The Role of Ethnic Diversity in the Darfur Conflict in Sudan

Wafaa Elrasheid Ismail Mohamed¹, Mendong Margaret Besin-Mengla²
¹(Pan African University. Institute of Governance, Humanities and Social Sciences, Yaoundé, Cameroon)
²(Department of Sociology and Anthropology, University of Buea, Cameroon)

ABSTRACT: *The conflicts in the Darfur region of Sudan have been of major concern for many scholars, who have focused primarily on the political aspect and competition over natural resources. However, the issues and challenges behind the ethnic differences have often been neglected. This research aimed* at examining the contributions of ethnic differences in fuelling the recent ethnic conflict in Western Darfur. *To attain the objective, the study adopted the mixed research approach of data collection and analysis. The findings revealed that the main root cause of Darfur's conflict is ethnic difference.* Social inequality was the main challenge faced by the inhabitants of the Darfur region due to ethnic differences. *Ethnic differences in the Darfur region has caused* ethnic intolerance and difficulty in living together. Tribalism and antagonism are the primary consequences of ethnic differences in the Darfur region. *The main recommendation of this research is for the Sudanese government, together with her international partners to promote inclusive and sincere dialogue among the warring groups; appease groups that have been oppressed for a long time in this country; promote equal human rights for every Sudanese; and ensure equal opportunities for all its citizens.*

Keywords: Challenges, Darfur conflict, Darfur region, ethnic diversity, Sudan.

I. INTRODUCTION

Darfur in Arabic is 'Land of the Fur'. Darfur lies between Kordofan to the east and Wadai to the west and extends southward to the Al-Ghazāl River and northward to the Libyan Desert. Some tribes are nomadic, as they move around the land with their livestock; while other tribes are sedentary farmers. Most nomadic tribes consider themselves as of Arab descent whereas the sedentary farming tribes consider themselves as of black African descent. Majority of the Darfur population is Muslim. The Darfur region is comprised of several ethnic groups. These ethnic groups include the Fur, Masalit, Zaghawa, and some Arab ethnic groups.

The Fur speak a Nilo-Saharan language that is used alongside Sudanese Arabic, which is mostly spoken for trade and commerce. Fur practice their traditional rituals alongside Islam. Fur villages are typically composed of four or five households, and most are farmers who cultivate food both for the family and to sell at market. Their primary crop is *dukhn* (millet), which is used to make their staple food *asida*, a thick porridge paste. *Dukhn* beer is an important part of the Fur diet and is also payment for field work. This tradition has lasted even though Islam prohibits the consumption of alcohol. By the year 2005, the Darfur conflict, had caused an estimated 70000 loss of civilian lives and about 1.8 million peoples had fled their land in search of safety (Straus, 2005).

The second tribe is called Masalit. According to ACAPS (2023) the Masalit are among the largest ethnic groups in Darfur and arescattered throughout Sudan. Majority of Masalit people inhabit parts of Northern Sudan, Darfur, Dar Masalit, and the Nyala District. They speak the Masalit language, it is a part of the broader Nilo-Saharan group. As agriculturalists, the Masalit grow millet, sorghum, peanuts, okra, and some fruits. They also gather honey and tree gum, and raise cattle, sheep, and goats to supplement their diet. Historically the Masalit

have been both self-sufficient and self-contained, yet due to drought and increased pressure on the land, their contact with other groups in the Darfur region has greatly increased. The majority of Masalit live in sedentary villages. Like other sedentary African farmers in Darfur, conflict with pastoral Arab groups over land and resources has been going on for generations. According to many village leaders, age-old clashes in the Darfur were more or less contained by traditional methods of conflict resolution.

Zaghawa is the third tribe, scattered throughout Sudan. They live primarily along the border between Sudan and Chad in the northern Darfur region. The Zaghawa, who also call themselves Beri, are a nomadic ethnic group who rely on camel and cattle herding. Zaghawa lands are ecologically fragile in Darfur and are frequently affected by drought (Ajena 2013). The Zaghawa must wait nine dry months for a brief rainy season; the competition for access to pasture and water often creates conflict either with settled farmers or among themselves.

