).

By embarking on this comprehensive search strategy encompassing these three authoritative databases, the objective was to glean scholarly insights from different perspectives. This approach allowed access to a wide array of literature and ensured that the systematic literature review would be well-rounded, encompassing varied viewpoints, methodologies, and historical contexts. In essence, it formed the bedrock of the research, setting the stage for a rigorous and inclusive examination of the role of church and church institutions in the context of peaceful elections in Kenya.

4.1.2 Search Terms and Boolean Operators

In line with the research purpose, question, and objectives, refining the search results as a pivotal step in the systematic literature review process was essential. Search terms, strings, and Boolean operators were used to ensure precision and relevance, employing a strategic approach to fine-tune the exploration of scholarly articles. This strategic approach involved crafting a carefully curated set of search phrases to identify articles directly related to the research question.

Search terms and phrases, such as "Church influence electoral peace in Kenya," "Church electoral peace Kenya," "NCKK peaceful elections Kenya," and "church peaceful elections Kenya," were developed for use in searching different databases. Each search phrase was thoughtfully constructed to capture different facets of the role of church and church institutions in promoting peaceful elections in Kenya. This approach identified a broad spectrum of potentially relevant articles, each contributing a unique perspective or insight to the study. These search terms guided the exploration of the vast academic landscape and helped pinpoint articles most directly aligned with the research objectives. This systematic and nuanced search strategy was employed to unearth a comprehensive range of scholarly sources to inform and enrich our systematic literature review on this crucial topic.

4.1.3 Temporal Advanced Search

In the next phase, establishing a specific year range from 2007 to 2022 represented a deliberate and strategic decision in refining the search for the systematic literature review. This temporal boundary served multiple crucial purposes, aligning the assessment more closely with the study's purpose and objectives. Firstly, the chosen year range ensured that the literature under examination was relevant and contemporary, in line with the study's objectives. Also, this approach focused on research findings and insights that were most germane to the current state of affairs regarding the role of church and church institutions in promoting peaceful elections in Kenya. Furthermore, this temporal focus ensured capturing and incorporating the latest perspectives and developments. Understanding the most recent scholarly discourse becomes essential to providing an up-to-date and comprehensive literature review as political and social landscapes evolve. This approach ensured the capture of contemporary perspectives, alignment with the study's objectives, and presented a comprehensive subject analysis.

4.1.4 Initial Results

A comprehensive initial search across various academic databases marked the start of the systematic literature review. This search yielded 17,500 articles. These search results indicated the research topic's richness and breadth of academic discourse. However, this initial result highlighted the necessity for a more meticulous and structured selection process. It was evident that, from this vast pool of literature, only a carefully curated subset would be chosen for inclusion in our systematic literature review. This emphasised the importance of employing rigorous criteria and systematic methodologies to identify and prioritise articles that would contribute most effectively to our research objectives.

4.1.5 Removal of Duplicates

Any duplicate articles were removed to ensure the integrity of the search results. Mendeley® and COVIDENCE® were used to facilitate this cleaning process. More specifically, after the identified articles were imported into Mendeley, the program was used to identify and remove duplicated articles in the library. Twenty-two duplicates were removed, mainly from JSTOR and Google Scholar.

4.1.6 Voting Systems

Within the COVIDENCE® platform, implementing a structured and systematic voting system was essential to our systematic literature review process. This voting system helped identify the initially identified articles, facilitating a more efficient and targeted selection process. The voting system itself was straightforward yet immensely effective, employing three distinct categories: "yes," "maybe," and "no" as contained in the program. These categories served as a decisive tool for assessing the initial article batch. Each class carried its significance in the evaluation process.

Firstly, the "yes" category unequivocally represented articles that, upon initial review, exhibited clear relevance, quality, and alignment with our research objectives. These articles were immediately recognised as strong candidates for inclusion in our systematic literature review. Conversely, the "no" category was employed for articles that, after an initial cursory assessment, did not meet the predetermined criteria for relevance or quality. These were swiftly eliminated from further consideration, allowing us to focus on more promising sources. The "maybe" category occupied a crucial middle ground. Articles categorised as "maybe" merited a second look, often due to aspects of potential relevance or promising content requiring closer examination. These articles were not immediately dismissed but were set aside for a more detailed assessment.

This organised and systematic categorisation using the voting system was pivotal in our ability to prioritise articles for a more comprehensive and in-depth evaluation. It allowed us to efficiently filter through the initial pool of articles, separating those that demanded closer scrutiny from those that did not. Consequently, this process identified 118 articles that warranted further evaluation for inclusion in our systematic literature review. The voting system in COVIDENCE® acted as a crucial decision-making tool, ensuring that only the most pertinent and valuable articles were subjected to the rigorous and detailed assessment required for their ultimate inclusion in our research. It saved time and ensured the review would encompass the highest quality and most relevant sources.

4.1.7 Skimming Reading of Abstracts

Following the initial categorisation using the voting system in COVIDENCE®, the subsequent step in the systematic literature review process involved a methodical and comprehensive examination of the remaining articles. This phase involved a skimming reading of the abstracts of these articles. The purpose of this preliminary screening was twofold. Firstly, it effectively narrowed down the pool of articles by swiftly identifying those directly relevant to our research question. Abstracts, often summaries of an article's content, provide valuable insights into each piece of literature's focus, scope, and potential contributions. Secondly, this skimming reading allowed us to make informed decisions about including articles based on their alignment with our research objectives. Reports that demonstrated their relevance, applicability and potential significance to our study were given priority at this stage.

This process led to the identification of a total of 75 articles that were deemed relevant to the study. These articles had successfully passed the initial screening based on their abstracts, signalling their potential to contribute valuable insights to our systematic literature review. By employing this rigorous approach to examining abstracts, we ensured that our examination would primarily consist of articles closely aligned with our research goals, enhancing the precision and pertinence of our study. This phase marked a significant milestone in the selection process, as we had effectively honed in on a more manageable subset of literature for detailed examination and eventual inclusion in our systematic review.

4.1.8 Article Evaluation

In the subsequent phase of the process, a more comprehensive evaluation of each article that had successfully passed the initial screening stages. After categorising articles as "yes" and "maybe" based on the initial assessments, there was a need for a deeper and more thorough examination to ascertain their suitability for inclusion in our study. This phase marked a critical juncture in the selection process, where the focus shifted from a cursory review to a more in-depth yet still relatively swift reading of the selected articles. The goal was to substantiate the initial judgments and confirm whether these articles met the stringent criteria we had set for their inclusion.

In this phase, the objective was to keenly read the content and evaluate the relevance of each article vis-à-vis our research question and objectives. This activity sought to assess whether the articles contained valuable insights and substantially contributed to the church's promotion of peaceful elections in Kenya. Each article underwent a thorough examination that encompassed factors such as the depth of analysis, the quality of research methods employed, the alignment with the research objectives, and the overall rigour of the study. Articles that met these criteria and continued demonstrating relevance were retained for further consideration.

Through this rigorous evaluation process, we were able to fine-tune our selection, ensuring that only articles of the highest quality and relevance were carried forward for inclusion in our systematic literature review. As a result, this phase culminated in narrowing down our selection to a final subset of 55 articles that exhibited exceptional promise and met our stringent criteria for further evaluation. This strategic approach not only upheld the integrity and rigour of the systematic review but also ensured that the selected articles would collectively contribute to a comprehensive and insightful examination of the role of church and church institutions in peaceful elections in Kenya.

4.1.9 Detailed Reading

In the culmination of the rigorous and meticulous selection process, the articles that had successfully navigated cursory and detailed evaluations were chosen for ultimate inclusion in the review. This phase represented the final selection, ensuring the literature review comprised articles that met the highest quality, relevance, and scholarly merit standards. Having identified these articles as "yes" or "maybe" candidates in the earlier stages of the review, the articles that emerged from this rigorous vetting process were deemed pertinent to our research question and of exceptional value and insight.

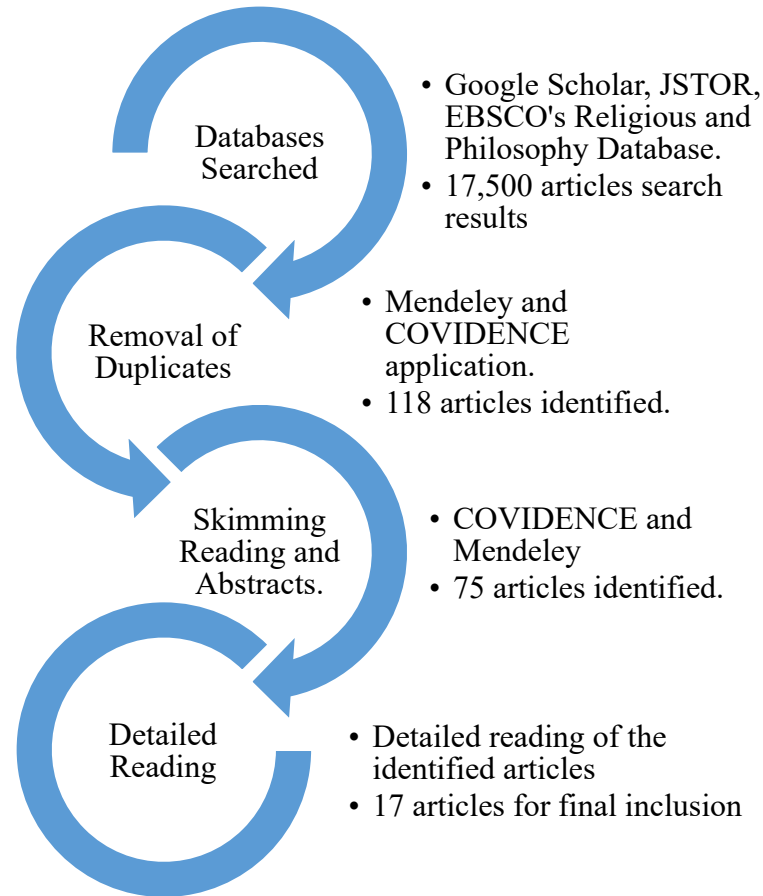


Figure 1. Articles Identification and Inclusion Process

This phase involved a deep reading of the full content of the selected articles. This immersive exploration enabled extracting the most relevant and compelling data and insights underpinning the systematic literature review. The thorough examination of these articles provided the foundation for further analysis and synthesis of the church's role in promoting peaceful elections in Kenya. The systematic nature of the process ensured that the articles selected for inclusion met and exceeded the stringent established inclusion criteria. Each paper was carefully scrutinised for its scholarly rigour, methodological soundness, contribution to the field, and alignment with the research objectives. This rigorous approach ensured that the highest standards of academic excellence would characterise the literature review. A final subset of 17 articles that had demonstrated their exceptional worthiness for inclusion were selected. These articles embodied a commitment to delivering a comprehensive, insightful, and academically rigorous examination of the church's pivotal role in fostering peaceful elections in Kenya.

4.2 Descriptive Analysis

4.2.1 Years of Publication

Selecting articles for inclusion in a systematic literature review investigating the role of church and church-based institutions, such as the National Council of Churches in Kenya, in promoting peaceful elections in Kenya is a vital step in ensuring the comprehensiveness and depth of the review. This study aims to provide a thorough and nuanced understanding of the subject matter by drawing from a diverse range of sources spanning various years. 2007 marked the beginning of evaluating the articles for inclusion in the review. The scope of the study was the 2007 to 2022 elections, which formed the basis for the inclusion and exclusion criteria. As shown in Figure 1, two articles published in 2009 were identified as crucial contributions to the review. A single paper published in 2009 was selected. Notable, this lone article from 2012 holds unique insights or perspectives on the subject matter, filling a critical gap in understanding the church's role in peaceful elections.

Two articles published in 2015 were selected for inclusion. The notable increase in articles published in 2015 on the focus area suggests a renewed focus on exploring the impact and dynamics of church involvement in electoral processes, possibly in response to evolving political and social contexts. Continuing into 2016, two more articles were deemed relevant for the review. These publications likely contributed contemporary viewpoints, methodologies, or empirical data, thus enriching the understanding of the subject's complexities, which are reviewed in the subsequent sections.

Four articles published in 2018 were included in the review. This substantial increase in the number of articles suggests a heightened recognition of the significant role that churches and church institutions play in fostering peaceful elections in Kenya. These articles further explored various dimensions of this involvement, providing valuable insights. The subsequent years, 2019 and 2020, maintained a consistent level of research output, with two and three articles included, respectively. These publications ensured that the review captured the most up-to-date developments, strategies, and challenges related to the topic, reflecting the ongoing relevance of the subject in Kenya's political landscape.

Finally, in 2022, a single article was included, emphasising that research in this field continued to evolve and adapt to the changing dynamics of elections, churches, and related institutions in Kenya. This article from 2022 likely offered contemporary perspectives and examined new trends or challenges in the context of peaceful elections. The meticulous selection of articles for this systematic literature review is integral to constructing a comprehensive and insightful narrative about the role of church and church institutions in promoting peaceful elections in Kenya. Each chosen article represents a unique piece of the puzzle, contributing to a deeper understanding of the evolving dynamics and impacts of churches and church-based institutions' involvement in the electoral process within the Kenyan context.

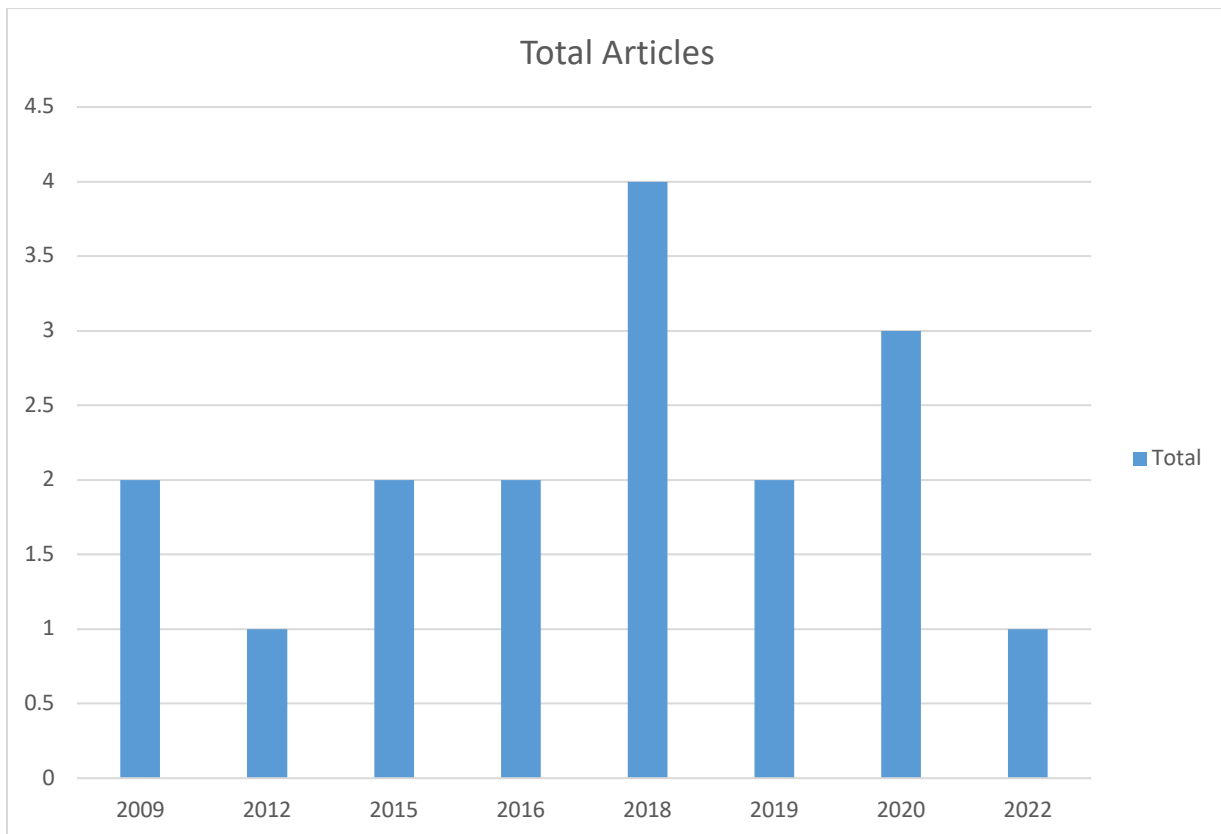


Figure 2. Years of publication

4.2.2 Publications Analysis

The selection of articles for inclusion in a systematic literature review on the role of church and church institutions in promoting peaceful elections in Kenya reflects diverse sources. Each of the sources contributes unique insights and perspectives to the comprehensive study. The literature review includes articles from various academic journals, showcasing a multidisciplinary approach to the topic.

The "African Media Review" and the "European Journal of Philosophy, Culture and Religion" offer scholarly examinations, underscoring the global academic interest in understanding churches and church-based institutions' dynamics in Kenya's electoral processes. Additionally, the "American Based Research Journal" and the "International Journal of Humanities, Art and Social Studies (IJHAS)" provide valuable contributions to the review, potentially presenting research findings from international perspectives and interdisciplinary angles. On the other hand, the "Journal of Civil Society" and the "Journal of Educational Policy and Entrepreneurial Research" signify the importance of exploring the interface between churches and church-based institutions and policies within the context of peaceful elections.

The "Online Journal of African Affairs," "Peace and Conflict Studies," and "Religion and Development in Africa" all represent specialised publications focusing on African issues, emphasising the specific relevance of religious actors in the African electoral context. The book "Religion and Politics in Kenya: Essays in Honour of a Meddlesome Priest" is a unique addition, suggesting that the literature review incorporates contributions from edited volumes that offer critical insights and scholarly discussions about the role of religious figures in Kenya's political landscape.

Furthermore, the "Research on Humanities and Social Sciences" source underscores the importance of multidisciplinary research in understanding the complex interplay between religion, politics, and elections in Kenya. The "Journal of Social Encounters" features prominently in the review with two articles, potentially indicating the journal's in-depth exploration of this subject matter. This source may provide nuanced perspectives on the multifaceted roles that churches and church institutions play in shaping electoral outcomes.

In addition to peer-reviewed journal articles and books, the literature review incorporates two unpublished doctoral theses. These theses represent valuable original research conducted by scholars, offering a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of the topic.

The selection of articles for this systematic literature review reflects a concerted effort to encompass a wide range of scholarly sources. As shown in Table 1, the sources were drawn from academic journals, books, and unpublished doctoral theses. This diversity of sources ensures a holistic and well-rounded exploration of the role of church and church institutions in promoting peaceful elections in Kenya.

Publication	Count
Africa	1
Africa Media Review	1
American Based Research Journal	1
European Journal of Philosophy, Culture and Religion	1
GSDRC Helpdesk	1
International Journal of Humanities, Art and Social Studies (IJHAS)	1
Journal of Civil Society	1
Journal of Educational Policy and Entrepreneurial Research	1
Online Journal of African Affairs	1
Peace and Conflict Studies	1
Religion and development in Africa	1
Religion and Politics in Kenya: Essays in Honour of a Meddlesome Priest	1
Research on humanities and social sciences	1
The Journal of Social Encounters	2
Unpublished doctoral thesis	2
Grand Total	17

Table 2. Publications

4.2.3 Impact Analysis

The impact factor analysis of the articles included in the systematic literature review on the role of church and church institutions in peaceful elections in Kenya reveals valuable insights into the influence and reach of these scholarly works. As shown in Figure 2, four articles have yet to receive any citations in other works. This suggests that while these articles may contain valuable information, they have yet to gain significant recognition or attention within the academic community. These works were published in less widely-read journals or have been published recently. Also, in some cases where inappropriate peer-review approaches are used to approve works for publication, they have the potential for bias because works originating from particular authors, institutions, or geographic locations may have the potential to be treated more or less critically (Beshyah et al., 2018; Tarkang & Bain, 2019). Such situations will likely result in publications from some geographical locations, such as Africa or Kenya, with low-impact factors.

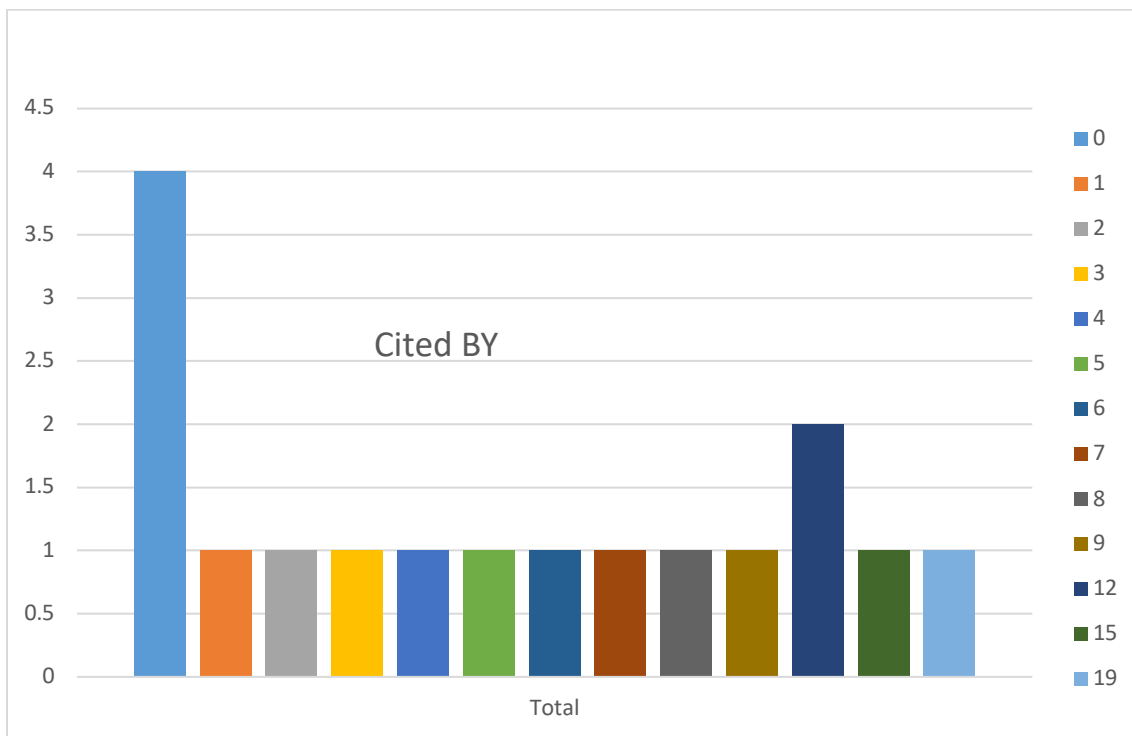


Figure 3. Impact Factor Analysis

The impact factor analysis also highlights the impact of several articles that have garnered citations in other scholarly works. One report has been cited in 19 different works, signifying its significant influence and relevance within the field of study. This highly cited article likely contains pivotal insights or ground-breaking research findings that have resonated with other scholars.