II. Statement of the problem

The Darfur region in western Sudan is home to a diverse range of ethnic groups each with their own unique traditions, beliefs, languages, and practices. According to the population the ethnic diversity in Darfur bred ethnic differences, limited intercultural tolerance, tribalism and hatred among people of different ethnicity. Growing tension stemming from ethnic differences unfortunately led to conflicts within the region. Ethnic conflicts have occurred in early 21st century. The latest of these ethnic conflicts began in 2003. Although there have been attempts to foster greater understanding and collaboration among ethnic groups, ethnic differences remain a significant obstacle in the region. The most recent conflict, which began in May 2003, is considered by the people in the Darfur regions as one of the worst humanitarian crises observed in the region in the 21st century. Ethnic differences in the Darfur regions have caused related problems such as socio-cultural problems and economic discrimination in the distribution of resources among people of different ethnic groups by stakeholders who promote ethnic preferences in the allocation of economic resources. For example, the people in the Darfur region claim that the Arab ethnic groups have historically been privileged and politically dominant in Sudan, while the non-Arab ethnic groups have suffered from marginalization and discrimination. The purpose of this study is to examine the role of ethnic differences in the recent ethnic conflict in Western Darfur.

III. Research Question

The study is centred on the following research question:

-   How have ethnic differences in the Darfur Region contributed in fuelling the recent Darfur conflict?

IV. Research Objective

This research is based on the objective that follows:

-   To examine the contributions of ethnic differences in fuelling the recent ethnic conflict in Western Darfur.

V. Research Hypothesis

-   Ethnic superiority of the Arab tribes, tribalism, ethnic hostility and marginalisation of non-Arab tribes fuelled the recent conflict in the Western Darfur region.

VI. Literature Review

This section reviews other studies relevant to the present research which were carried out by other scholars either in different contexts, methods, or whose results were different, thus showing the knowledge gap filled by the present study. It also presents the relation to ethnic differences in the Darfur region.

Aprile et al (2017) conducted study on racial/ethnic discrimination during adolescence. The purpose of this meta-analytic review is to examine the relationship between racial/ethnic discrimination and well-being during adolescence. The objective is to provide a comprehensive understanding of the impact of discrimination on the mental health and overall well-being of adolescents from different racial and ethnic backgrounds. The researchers collected data from various studies that examined the association between racial/ethnic

discrimination and well-being among adolescents. This work is relevant to our study because it investigates the relationship between perceived racial/ethnic discrimination and socio-emotional distress, academic performance, and risky health behaviours during adolescence, as well as potential variations in these relationships. It also helps the researchers better understand the impact of discrimination, as this article explores how racial/ethnic discrimination affects the well-being of individuals during adolescence. By examining the effects of discrimination on well-being, it can provide insight into the challenges faced by individuals in the Darfur region who may experience discrimination on ethnic grounds. This understanding can contribute to a broader understanding of the challenges related to ethnic discrimination in the Darfur region. Furthermore, it helps examine the experiences of discrimination, as this article discusses various forms of discrimination faced by individuals from different racial/ethnic backgrounds.

Kleinewiese (2022) conducted a study on ethnic discrimination in neighbourhood in-group-out-group encounters, specifically examining possible solutions to reduce threat perception and increase fairness. This work fills a research gap by integrating prior research from sociology and social psychology, including threat and competition theories from integration research. The study focuses on the dynamics of in-group-out-group relationships, fairness norms, and threat in relation to negative behaviour towards others, such as neighbours. It particularly examines the circumstances under which negative behaviour is more likely towards an ethnic out-group person compared to an in-group person, known as discriminating behaviour. The study also emphasizes the importance of promoting fairness and equality in interpersonal neighbourhood interactions to mitigate ethnic discrimination. Based on the findings, the article recommends several strategies to combat ethnic discrimination in neighbourhoods, such as fostering positive contact between different ethnic groups, promoting cultural diversity awareness, enforcing anti-discrimination policies, and encouraging collective action against discrimination. Overall, this work addresses the issue of ethnic discrimination in neighbourhood settings and suggests measures to reduce prejudice and promote inclusivity and harmony. This study is relevant to our study because it focuses on ethnic discrimination in neighbourhood encounters and highlights the issues of ethnic tensions and conflicts that may exist in the Darfur region. The work discusses ethnic discrimination, which is considered to be one of the challenges faced in the Darfur region, where ethnic groups such as the Fur, Masalit, and Zaghawa have experienced violence and discrimination. Therefore, the work proposes reduced threat perception as a possible solution to ethnic discrimination. This can be relevant to our study as understanding the factors contributing to threat perception and finding ways to alleviate it could help mitigate conflicts and tensions in the Darfur region. Additionally, the study suggests increasing fairness as a strategy. This idea relates to the objective of achieving justice and equality for different ethnic groups in the Darfur region, which are facing marginalization, violence, and even genocide.