Furthermore, including articles with various citation counts, ranging from one to nine citations, underscores the diverse range of contributions within the review. These articles have had varying degrees of influence and have contributed differently to the academic discourse surrounding the role of church and church institutions in peaceful elections in Kenya. Two articles cited in 12 other works and one cited in 15 others showcase the enduring impact of specific research findings or methodologies as they continue to be referenced and built upon by different scholars over time. The impact factor analysis of the articles in this systematic literature review provides a nuanced understanding of their recognition and influence within the academic community. While some articles still await broader recognition, others have substantially contributed to the field, shaping the ongoing dialogue and research on this vital subject.

4.3 Literature Classification

4.3.1 Methodology Used in the Selected Studies

This section presents the methodology used in the articles selected for inclusion in the study. As Figure 3 shows, one (1) of the articles chosen for inclusion in the review was a book chapter from an edited book, which provided a specialised perspective or analysis on the role of church and church institutions in peaceful elections within the context of a more significant book, which covered religion and development. One (1) of the selected articles employed a case study methodology, delving deeply into a specific electoral event in Kenya to examine the involvement and impact of church institutions on the peacefulness of elections. Two (2) studies conducted descriptive surveys to gather data and provide detailed descriptions of the role of church institutions in peaceful elections in Kenya. These surveys aimed to offer a comprehensive overview of this aspect.

One (1) study adopted ethnographic research methods, immersing the researcher in the Kenyan electoral context to provide a culturally embedded understanding of how church institutions contribute to peaceful elections. Two (2) studies employed a qualitative case study approach, focusing on specific instances or cases within Kenya to explore the multifaceted role of church institutions in promoting peaceful elections. Three studies utilised qualitative descriptive methodologies to offer in-depth accounts and explanations of the involvement of church institutions in peaceful elections in Kenya, emphasising the richness of the data and context. One (1) study conducted a qualitative document analysis, scrutinising written records and documents related to the role of church institutions in Kenya's elections to draw insights and conclusions. Six (6) studies adopted an exploratory qualitative approach to delve into the various dimensions and aspects of church institutions' roles in peaceful elections in Kenya. These studies likely aimed to uncover new perspectives and nuances in the subject matter.

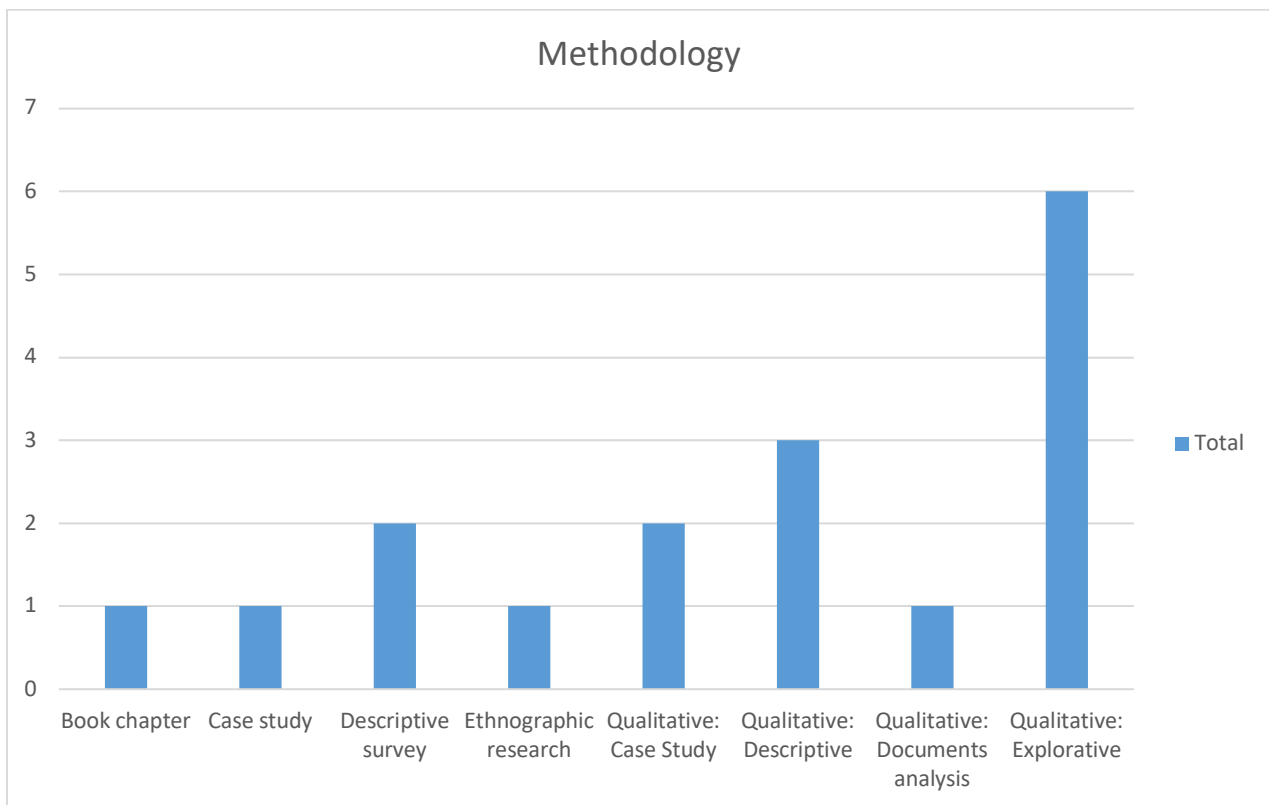


Figure 4. Methodologies Used in the Selected Studies

The diversity of methodologies used in the articles selected for inclusion in the systematic literature review on the role of church and church institutions in peaceful elections in Kenya is crucial for several reasons. It enriches the depth of analysis by offering a multifaceted perspective, allowing researchers to explore the subject matter from various angles. Different methodologies provide complementary insights, ranging from detailed case studies and ethnographic immersion to broader surveys and document analysis. This diversity ensures a more comprehensive understanding of the complex interactions between church institutions and peaceful elections, accommodating in-depth examination and general overviews. By incorporating various approaches, the review can better capture the nuances, challenges, and opportunities associated with the topic, ultimately fostering a more robust and well-rounded body of knowledge.

4.4 Church and Church Institutions Influence on Peaceful Elections (2007-2022)

4.4.1 Mediation

From the findings, 10 of the 17 articles captured and described the mediating role and influence of the church and church institutions on peaceful elections in Kenya. Table 2 provides an overview of the findings from the articles reviewed. In one article, Tenaw (2018) focused on the 2007 election and highlighted the church's role in promoting mediation. Tenaw further underscored the pivotal role of church leaders who underwent specialised training in mediation for peacebuilding. Their training was seen as instrumental in promoting peaceful elections and post-electoral peace because they acted as mediators in their respective communities. Also focusing on the 2007 election, Klopp (2009) discussed the effectiveness of "Good Neighbour" workshops conducted by the church. These workshops aimed at reconciling communities, bringing them together, and creating an atmosphere conducive to peaceful elections. Similarly, focusing on the same election, Githigaro (2012) highlighted the church's role in facilitating intra-ethnic and interethnic dialogue, emphasising community forgiveness, healing, and reconciliation. Their efforts were aimed at enabling communities to coexist harmoniously.

Other articles also highlighted the Church and Church-based mediation role in the 2007 election. For example, Richard (2020) discussed the church's involvement in promoting community dialogue. Richard (2020) also observed that the Church encouraged community leaders to work towards inter-ethnic peace at the grassroots level. The church also endorsed traditional conflict resolution approaches, such as the *Ketebe Kok* approach, which encouraged conflicting parties to face each other and resolve their differences. Haider (2016) also emphasised the church's inter-ethnic and interreligious dialogue efforts. They employed religious language and symbolism to unite political leaders, fostering unity and cooperation during elections. Finally, Mwamba et al. (2019) underlined the importance of inter-ethnic vocational Bible studies, peace-building workshops, prayer movements, and mainstreaming standing groups of professionals. These initiatives were seen as key in promoting peace during election periods.

Theme	Literature	Election	Presentation of Role/Influence
Mediation	Tenaw (2018)	2007	○ Church leaders training on mediation for peacebuilding.
	Tarus & Gathogo (2016)	2007/13	○ Exhibiting counter-cultural faith, transcending ethnicity
	Meinema (2020)	2007/2013	○ Dialogue between various groups, including Christians and Muslims
	Klopp (2009)	2007	○ Good neighbour workshops for reconciliation between communities.
	Githigaro (2012).	2007	○ Intra-ethnic and interethnic dialogue with the aim of forgiving each other; reconciling and bringing about healing and reconciliation to enable communities to live together harmoniously.

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Religious leaders training in conflict resolution and conflict management.
Mwamba (2019)	2007/13		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Inter-ethnic dialogue ○ Peace-building workshops
Richard (2020)	2007		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Dialogue between communities. ○ Community leaders to promote inter-ethnic peace from the grassroots level ○ Church encouraged use of traditional conflict resolution approaches, such as <i>Ketebe kok</i> approach, which encourages conflicting parties to face each other and resolve their differences.
Haider (2016)	2007		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Inter-ethnic and interreligious dialogue. ○ Religious language and symbolism-uniting political leaders.
Kinas (2018)	2007/13		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Brining politicians together for dialogue ○ Communities dialogue for peace.
Mwamba et al. (2019)	2007		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Inter-ethnic vocational bible studies. ○ Peacebuilding workshops ○ Prayer movements ○ Mainstreaming standing groups, professionals for peace initiatives

Table 3. Mediation role and influence

From the reviewed literature, other articles focused on the 2007 and 2013 elections. For example, Meinema (2020), while examining the 2007 and 2013 elections, emphasised the importance of dialogue between various groups, including Christians and Muslims, in fostering peaceful electoral environments. The discussion served as a crucial platform for mitigating tensions and promoting understanding among religious and ethnic communities. The Church and church-based institutions play a critical role in mediation. In their article, Tarus and Gathogo (2016) highlighted the counter-cultural faith the church and church-based institutions, such as the NCKK, exhibited that transcended the ethnic divisions often associated with elections. Their work emphasised how this transcendent faith helped maintain peace during these electoral periods.

Focusing on the same period, Kinas (2018) discussed the church's role in bringing politicians together for dialogue and facilitating community dialogues to promote peace among diverse groups. Finally, Mwamba (2019) pointed out the significance of inter-ethnic dialogue and peace-building workshops initiated by the church. These activities played a critical role in diffusing tensions and promoting peaceful electoral processes. These findings collectively indicate that the church was pivotal and multifaceted in mediating and promoting peaceful elections in Kenya. Their involvement encompassed training, dialogue facilitation, reconciliation efforts, and community engagement across multiple electoral cycles, ultimately cultivating a culture of peace and unity in a politically charged environment.

4.4.2 Advocacy

From the analysed articles, six (6) of the articles highlighted the church and church-based institutions' advocacy role for peaceful elections in Kenya. As summarised in Table 3, the church in Kenya and church-based institutions have played a significant advocacy role in various ways, as documented by several researchers in their systematic literature review. For example, Klopp (2009), in an examination of the 2007 election, highlighted the church's role in uniting and empowering affected individuals to voice their concerns collectively. Additionally, the church acted as an advocate, articulating the issues faced by victims of electoral violence, striving to ensure their rights and needs were addressed. Kagema (2015) also emphasised the church's multifaceted advocacy efforts. Kagema (2015) observed that these efforts encompassed social, economic, and political empowerment initiatives to strengthen the population's overall well-being and increase their active participation in the political landscape.

Making near similar observations, Mwamba et al. (2019) noted that the church engaged in lobbying efforts directed at the government to address inter-ethnic conflicts. This advocacy sought to draw attention to the underlying causes of ethnic tensions and disputes, advocating for solutions that would foster peace and unity in the country.

On the other hand, Tenaw (2018) highlighted another aspect of the advocacy role of the Church and Church-based institutions. Tenaw (2018) pointed out that the church played a pivotal role in advocating for the passage of essential legislation. This included advocating for laws such as The National Cohesion and Integration Act, The Constitutional Review Act of 2008, and the Witness Protection Act. These legislative actions were instrumental in promoting social cohesion and safeguarding the rights and safety of witnesses, contributing to a more just and peaceful society. Similarly, Githigaro (2012), while examining the 2007 election, shed light on the church’s advocacy efforts in two key areas. First, the church championed women’s empowerment, particularly for victims of sexual violence during the 2007 electoral violence. Second, the church advocated for the passage of significant laws, including the Truth, Justice, and Reconciliation Act, the National Cohesion and Integration Act, The Constitutional Review Act of 2008, and the Witness Protection Act, to address various societal issues.

Theme	Literature	Election	Presentation of Role/Influence
Advocacy	Klopp (2009)	2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Organising the affected individuals to have a collective voice. ○ Articulated issues affecting victims of electoral violence
	Kagama (2015).	2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Social, economic, and political empowerment of the populace.
	Tenaw (2018)	2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Advocated for passage of legislation, such as The National Cohesion and Integration Act, The Constitutional Review Act of 2008, and the Witness Protection Act

Githigaro (2012)	2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Women empowerment as victims of rape during electoral violence of 2007 ○ Passage of different laws, including Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Act, National Cohesion and Integration Act, The Constitutional Review Act of 2008, and the Witness Protection Act.
Haider (2016)	2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Civic education
Mwamba et al. (2019)	2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Lobbying the government to address inter-ethnic conflicts

Table 4. Advocacy Role of the Church

Finally, Haider (2016), in the context of the 2007 election, discussed the church's role in providing civic education to the public as an aspect of advocacy. Through this advocacy, the church aimed to educate citizens about their rights and responsibilities within the democratic system, empowering them to engage actively and knowledgeably in the political process. Therefore, the church in Kenya has been actively involved in advocacy across various election periods. These advocacy efforts have encompassed legislative advocacy, empowerment initiatives, civic education, and conflict resolution advocacy. They underscore the church's commitment to promoting social justice, peace, and the well-being of the Kenyan population.

4.4.3. Oversight

The church in Kenya has assumed a significant oversight role over the government and other stakeholders to ensure peaceful elections and post-election peace. For example, Klopp (2009), focusing on the 2007 election, highlighted the role of the National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCCK) secretariat in critiquing the government's policies and actions. This critique served as a form of oversight to ensure that the government adhered to principles of justice and accountability. Similarly, Kilonzo (2009), in the context of the 2007 election, highlighted the church's condemnation of both the President and the Prime Minister for their perceived role in encouraging violence through their hard-line stances. The church also strongly disapproves of corruption, underscoring its oversight role in holding leaders accountable for their conduct and advocating for a peaceful and just society. Kagema (2015) also discussed the Church's role in condemning corruption. Kagema (2015) emphasised the church's active stance in combating corruption, which is considered a facilitator of electoral violence in Kenya. This oversight role aimed at promoting transparency and accountability within the political and electoral systems.

Theme	Literature	Election	Presentation of Role and Influence
Oversight	Klopp (2009)	2007	○ NCCCK secretariat criticised the government.
	Kagema (2015).	2007	○ Combating corruption, which is an enabler of Electoral violence in Kenya.
	Githigaro (2012)	2007	○ Monitoring of government peacebuilding and resettlement programs. ○ Calling for culpable individuals to be prosecuted in the International Criminal Court.

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Monitoring the implementation of the recommendations of the Kenya National Dialogue and Reconciliation Project.
	Haider (2016)	2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Inter-religious forums to call for prosecution of leaders involved in post-election violence.
	Kilonzo (2009)	2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Condemned the President and the Prime Minister for their hard stands, encouraging violence. ○ Condemnation of corruption.

Table 5. Oversight Role and Influence on Elections

On the other hand, Githigaro (2012) discussed how the church monitored the government's peacebuilding and resettlement programs in a discussion of the oversight role. Furthermore, the church called for individuals implicated in post-election violence to be prosecuted in the International Criminal Court, underlining the significance of accountability for those involved in such acts. The church also oversaw the implementation of recommendations arising from the Kenya National Dialogue and Reconciliation Project, ensuring the effective execution of reconciliation efforts.

Finally, Haider (2016) made a similar observation, focusing on the same election. Haider (2016) noted the church's participation in inter-religious forums that advocated for prosecuting leaders linked to post-election violence. This oversight role sought to hold individuals accountable for their actions and promote justice. Therefore, the church in Kenya has actively embraced an oversight role in various domains, including government actions, corruption, accountability, and justice. These oversight endeavours reflect the church's commitment to fostering transparency, accountability, and ethical conduct during elections.

4.4.4 Documentation

Only one article from the review highlighted documentation efforts by the Church and Church-based institutions. Klopp (2009), focusing on the 2007 election, observed that the church undertook essential documentation efforts in Kenya about electoral violence and its implications. One aspect of this documentation involved meticulously recording incidents of violence, mainly focusing on any evidence that suggested government involvement. This effort aimed to establish a factual and evidential basis for assessing the role of the government in the violence that occurred during the electoral period. Additionally, Klopp (2009) observed that the documentation extended to capturing the consequences and aftermath of the violence. This comprehensive documentation process likely included gathering information on the individuals affected, the extent of physical and psychological harm, property damage, and any other significant repercussions resulting from the electoral violence.

Theme	Literature	Election	Presentation of Role and Influence
Documentation	Klopp (2009)	2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Documented incidents of violence for evidence of government involvement. ○ Documentation of the consequences of the violence.

Table 6. Documentation of Violence and Evidence

By documenting these consequences, the church contributed to a better understanding of the full scope and impact of the violence on individuals and communities. Therefore, the Church's documentation efforts in 2007 encompassed the systematic recording of incidents of violence to assess government involvement and the thorough documentation of the wide-ranging consequences of electoral violence. These documentation activities were crucial for fostering transparency, accountability, and a comprehensive understanding of the events that unfolded during that time. The documentation has an oversight aspect to it.

4.4.5 Partnerships for Peace and Humanity

Three articles discussed the Church and Church-based institutions' partnerships for peaceful elections and post-election peace. These articles demonstrate that the church in Kenya has actively engaged in partnerships with various organisations and entities to promote peace, as highlighted by different researchers. For example, Klopp (2009), in the context of the 2007 election, documented the church's partnerships with organisations such as Dutch Interchurch Aid and the Norwegian Refugee Council. These partnerships involved collaborative efforts to address the aftermath of electoral violence and assist affected communities. Additionally, the church partnered with local government authorities to foster peace, emphasising the importance of cooperation between religious institutions and local governance. Furthermore, the church collaborated with other churches, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), and Youth Groups to disseminate peace messages and engage the broader community in peacebuilding initiatives.

Similarly, Githigaro (2012) highlighted the church's extensive partnerships, including cooperation with the Inter-Religious Forum (IRF). The church also partnered with various organisations, such as the Kenya Red Cross, World Church Council, and other churches. Furthermore, the church collaborated with international bodies like the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), as well as local and international Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). These partnerships demonstrated a broad, inclusive approach to peacebuilding, involving multiple stakeholders in concerted efforts to promote peace and reconciliation.

Theme	Literature	Election	Presentation of Role/Influence
Partnerships	Klopp (2009)	2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Dutch Interchurch Aid, Norwegian Refugee Council ○ Partnerships with local government ○ Churches, CSOs, and Youth Groups for peace messaging.

	Githigaro (2012).	2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Partnership with the Inter-Religious Forum (IRF) ○ Partnerships with the Kenya Red Cross, World Church Council, other churches, bodies such as United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), and local and international NGOs,
	Kilonzo (2009)	2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Churches partnerships with local government officials to promote peace.

Table 7. Partnerships with Other Organisations

Finally, Kilonzo (2009) emphasised the church's partnerships with local government officials to advance peace initiatives. This collaboration likely involved joint efforts to address peace and security issues at the community level, illustrating the importance of cooperation between religious institutions and local government authorities in promoting stability and peace. Therefore, the church in Kenya has actively forged partnerships with a wide range of organisations, including humanitarian agencies, inter-religious forums, government entities, international bodies, and NGOs, to work collaboratively on peacebuilding initiatives. These partnerships reflect a holistic and inclusive approach to addressing the complex challenges related to peace and conflict resolution in Kenya to foster peaceful elections and ensure post-election stability.

4.4.6 Assistance to Victims of Electoral Violence

Five articles from the review discussed the importance of the church's assistance to victims in promoting electoral and post-electoral peace in Kenyan elections. During and following electoral and post-electoral violence in Kenya, the church played a pivotal role in helping and supporting the victims, as highlighted by various researchers. For example, Klopp (2009), during the 2007 election, noted that many wounded and displaced individuals sought refuge in churches as places of safety. The church extended material assistance, such as food, shelter, and necessities, to these victims. Furthermore, they provided crucial psychosocial support to help those affected by the violence cope with trauma and emotional distress. In this way, the churches actively protected and cared for victims of electoral violence.

Githigaro (2012) made similar conclusions and emphasised the church's role in delivering humanitarian aid to victims. This aid likely included provisions like food, clothing, and shelter for those affected by the violence. Additionally, the church engaged in rescue missions to assist individuals stranded or isolated due to the violence. Psychosocial support and agency services, including referrals to institutions for care, were also provided to address the broader needs of victims. In agreement, Richard (2020) highlighted the significant role played by the Catholic church in Eldoret, where they received thousands of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). This action demonstrates the church's commitment to providing shelter and support to those forced to flee their homes due to violence.