Wong et al (2003) conducted a study on the influence of ethnic discrimination and ethnic identification on the school and socio-emotional adjustment of African American adolescents. The study used longitudinal data from a diverse sample of African American adolescents living in or near a major East Coast metropolis. The researchers examined the relationship between perceived discrimination by teachers and peers, and indicators of academic, socio-emotional, and behavioural adjustment in African American adolescents. They also explored whether ethnic identification acted as a promotive and protective factor against the potential negative impacts of ethnic discrimination. Their study revealed that experiences of discrimination by peers and teachers were potential risks for African American adolescents' academic motivation, mental health, self-esteem, and involvement in problem behaviours. The findings suggest that proximal instances of ethnic discrimination pose developmental risks across a wide range of functioning. Additionally, experiences of racial devaluation in school, work, or other settings were associated with increased anger and distress, decreased satisfaction with school or work, and even poorer health outcomes. These findings are particularly important as they indicate that experiences of ethnic discrimination can influence the development of early adolescents, who are already at an increased risk for declining motivation, poorer self-perceptions, susceptibility to negative peer influence, and engagement in problem behaviours. This study is relevant to our work because it explores how ethnic discrimination affects the school and socio-emotional adjustment of African American adolescents. This can

provide insight into the negative consequences of discrimination based on ethnic differences, which can be applied to the challenges faced in the Darfur region. This study also addresses the role of ethnic identification in adolescents' adjustment. This concept can be relevant to understanding how ethnic differences and identities contribute to the challenges in the Darfur region.

Idrisov et al (2020) conducted study on Aggressiveness and ethnic intolerance as factors of extremist behaviour. The purpose of their work was to study the relationship between aggressive behaviour of an individual with the parameters of socio-ethnic intolerance and socio-psychological attitudes in the motivational need-sphere of the individual, in the context of experiencing intense stress caused by a traumatic event. The results of the study showed that aggressive forms of individual behaviour are accompanied by an increase in the overall level of social tolerance, which in turn can become one of the factors of increasing tension in society, disrespect and intolerance towards others, including people of other nationalities and faiths. Their result also showed that the presence of traumatic experiences deepens and intensifies aggressive forms of behaviour, forming indirect verbal aggression, leading to the disintegration of the individual with the micro social environment and socio-psychological maladjustment. Lastly, various forms of aggressive behaviour are positively associated with such motivational attitudes of the individual as an orientation toward power and toward money. At the same time, the predominance of orientations towards power in the motivational-need-related sphere of the individual is accompanied by an increase in the indicators of the individual's propensity to direct verbal, indirect physical and direct physical types of aggression. This work is important to this study because firstly, the study investigates aggressiveness and ethnic intolerance as factors contributing to extremist behaviour. Considering the significant conflicts between ethnic groups in the Darfur region, understanding the role of aggressiveness and ethnic intolerance is crucial. This study provides valuable insights into the psychological factors that may contribute to the challenges faced in the region. Additionally, the study's findings may help identify the root causes of extremist behaviour related to ethnic differences. By examining the link between aggressiveness, ethnic intolerance, and extremist behaviour, the researcher can analyse how these factors may manifest in the Darfur region and contribute to the ongoing conflicts and challenges.