Mwamba et al. (2019), in their article's discussion of support during electoral and post-electoral violence, focused on psychosocial support. They reaffirmed the church's role in offering pastoral care and counselling to victims. These services aimed to provide comfort, guidance, and emotional support to individuals affected by electoral violence. Similarly, Mwamba (2019) mentioned that the church offered victims pastoral care and counselling services. This pastoral support addressed the spiritual and emotional needs of individuals and communities affected by electoral violence. As such, the church in Kenya and Church-based institutions, working with other partners, have been at the forefront of aiding and supporting victims of electoral and post-electoral violence. This support includes material aid, psychosocial assistance, shelter, counselling, and pastoral care, all

of which have been instrumental in helping individuals and communities recover and heal in the wake of violence.

Theme	Literature	Election	Presentation of Role and Influence
Assistance	Klopp (2009)	2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Wounded and displaced took refuge in the churches. ○ Material assistance and psychosocial assistance to the victims. ○ Churches protecting the victims of electoral violence.
	Githigaro (2012).	2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Humanitarian aid for victims of post-election violence. ○ Rescue those marooned by violence. ○ Psychosocial support. ○ Agency: Referrals to institutions for care.
	Mwamba (2019)	2007/13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Pastoral care and counselling.
	Richard (2020)	2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Catholic church in Eldoret received thousands of IDPs
	Mwamba et al. (2019)	2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Pastoral care and counselling.

Table 8. Assistance to Victims

4.4.7 Peace Messaging

Peace messaging emerged as one of the dominant themes. Ten articles discussed peace messaging as a role of the church and church-based institutions in promoting peaceful elections and post-electoral peace. The church in Kenya actively engaged in peace messaging and advocacy to promote reconciliation and unity during electoral periods, as evidenced by various researchers. For example, Klopp (2009), in a study of the 2007 election, highlighted the church's use of prayers to promote peace. Additionally, the church played a crucial role in countering government propaganda by releasing information and educating the public, aiming to foster a more informed and peaceful society.

Other articles also focused on the peace messaging role of the Church and Church-based institutions in the 2007 elections. Githigaro (2012) noted the church's mobilisation of church and community leaders to restrain youths from engaging in violence. The church also facilitated dialogue forums, pastoral visits, exchange visits, and ecumenical visits to encourage communication and understanding among different groups. Similarly, Haider (2016) mentioned the church's efforts in delivering messages against violence, emphasising the importance of peaceful coexistence and conflict resolution. Mwamba et al. (2019) emphasised the role of church sermons in conveying messages of peace and unity. Finally, Richard (2020) discussed the "Amani Mashinani (peace at the grassroots)" initiative, which likely involved grassroots efforts to promote peace and reconciliation at the community level.

Theme	Literature	Election	Presentation of Role/Influence
Peace messaging	Klopp (2009)	2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Prayers ○ Information release and education to counter government propaganda.
	Tarus & Gathogo (2016)	2007/13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Church's role in embodying authentic community
	Meinema (2020)	2007/13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Wall murals ○ T-shirts (Amani Pwani, Amani Kenya) ○ Banners for peace messaging.

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Barazas (meetings) and marches ○ Criticising politician’s use of youths for violence ○ Music and other artistic works.
	Githigaro (2012).	2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Mobilization of church and community leaders to restrain youths from committing violence. ○ Dialogue forums, pastoral visits, exchange visits and ecumenical visits
	Mwamba (2019)	2007/13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Church sermons, peace desk, prayer movements, inter-ethnic dialogue ○ Peacebuilding workshops
	Haider (2016)	2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Messages against violence
	Richard (2020)	2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Amani Mashinani initiative
	Mwamba et al. (2019)	2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Church sermons
	Kinas (2018)	2007/13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Peace plan for peace in Kenya ○ Prayer forums ○ National prayer day ○ Wheels of Hope-Mombasa, Nairobi, Nakuru, Eldoret, and Kisumu.
	Kilonzo (2009)	2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Caravan hope (Msafara) promoting peace

Table 9. Peace Messaging Role

Other articles focused on the 2007 and 2013 elections, discussing the peace messaging role. For example, Tarus and Gathogo (2016) emphasised the church's role in embodying authentic community and contributing to peace messaging. This likely involved promoting unity, understanding, and cooperation among community members. Mwamba (2019) highlighted several avenues for peace messaging employed by the church during the same election. These included church sermons, the establishment of peace desks, prayer movements, and inter-ethnic dialogues. The church also organised peacebuilding workshops to educate and empower communities with conflict resolution skills. Kinan (2018) also highlighted the church's development of a peace plan for Kenya and the organisation of prayer forums, including a national prayer day. The "Wheels of Hope" initiative in multiple cities likely involved community-based peace promotion efforts.



Figure 5. Peace Messaging T-Shirts at the Coast, Meinema (2020)

Finally, Meinema (2020), covering the 2007 and 2013 elections, discussed various means of peace messaging employed by the church, including murals, peace-themed T-shirts (e.g., Amani Pwani, Amani Kenya, as shown in Image 1), and banners carrying messages of peace. The church also organised *barazas* (meetings) and marches to express their commitment to peace. Furthermore, they criticised politicians for using youths for violence and used music and other artistic works to convey messages of peace. The church in Kenya has employed diverse strategies and initiatives for peace messaging during electoral periods. These efforts have included prayers, community mobilisation, artistic expressions, dialogue forums, pastoral visits, and various grassroots campaigns to promote peace, unity, and reconciliation in the country.

4.4.8 Partisanship and Promotion of Electoral Violence

Partisanship of the Church and Church-based institutions also emerged as another key theme. As Table 9 demonstrates, nine reviewed articles discussed this issue in the 2007 electoral period. As outlined by various researchers, the problem of partisanship within the church in Kenya during electoral periods is a matter of concern. For example, Klopp (2009), focusing on the 2007 election, observed instances where particular ethnic groups, particularly the Kalenjin, were presented as the favoured tribe, while others, such as the Gikuyu, were seen as outsiders due to differing voting patterns. This Ethnisation of the church contributed to divisions along ethnic lines. Additionally, the African Inland Church, the National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCCK), and the Roman Catholic Church were noted to have exhibited partisanship during this period. The church, in general, was criticised for its perceived lack of courage to confront and counter powerful hate speech and for failing to maintain neutrality in both pre- and post-election periods.

Also, Mati (2015) highlighted schisms among religious groups in Kenya, with divisions occurring along ethnic and denominational lines. In agreement, Tarus and Gathogo (2016) noted that the church had propagated negative ethnicity and contributed to interdenominational conflicts during the 2007 and 2013 elections. Similarly, Tarus (2022) documented church divisions along ethnic and denominational lines and newspaper editorial titles criticising the church's involvement in politics and its perceived lack of neutrality. The report mentioned instances of clergy blessing warriors to perpetrate electoral violence and inviting politicians to pulpits to disseminate hate messages. It also highlighted cases of partisanship among Catholic bishops. Kagema (2015) noted that the church took sides during the 2007 elections, exacerbating violence along tribal and religious lines.

Theme	Literature	Election	Presentation of Role and Influence
Partisanship	Klopp (2009)	2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Kalenjin was presented as the chosen tribe, and other tribes in the Rift Valley, especially the Gikuyu, were outsiders because they did not exhibit the same voting patterns as the Kalenjin. ○ African Inland Church, NCCCK, and Roman Catholic also exhibited partisanship ○ Ethnisation of the Church. ○ Lack of courage to confront and counter the powerful and hate speech. ○ Lack of neutrality in pre-and post-election periods.
	Mati (2015)	2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Schism among religious groups in Kenya along ethnic, denominational,
	Tarus & Gathogo (2016)	2007/2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Church propagation of negative ethnicity and interdenominational conflict.

Meinema (2020)	2007/2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Western donors’ partnerships for peace and assistance to address partisanship.
Tarus (2022)	2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Church divisions along ethnic and denominational lines Editorial tiles in the dailies: “The church is not our voice anymore; “No longer the beacon of morality; “Heal yourself first, dear clerics;” Kenya badly in need of new leaders; “House of God divided;” “When the shepherds led their flock astray;” “How clergy took battle to Grim Reaper;” “Church embedded long before elections;” “Ethnicity in the church comes of age;” “Church’s worrying slide to silence;” ○ Clergymen blessing warriors to perpetuate electoral violence ○ Inviting politicians in the pulpit to disseminate hate messages ○ Catholic bishops’ partisanship
Kagema (2015).	2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Church took sides leading to the 2007 elections, which exacerbated the violence. (Tribal and religious lines).
Kilonzo (2009)	2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Churches had favourite presidential candidates and demonstrated partisanship diminishing their moral right to condemn the violence.
Mwamba (2019)	2007/13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Standing groups-involving professionals with expertise in peacebuilding.

	Kinas (2018)	2007/13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Partisanship in 2007 elections ethnically and along religious and denomination lines. (Polls by Synovate Kenya established that 38% of Kenyans did not trust religious leaders because of the partisanship).
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Table 10. Partisanship of the Church

Other articles also discussed the partisanship evident during the 2007 electioneering period. Kilonzo (2009) observed that some churches had favourite presidential candidates and demonstrated partisanship, which diminished their moral authority to condemn violence. Mwamba (2019) mentioned standing groups within the church involving professionals with expertise in peacebuilding, which may have contributed to the church's ability to address issues of partisanship. Kinas (2018) highlighted partisanship in the 2007 elections, with divisions occurring along ethnic, religious, and denominational lines. Polls conducted by Synovate Kenya indicated that many Kenyans did not trust religious leaders due to perceived partisanship. Meinema (2020) pointed out the influence of Western donors' partnerships on peace and assistance efforts within the church during electoral periods to address partisanship. Therefore, partisanship within the church during electoral periods has been a complex and contentious issue in Kenya. It has led to divisions along ethnic, denominational, and political lines and has sometimes eroded the moral authority of religious institutions to promote peace and neutrality during election cycles.

4.4.9 Acknowledgement, Apology, and Reconciliation

As discussed in five articles, the church acknowledged, apologised, and took initiatives to foster reconciliation as significant aspects of addressing past issues, the church's partisanship, and promoting healing within the church in Kenya during and after electoral periods, as noted by various researchers. Klopp (2009) mentioned that the National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCCK) and the Roman Catholic Church (RC) issued apologies after the 2007 election, acknowledging their partisanship during the period. These apologies marked an essential step toward addressing the church's role in the political landscape and fostering reconciliation. Similarly, Kageema (2015) highlighted the apologies the Catholic Church and the NCCCK issued for their partisanship leading to the 2007 elections. These apologies played a significant role in helping the church regain its credibility and reputation as a unifying and impartial institution. Also, Tarus (2022) documented multiple apologies, including the "Hope for Kenya" apology and a second apology in Kabarak. Additionally, Catholic bishops issued an apology at the Holy Family Basilica. These acts of acknowledgement and apology demonstrated a commitment to reconciliation and healing within the church.

Theme	Literature	Election	Presentation of Role and Influence
Acknowledgement, apology, and reconciliation	Klopp (2009)	2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ NCCCK apology after the 2007 election partisanship ○ RC apology after the 2007 election partisanship
	Kageema (2015).	2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Catholic church and NCCCK apologised for partisanship leading to the 2007 elections. Helped church recover its credibility.
	Tarus (2022)	2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Hope for Kenya apology ○ Second apology in Kabarak.

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Catholic bishops' apology at Holy Family Basilica.
	Tarus & Gathogo (2016)	2007/2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Hope for Kenya apology ○ Exhibiting counter-cultural faith, transcending ethnicity
	Kinas (2018)	2007/13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ NCKK apology in 2008 ○ Catholic church's apology

Table 11. Apology of the Church

Tarus and Gathogo (2016) also mentioned the "Hope for Kenya" apology as part of efforts to address past issues. The church also sought to exhibit counter-cultural faith, transcending ethnic divisions and promoting unity. Finally, Kinas (2018) noted that the NCKK issued an apology in 2008, acknowledging past shortcomings. The Catholic Church also issued an apology, signifying a commitment to healing and reconciliation within the church community. Therefore, acknowledgement, apology, and reconciliation have been essential components of addressing past challenges and promoting unity within the church in Kenya during and after electoral periods. These actions have played a crucial role in restoring the credibility and reputation of the church as a unifying and impartial institution in the eyes of the public.

4.5 Summary and Next Chapter

This chapter presented the study's findings. The findings were explained in detail, offering a comprehensive understanding of the intricate dynamics of the church's role and its influence on peaceful elections and the post-election period. Each finding was systematically examined within the context of the research questions. The ensuing chapter will interpret the findings within the context of the theoretical framework, contributing to the broader academic conversation on the nuanced relationship between the church and maintaining peace and stability in Kenya during the electoral periods.

CHAPTER FIVE: INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter laid the foundation for understanding the role of churches and church-based institutions in promoting peaceful elections in Kenya by presenting the findings of the systematic literature review. This chapter builds upon those findings, delving into a comprehensive discussion of the results and drawing connections between the empirical data and the broader theoretical framework. Furthermore, we will introduce applying the peacebuilding and secularism theory to interpret the findings, shedding light on the intricate relationship between religion, peace, and the secular nature of electoral processes. The chapter thoroughly analyses the conclusions presented in the previous chapter.

This chapter will describe the findings and introduce a theoretical lens to facilitate a nuanced interpretation and contextualisation of the results. The peacebuilding and secularism theory will provide the theoretical framework to analyse the findings and their implications. This theory will allow us to understand how religious institutions engage in peacebuilding efforts within a secular electoral landscape. By applying this theoretical framework, we aim to shed light on the intricate balance between the spiritual and the secular and how religious actors can contribute to peace in an electoral context without undermining the principles of a secular state. The peacebuilding and secularism theory provides a framework for exploring how religious institutions navigate their roles in peace promotion while respecting the secular nature of state institutions and electoral processes. It helps to address questions such as the coexistence of religious values and the principles of democracy and how religious entities can serve as mediators and peacebuilders while respecting the state's autonomy.

5.2 Discussion of Findings

This section discusses the findings of the literature review. It includes a nuanced exploration of the results obtained from the systematic literature review, compared to the findings of other scholarly works and reports.

5.2.1 Mediation

The findings from the systematic literature review highlight the significant and multifaceted role that churches and church-based institutions have played in mediating and promoting peaceful elections in Kenya from 2007 to 2022. One of the critical roles and influences of churches and church-based institutions in fostering peaceful elections in Kenya is mediation. Mediation, from the literature, includes different elements. One of the primary elements of mediation is clergy and other religious leaders in mediation, a program spearheaded by the NCKK and other institutions. As Tenaw (2018) observed, church leaders underwent specialised training in mediation for peacebuilding, emphasising the importance of equipping religious leaders with the necessary skills to mediate conflicts and promote peace during electoral periods. This training facilitated peaceful elections by allowing church leaders to negotiate within their communities. These findings are consistent with the results of other scholars, such as Nets-Zehngut (2007), Njoroge (2011), and Sihanya et al. (2007), who averred that mediation requires specialised skills, which requires mediators to undergo training to be effective in the mediation process.

In implementing mediation efforts to foster peaceful elections and the post-electoral period, the systematic literature review revealed different approaches used in the Church. Initiatives included community reconciliation workshops (Klopp, 2009); intra-ethnic and interethnic dialogue (Githigaro, 2012); promotion of inter-ethnic peace at the grassroots (Richard, 2020); interethnic and interreligious dialogue (Haider, 2016); inter-ethnic dialogue and peace-building workshops (Mwamba et al., 2019); dialogue between groups (Meinema, 2020); counter-cultural faith (Tarus & Gathogo, 2016); and political dialogue and community engagement (Kinas, 2018).

These findings were consistent with the conclusions in other studies, such as Snodgrass and Achieng (2019), Nets-Zehngut (2007), Njoroge (2011), and Sihanya et al. (2007), who concluded that electoral and post-electoral disagreements and violence involve two or more groups. In such a situation, the parties' willingness to engage in dialogue to resolve the issues gives rise to conflict. Mediation, including training and skills building among mediators and dialogue between the conflicting parties or groups, has been instrumental in fostering peaceful resolution of disputes between conflicting parties, such as in elections and post-electoral periods (Snodgrass & Achieng, 2019).

5.2.2 Advocacy

The systematic literature review conducted to evaluate the role of churches and church-based institutions in promoting peaceful elections in Kenya revealed the significant advocacy role played by these entities. Across six analysed articles, it became evident that churches and church-based institutions in Kenya have been actively advocating for peaceful elections through various means. Klopp's (2009) examination of the 2007 election highlighted how the church acted as a unifying force, empowering individuals affected by electoral violence to voice their concerns collectively. Kagema (2015) emphasised the multifaceted nature of the church's advocacy efforts, including social, economic, and political empowerment initiatives aimed at bolstering the population's overall well-being and increasing their active participation in the political landscape. On the other hand, Mwamba et al. (2019) noted that the church engaged in lobbying efforts directed at the government to address inter-ethnic conflicts. This advocacy aimed to draw the government's attention to the root causes of ethnic tensions and disputes, advocating for solutions that could foster peace and unity in the country.

Similarly, Tenaw (2018) pointed out another dimension of the advocacy role of churches and church-based institutions, such as the church's pivotal role in advocating for the passage of essential legislation, including The National Cohesion and Integration Act, The Constitutional Review Act of 2008, and the Witness Protection Act. On the other hand, Githigaro (2012), while examining the 2007 election, shed light on the church's advocacy efforts in two key areas.

First, the church championed women's empowerment, particularly for victims of sexual violence during the 2007 electoral violence. Second, the church advocated for the passage of significant laws, including the Truth, Justice, and Reconciliation Act, the National Cohesion and Integration Act, The Constitutional Review Act of 2008, and the Witness Protection Act, to address various societal issues. These initiatives underscore the church's commitment to gender equality, social justice, and peace. Finally, Haider (2016) discussed the church's role in providing civic education to the public as an aspect of advocacy. Through this advocacy, the church aimed to educate citizens about their rights and responsibilities within the democratic system, empowering them to engage actively and knowledgeably in the political process. Civic education was identified as a critical element in building an informed and engaged electorate.

The literature review findings demonstrate that the Kenya church has been actively advocating for peaceful elections across various election periods, consistent with the results and conclusions in other works. For example, Linke (2020) concluded that different forms, including legislative advocacy, empowerment initiatives, civic education, and conflict resolution advocacy, are central to churches and church-based institutions' multifaceted commitment to promoting social justice, peace and the overall well-being of the Kenyan population. Advocacy is critical in addressing both immediate election-related issues and broader societal challenges.

5.2.3 Oversight

The systematic literature review demonstrated that the church's role in Kenya goes beyond advocacy and extends to a significant oversight function focused on government actions and fostering accountability to ensure peaceful elections and post-election peace. Several studies have shed light on how the church undertakes this oversight role, contributing to the larger goal of promoting transparency, accountability, and ethical conduct during electoral periods.

For example, Klopp (2009) highlighted the pivotal role played by the National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCCK) secretariat in critiquing government policies and actions, particularly in the context of the 2007 election. Similarly, Kilonzo (2009), also focusing on the 2007 election, underscored the church's stance in condemning the President and the Prime Minister for their perceived roles in encouraging violence through their hard-line stances. This condemnation signified the church's moral authority and reflected its oversight role in holding political leaders accountable for their actions. In addition, the church strongly disapproved of corruption, emphasising its commitment to accountability and establishing a peaceful and just society.

Also, Kagema (2015) emphasised the church's active role in combating corruption, a factor often linked to electoral violence in Kenya. By condemning and acting against sin, the church exercised oversight to promote transparency and accountability within the political and electoral systems. In their article, Githigaro (2012) contributed to the discussion of the oversight role by highlighting how the church monitored the government's peacebuilding and resettlement programs. Additionally, the church advocated for individuals implicated in post-election violence to be prosecuted in the International Criminal Court, signalling the importance of accountability for those involved in such acts. Furthermore, the church played a crucial role in overseeing the implementation of recommendations from the Kenya National Dialogue and Reconciliation Project, ensuring the effective execution of reconciliation efforts. Finally, Haider (2016) further corroborated these findings, noting the church's participation in inter-religious forums that advocated for prosecuting leaders linked to post-election violence. This oversight role sought to hold individuals accountable for their actions and promote justice within the political and electoral landscape.

Therefore, the literature review is consistent with the findings of other studies and publications. The church in Kenya has taken on an active and multifaceted oversight role in various domains, including government actions, the fight against corruption, and the promotion of accountability and justice. These oversight endeavours reflect the church's commitment to fostering transparency, accountability, and ethical conduct during elections, all of which are crucial for the realisation of peaceful elections and post-election peace (Ahere, 2012; Owuor & Wisor, 2014; Lynch et al., 2019). The church's moral authority and commitment to these oversight roles contribute significantly to the broader efforts to create a more just and harmonious society during electoral periods.

5.2.4 Documentation

The role of documentation by the Church and Church-based institutions in Kenya during electoral periods is an often overlooked yet vital function in the pursuit of transparency, accountability, and a thorough understanding of the events that transpire. Klopp (2009), focusing on the 2007 election, highlighted the meticulous documentation efforts undertaken by the church, particularly regarding electoral violence and its implications. One crucial aspect of this documentation was the careful and systematic recording of incidents of violence, with a particular focus on gathering evidence that suggested government involvement. This endeavour aimed to establish a factual and evidential basis for assessing the role of the government in the violence that occurred during the electoral period. By documenting these incidents, the church contributed to shedding light on potential malpractices and holding those responsible accountable.

Furthermore, Klopp (2009) observed that the church's documentation extended beyond chronicling the violent events. It also encompassed capturing the consequences and aftermath of the violence. This comprehensive documentation process likely included gathering information on the individuals affected, the extent of physical and psychological harm inflicted, property damage, and any other significant repercussions resulting from the electoral violence. By documenting these consequences, the church contributed to a better understanding of the full scope and impact of the violence on individuals and communities.

Therefore, one of the critical roles of churches and church-based institutions, the documentation efforts in 2007 encompassed different elements as demonstrated in the systematic review. The systematic recording of violence, social injustice, and other issues to assess government involvement and the thorough documentation of the wide-ranging consequences of electoral violence helps in conflict management and resolution, transparency and accountability. It forms the basis for lessons to mitigate recurrence (Lynch et al., 2019). This documentation, evidence-gathering, and dissemination activities are pivotal in fostering transparency, accountability, and a comprehensive understanding of the events, which helps address conflict and violence in society (Kuperus, 2011). Moreover, the documentation served as an oversight mechanism, ensuring that critical events were recorded correctly and that evidence was preserved, ultimately contributing to the pursuit of justice and peace in the aftermath of the elections.

5.2.5 Partnerships for Peace and Humanity

The literature review data showed that the Kenya church has proactively promoted peaceful elections and post-election peace through collaborative partnerships with various organisations and entities. As highlighted by several researchers, this collaborative spirit underscores the church's commitment to working with diverse stakeholders to pursue peace and harmony in Kenya during electoral periods. For instance, Klopp (2009), in the context of the 2007 election, documented the church's partnerships with organisations such as Dutch Interchurch Aid and the Norwegian Refugee Council. These collaborations involved joint efforts to address the aftermath of electoral violence and assist affected communities. Additionally, the church forged partnerships with local government authorities, recognising the significance of cooperation between religious institutions and local governance in fostering peace. Further, churches' collaboration extended to working with other churches, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), and Youth Groups to disseminate peace messages and engage the broader community in peacebuilding initiatives. This inclusive approach aimed to reach various segments of society, promoting a shared commitment to peace and unity.

Similarly, Githigaro (2012) highlighted the extensive partnerships undertaken by the church, which included cooperation with the Inter-Religious Forum (IRF) and various organisations such as the Kenya Red Cross, World Church Council, and other churches. Furthermore, the church engaged in collaborative efforts with international bodies like the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), as well as local and international Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). These partnerships reflected a broad, inclusive approach to peacebuilding, involving multiple stakeholders in concerted efforts to promote peace and reconciliation. Finally, Kilonzo (2009) also emphasised the church's partnerships with local government officials to advance peace initiatives, further underlining the importance of joint efforts between churches and government entities in addressing peace and security issues at the community level.

In summary, churches in Kenya have actively established partnerships with diverse organisations, including humanitarian agencies, inter-religious forums, government authorities, international bodies, and NGOs, to work on peacebuilding initiatives collaboratively. These partnerships reflect a holistic and inclusive approach to addressing the complex challenges related to peace and conflict resolution in Kenya, ultimately contributing to promoting peaceful elections and realising post-election peace. The church's commitment to cooperation and partnership highlights its central role as a catalyst for peace and unity in the Kenyan context.

5.2.6 Assistance to Victims of Electoral Violence

The church's role in assisting victims of electoral violence and post-electoral turmoil in Kenya is of paramount importance, as numerous researchers emphasise. This assistance addresses the immediate needs of victims and plays a vital role in the broader context of promoting electoral and post-electoral peace. During the 2007 election, as highlighted by Klopp (2009), many wounded and displaced individuals sought refuge in churches, viewing them as places of safety. The church extended these victims' material assistance, including food, shelter, and necessities. Furthermore, they provided crucial psychosocial support to help those affected by the violence cope with trauma and emotional distress. In this manner, the church actively protected and cared for victims of electoral violence, providing them with a sanctuary of physical and emotional support.

Githigaro (2012) corroborated these findings and emphasised the church's role in delivering humanitarian aid to victims, including food, clothing, and shelter for those affected by the violence. Moreover, the church engaged in rescue missions to assist individuals stranded or isolated due to the violence. The assistance also included psychosocial support and agency services, with referrals to institutions for comprehensive care, addressing the broader needs of victims. Further, in Eldoret, Richard (2020) noted that the Catholic church received thousands of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) after the 2007 post-election violence, one of the severest occurrences of electoral violence in the country's history. This underscores the church's commitment to providing shelter and support to those forced to flee their homes due to violence, demonstrating its vital role in safeguarding and assisting the affected population.

Also, Mwamba et al. (2019) highlighted the church's contribution to psychosocial support during electoral and post-electoral violence. The church offered pastoral care and counselling services, providing comfort, guidance, and emotional support to individuals affected by electoral violence. Similarly, Mwamba (2019) mentioned that the church offered pastoral care and counselling services to victims, addressing their spiritual and emotional needs during distress. These services were instrumental in helping individuals and communities recover and heal in the wake of violence.

In essence, the church in Kenya and Church-based institutions, in collaboration with various partners, have played a crucial role in aiding and supporting victims of electoral and post-electoral violence. These findings are consistent with the conclusions in the extant literature, such as Elder et al. (2014), Kagema (2019), and Kilonzo and Onkware (2022), who concluded that support, such as material aid, psychosocial assistance, shelter, counselling, and pastoral care, has been pivotal in helping individuals and communities recover and heal from the traumatic impact of violence and present an opportunity to pursue and realise peaceful elections. By helping those in need, churches contribute significantly to promoting electoral peace and post-election reconciliation in Kenya.

5.2.7 Peace Messaging

The role of peace messaging by the church and church-based institutions in Kenya is a recurring and significant theme in promoting peaceful elections and post-electoral peace. Several studies underscored the active engagement of the church in peace messaging and advocacy to encourage reconciliation, unity, and non-violence during electoral periods. For example, Klopp (2009) highlighted the use of prayers by the church to promote peace during the 2007 election. Additionally, the church actively countered government propaganda by disseminating information and educating the public to create a more informed and peaceful society. Similarly, Githigaro (2012) emphasised the church's mobilisation of church and community leaders to prevent youths from engaging in violence. The church also facilitated dialogue forums, pastoral visits, exchange visits, and ecumenical visits to encourage communication and understanding among different groups.

Also, Haider (2016) noted the church's efforts in delivering messages against violence and emphasised the importance of peaceful coexistence and conflict resolution, which is vital in promoting peace during electoral periods. Additionally, Mwamba et al. (2019) stress the role of church sermons in conveying messages of peace and unity. The church also established peace desks, organised prayer movements, and engaged in inter-ethnic dialogues. Additionally, peacebuilding workshops were conducted to educate and empower communities with conflict resolution skills. Similarly, in a discussion of peace messaging initiatives implemented by the church, Richard (2020) discussed the "Amani Mashinani (peace at the grassroots)" initiative, which likely involved grassroots efforts to promote peace and reconciliation at the community level.

Other reviewed literature, such as Tarus and Gathogo (2016), highlighted the church's role in embodying an authentic community, contributing to peace messaging and promoting unity and cooperation among community members. Kinas (2018) discussed developing a peace plan for Kenya and organising prayer forums, including a national prayer day. The "Wheels of Hope" initiative in multiple cities likely involved community-based peace promotion efforts. Finally, Meinema (2020) discussed various means of peace messaging employed by the church, including murals, peace-themed T-shirts, banners, meetings (barazas), and marches. The church also criticised politicians for using youths for violence and using music and other artistic works to convey messages of peace.

Therefore, the church in Kenya and church-based institutions employed various strategies and initiatives for peace messaging during electoral periods. These efforts, consistent with the findings reported by Akinyi (2016), encompass prayers, community mobilisation, artistic expressions, dialogue forums, pastoral visits, grassroots campaigns, and various forms of communication to promote peace, unity, and reconciliation in the country. As Akinyi (2016) also concluded, the church's role in peace messaging is pivotal in shaping public attitudes and behaviours, fostering a culture of peace and understanding during electoral periods.

5.2.8 Partisanship and Electoral Violence

While the church is expected to foster peace and encourage peaceful coexistence, in some cases, it has failed to live up to these expectations. Partisanship within the Church and Church-based institutions during electoral periods in Kenya has been a complex and contentious issue, as discussed in various reviewed articles. This issue highlights the challenges and concerns associated with the involvement of churches and related institutions in politics, the potential impact on electoral violence, and the promotion of peaceful elections.

During the 2007 election, there were instances where particular ethnic groups, particularly the Kalenjin, were perceived as favoured by some church factions, while others, such as the Gikuyu, were seen as outsiders due to differing voting patterns. This ethnisation of the church contributed to divisions along ethnic lines. Moreover, specific denominations and church-based institutions, including the African Inland Church, the National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCCK), and the Roman Catholic Church, exhibited partisanship during this election (Mati, 2015; Tarus, 2022; Kilonzo, 2009; Mwamba, 2019; Kinas, 2018; Meinema, 2020). This partisanship raised concerns about the neutrality of churches and related institutions in political matters.

The church, in general, faced criticism for its perceived lack of courage in confronting and countering powerful hate speech and its failure to maintain neutrality in both pre-and post-election periods. This lack of objectivity eroded the church's moral authority to promote peace and non-violence during elections. Divisions within the church also occurred along ethnic and denominational lines. Researchers pointed out that schisms among religious groups in Kenya during electoral periods contributed to tensions and conflicts. Polls conducted by Synovate Kenya revealed that a significant portion of the population did not trust religious leaders due to perceived partisanship during electoral periods.

To address these challenges, some articles discussed the influence of Western donors' partnerships on peace and assistance efforts within the church. These partnerships aimed to mitigate the negative impact of partisanship on the electoral process. Despite these efforts, the issue of partisanship remained complex and contentious. Another concern was that, during electoral periods, some churches openly supported presidential candidates and demonstrated partisanship, compromising their moral right to condemn violence and promote peace. This diminished their credibility as neutral voices in the promotion of peaceful elections.

As such, partisanship within the church during electoral periods has raised concerns about divisions along ethnic, denominational, and political lines. It has also led to questions about religious institutions' neutrality and moral authority to promote peaceful elections. Addressing partisanship and encouraging the church's role as a unifying and neutral force during elections remain significant challenges in Kenya. It underscores the complexity of the relationship between religion, politics, and peace in the context of electoral processes. Partisanship of churches and related institutions can potentially exacerbate electoral violence before, during, and after elections, as was evidenced in the 2007 election.

5.2.9 Acknowledgement, Apology, and Reconciliation

In the context of the church's involvement in Kenyan electoral processes, acknowledging past shortcomings, issuing apologies, and fostering reconciliation have been vital themes discussed in several articles. The church takes significant steps to address its role during and after electoral periods and promote healing and unity within the community. For instance, during the aftermath of the 2007 election, the National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCCK) and the Roman Catholic Church (RC) issued formal apologies. These apologies allowed the church to acknowledge its partisanship and contribution to the divisive political landscape during that election. More specifically, Tarus (2022) documented multiple apologies, including the "Hope for Kenya" apology and another apology in Kabarak. The Catholic bishops also issued an apology at the Holy Family Basilica. These acts of acknowledgement and apology signify a commitment to reconciliation and healing within the church community, addressing past issues and moving forward with a renewed sense of unity.

Taurus and Gathogo (2016) mentioned the "Hope for Kenya" apology as part of broader efforts to address past challenges. They also emphasised the church's role in exhibiting counter-cultural faith, transcending ethnic divisions, and promoting unity within the church community. Kinas (2018) noted that the NCKK issued an apology in 2008, acknowledging its past shortcomings, and the Catholic Church also issued an apology. These actions reflect the church's dedication to reconciliation and unity within the church community and its commitment to restoring its image as a unifying and impartial institution. Such acknowledgements marked a crucial step toward reconciliation and the restoration of the church's reputation as a unifying and neutral institution (Kilonzo, 2009; Mati, 2015; Mwamba, 2019; Tarus, 2022; Kinas, 2018; Meinema, 2020). Acknowledging past errors, partisanship, issuing apologies, and fostering reconciliation have been fundamental aspects of the church's efforts to address its role during electoral periods and promote unity and healing within the church community. These actions rebuild the credibility and reputation of the church as a peace-making and impartial institution in the eyes of the public.

5.3 Interpretation of Findings

In this section, the findings from the systematic literature review are interpreted leveraging the secularism perspective and the peacebuilding theoretical perspective.

5.3.1 Interpretation of Findings Using the Peacebuilding Theoretical Lens

Applying the peacebuilding theory to the findings, the church's role in influencing peaceful civic elections in Kenya can be explored further. The peacebuilding theory emphasises proactive engagement, addressing root causes, and fostering lasting peace (Gawerc, 2006). The church's activities, as outlined in the findings, exemplify these principles.

For instance, churches and church-based institutions' partnerships with various organisations, local government authorities, inter-religious forums, and international bodies represent a proactive approach to conflict prevention, management, and resolution. By collaborating with these stakeholders, the church aims to address the underlying issues that could lead to violence during elections. The partnerships extend beyond reactive responses to electoral violence and instead focus on preventing conflicts from escalating in the first place. Also, the mediation role exhibited during volatile electoral periods is consistent with the tenets of the peacebuilding theoretical perspective. In fact, according to Ndeche and Iroye (2022), the peacebuilding theoretical perspective avers that peacebuilding efforts involve collaboration between organisations and entities in conflict management, resolution, and maintenance of peace in the short and long term. As such, at the core, the partnerships with other like-minded organisations and institutions and the mediation role can potentially foster peaceful elections in Kenya.

Further, churches and church-based institutions' involvement in peace messaging is another critical aspect from a peacebuilding perspective. The church actively engages in conflict resolution and promoting peaceful coexistence by conducting prayers, disseminating messages against violence, organising dialogue forums, and using various forms of artistic expression. This approach corresponds with the peacebuilding theory's focus on addressing the root causes of violent conflicts (Longpoe, 2020). The involvement of these institutions in peace messaging in its various forms, as an integral part of the activities undertaken before, during, and after elections, can foster peacebuilding efforts.

Also, the peacebuilding theory encourages multilateral civic engagement. The churches, church-based institutions, and other related institutions' collaboration with different organisations and community leaders in civic education and engagement initiatives illustrates a commitment to working together to build peace. In fact, according to Ndeche and Iroye (2022), peacebuilding in theory and practice envisages a multilateral rather than a unilateral process of active prosocial civic engagement behaviours. This inclusive approach of churches aligns with the theory's emphasis on concerted efforts by multiple stakeholders to promote peace and reconciliation. Therefore, civic engagement and education activities of churches and church-based institutions have the potential to foster peace during and after elections.

Additionally, the church's provision of material assistance and psychosocial support to victims of electoral violence aligns with the restorative justice aspect of peacebuilding. By aiding victims, the church contributes to healing and reconciliation within affected communities. Ndeche and Iroye (2022) observed that an integral element of peacebuilding from the perspective of peacebuilding theory, for sustainable peace and sustainable post-conflict reconstruction, it is vital to focus on all levels, including physical, economic, social and psychological. The church-based, faith-based institutions' role as a source of comfort, guidance, and emotional support demonstrates its commitment to addressing the consequences of violence and rebuilding the social fabric.

As such, churches and church or faith-based institutions' activities during Kenyan elections demonstrate their role as a proactive peacebuilder. By addressing the root causes of conflict and the consequences of violence, the church plays a crucial role in creating an environment conducive to peaceful elections and post-electoral peace. The identified roles and influences of churches and related institutions before, during, and after elections have the potential to foster peaceful elections from a peacebuilding theoretical lens.

5.3.1 Interpretation of Findings Using the Secularism Perspective

On the other hand, examining the findings through the lens of secularism sheds light on the relationship between churches, church-based institutions, and the state. For example, churches, church-based, and related institutions, such as the National Church Council of Kenya (NCCCK) and the Kenyan state. Secularism involves separating religious institutions and symbols from the governance of the state, emphasising a focus on worldly matters and individual freedoms (Chishti, 2004). The degree of secularism in a country can influence the role of religious institutions in influencing peaceful elections (Reaves, 2012). As such, the implication is that if Kenya adheres to secular principles, religious bodies, including churches, should operate independently of the state's control. Therefore, churches and other related institutions can independently critique and oversee the state in such a situation. This perspective can help assess the state's neutrality concerning religion.

From a secularism theoretical lens perspective, the church's involvement in peace messaging, assistance to victims, and reconciliation efforts indicates its freedom to engage in activities promoting peace. These activities of the church suggest a degree of neutrality on the part of the Kenyan state regarding religious activities. The state does not impose religious beliefs or practices on individuals, as is characteristic of secularism (Reaves, 2012). Further, the fact that the NCKK and other church-based institutions have been able to collaborate with international bodies, inter-religious forums, and various organisations indicates that they have the freedom to engage in activities beyond the religious sphere. This aligns with the secular principle of keeping religious institutions separate from the state's governance. The NCKK and other institutions' criticism and oversight over the government and government officials, such as The President and the Prime Minister, for their perceived roles in the 2007 general election is consistent with secularism principles and practices.

Further, in secularism, individual freedom of conscience and freedom of association for religious purposes are strictly protected. The state does not discriminate based on religion (Reaves, 2012). The findings from the systematic literature review revealed that the church's activities, such as pastoral care, counselling, and inter-ethnic dialogue, prioritise individual freedoms and do not impose religious ideas on individuals. These activities demonstrate churches and church-based or religious institutions carrying out their civil obligations as institutional citizens of the country. Reaves (2012) observed that the state, from a secularism theoretical perspective, the state views religious and related institutions as some of the organisations founded on shared cultural, social, and economic objectives. Like the state, churches are viewed as entities that seek to foster the well-being of citizens.

Therefore, the findings suggest that the Kenyan state and government maintain a degree of secularism by allowing churches and related institutions to engage in peace-promoting activities independently. The state's neutrality regarding religion enables churches and church-based institutions to contribute to peacebuilding during elections without interference or curtailment. This interpretation aligns with secularism, emphasising the separation of religious and state matters while upholding individual freedoms and civil rights. Given the space and the constitutional or legal leeway, churches and church-based institutions engage in diverse activities that collectively contribute to peacebuilding before, during, and after elections.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

This final chapter consolidates the insights from the extensive examination of the church's role in influencing peaceful civic elections in Kenya using a systematic literature review methodology. The chapter draws upon the findings to formulate comprehensive conclusions that shed light on the multifaceted roles and influences of churches and church-based institutions during electoral periods. Additionally, this chapter transcends mere reflection and offers a pragmatic set of actionable recommendations aimed at shaping policies and strategic actions that can contribute to the promotion of peaceful elections. Furthermore, recognising this field's evolving nature and the ever-dynamic socio-political landscape, the chapter identifies areas for further research to deepen the understanding of the church's role in electoral peace in Kenya.

6.2 Conclusions

From a peacebuilding theoretical perspective, the study's conclusions affirm that the church's actions align closely with the principles of proactive engagement, root-cause addressing, and multilateral civic participation. These actions, including partnerships with various organisations, mediation, peace messaging, and assistance to victims, exemplify the church's role as a proactive peacebuilder. Addressing the underlying causes of conflict and the consequences of violence, the church is indispensable in creating an environment conducive to peaceful elections. The findings have illuminated how the church contributes to conflict prevention, management, resolution, and peace consolidation. However, as evidenced in the 2007/2008 electoral period, it is essential to note that churches and church-based institutions do not always live up to the expectation of fostering peace. Partisanship and impartiality in these institutions and the pursuit of selfish interests can contribute to heightened tension, exacerbated violence, and loss of the moral right to preach about peace.

Examining the church's role through the lens of secularism has facilitated understanding the broader socio-political context in which these actions occur. By considering Kenya's secular nature, the study has demonstrated the delicate balance that churches and church-based institutions strike in engaging with the political sphere while respecting the principles of separation between church and state. Our conclusions underscore the importance of this balance in maintaining a democratic and pluralistic society. The church, as a moral compass and voice of reason, contributes significantly to the electoral process while upholding the principles of secularism, thereby promoting tolerance and peaceful coexistence.

6.3 Recommendations

As we transition from conclusions to recommendations, it is essential to point out that the church's role in electoral peace is both an opportunity and a responsibility. As observed in the findings, the fruitful collaborations between churches, church-based institutions, and various stakeholders underscore the need for policy-level recognition and support for these initiatives. Therefore, the following recommendations are proposed:

- a. The government should officially recognise the pivotal role that churches and related institutions play in electoral peace. Establishing mechanisms for collaboration between the state and churches can lead to more effective conflict prevention and resolution.
- b. Invest in capacity-building programs for church leaders and members involved in peacebuilding initiatives. This will empower them with the necessary skills and knowledge to address conflict dynamics more effectively.
- c. Incorporate peace education into the national curriculum, focusing on interfaith dialogue and conflict resolution. This can help instil a culture of peace from a young age.
- d. Establish independent monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to assess the impact of church-led peace initiatives. This will provide valuable insights into their effectiveness and areas for improvement.
- e. Encourage and facilitate interfaith collaboration, particularly during electoral periods. Joint initiatives by various churches and church-based institutions can promote unity and tolerance.

- f. Invest in research initiatives to further understand the role of churches in electoral peace. This will help in refining strategies and adapting to evolving challenges.
- g. Promote public awareness campaigns on the importance of peaceful elections and the church's role. Sensitising the population can foster a culture of peaceful participation.
- h. Strengthen international partnerships that support peacebuilding initiatives led by churches in Kenya. This can provide additional resources and expertise.

Moving forward, it is critical to acknowledge that the field of understanding the church's role in electoral peace is still evolving. Therefore, further research is required in this area. For example, it is vital to investigate the long-term impact of church-led peace initiatives on communities and electoral processes. This will provide insights into the sustainability of their efforts. Further, it is essential to explore the dynamics of interfaith collaboration during electoral periods and its potential to influence peace. Understanding the complexities of working across religious boundaries is necessary. Also, research could focus on comparative studies across different regions and countries to discern the transferability of church-led peacebuilding models. Other potential research areas are investigating the role of emerging technologies, such as social media, in shaping the church's influence in electoral peace and examining the church's efforts to engage and empower young people to promote electoral peace actively.

This study underscores the indispensable role that churches and church-based institutions play in influencing peaceful civic elections in Kenya. Their activities align closely with the principles of peacebuilding theory, making them effective proactive peacebuilders. Simultaneously, they navigate the delicate balance between religious engagement and secularism, promoting tolerance and peaceful coexistence. The recommendations and areas for further research aim to harness and expand the positive impact of the church, ensuring that its invaluable role in electoral peace is maximised and sustained for the benefit of Kenya's democracy and social harmony.

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