Olasson and Siba (2009) conducted a study on ethnic cleansing or resource struggle in Darfur? An Empirical Analysis. They observed that the conflict in Darfur has been described in two ways: as an ethnic cleansing campaign carried out by the Sudanese government and its allied militias, and as a local struggle over dwindling natural resources between African farmers and Arab herders. In their article, they analysed the factors that contribute to attacks on villages in Darfur and utilized a conflict theory framework to understand the choice between ethnic cleansing and resource capture. Their findings lead them to conclude that the conflict in this particular area of Darfur should primarily be described as an ethnic cleansing campaign targeting three traditionally dominant African groups who expressed their opposition to the government in 2003. On the other hand, Arab-dominated villages are rarely targeted, although the possibility of resources playing a role cannot be completely ruled out. Furthermore, their results clearly show a significant displacement of people and a substantial reallocation of land from the three rebel tribes to Arab and new African ethnic groups. The socioeconomic impacts of the ethnic cleansing documented in this study are likely to be significant, and further research into this area is warranted. This work is important to this study because it aims to analyse whether the violence in Darfur is primarily driven by ethnic cleansing or resource struggle. By examining empirical data and evidence, the study provides insights into the underlying causes of conflicts in the region. This helps the researcher gain a deeper understanding of the main causes of the Darfur conflict, which can help address challenges related to ethnic differences and their role in driving conflicts in Darfur. Secondly, the study analyses the factors that contribute to the conflicts in Darfur, specifically focusing on whether they are driven by ethnic cleansing or resource struggle. By examining these dynamics, it can shed light on how ethnic differences play a role in exacerbating tensions and challenges faced in the region. Lastly, the study's empirical analysis provides insights into the policy implications for addressing the challenges of ethnic differences in Darfur. Whether the conflicts are rooted in ethnic cleansing or resource struggles, understanding the specific dynamics helps the

researcher develop targeted policies and interventions to mitigate and manage conflicts arising from ethnic differences.

Human Rights Watch (2004) discussed the ethnic cleansing in Darfur. It provides a comprehensive account of the ethnic cleansing and conflict that took place in the Darfur region of Sudan. It also highlights the involvement of the Sudanese government and its allied militia forces in targeting and persecuting certain African ethnic groups, primarily the Massalit Fur, and Zaghawa. It examines the historical context leading up to the conflict, shedding light on the underlying factors such as land disputes, limited resources, and political marginalization of certain communities. The government's response to local rebellions is explored, with a focus on the creation and arming of Janjaweed militias as a means of suppressing dissent in the region. The book uncovers the tactics employed by the government and militia forces, which included mass killings, rape, torture, and the displacement of millions of people. It details the systematic destruction of villages, infrastructures, and livelihoods, leaving communities devastated and dependent on humanitarian aid. Human Rights investigates the international response to the crisis, analysing efforts made by the United Nations, African Union, and other organizations to provide protection, relief, and seek justice for the victims. This article by Human Rights Watch is valuable to our study as it addresses the question regarding the challenges of ethnic differences in the Darfur region. The article specifically highlights the role of the government and militia forces in perpetrating ethnic cleansing against certain ethnic groups in the region. This provides evidence that the conflict in Darfur is not only due to resource scarcity or tribal conflicts, but also relates to political and power dynamics. The government's actions to conduct an ethnic cleansing campaign constitute one of the challenges that minority ethnic groups face in the Darfur region. Moreover, the article proposes useful strategies to manage the challenges of ethnic cleansing, which is very relevant. By advocating for justice and accountability for human rights abuses, addressing root causes of the conflict through political negotiations, and investing in programs that support reconciliation and social cohesion, the report provides a framework for managing ethnic differences in Darfur.

Admassu (2019) conducted a study on the causes of ethnic conflict in Ethiopia and its effect on development. The study explores multi-dimensional causes of ethnic conflict, and its effect on development in Ethiopia specifically focusing on the case of Amhara and Gumuz communities. The researcher argues that ethnic conflict occurs when a particular set of factors and conditions converge: a major structural crisis; presence of historical memories of inter-ethnic grievances; institutional factors that promote ethnic intolerance; manipulation of historical memories by political entrepreneurs to evoke emotions such as fear, resentment and hate toward the "other"; and an inter-ethnic competition over resources and rights. The goal of the paper is to depart from simplistic explanations of ethnic conflict and provide a basis for a more comprehensive approach to peace-building and post-conflict development strategies in ethnically divided societies. The findings of the study indicate the cause of conflict in Ethiopia has been largely due to territorial boundary, limited natural resources and the search for new economic resources, proliferation of illegal fire arms, inadequate policing and state security arrangements, diminishing the role of the traditional institutions, competition over control and access to natural resources. The study also found that Population displacement especially forced internal migration, recruitment or looting of family assets and psychological damage are main results of conflict between the two communities and followed by loose of assets. This study is relevant to our present study because it examines the root causes of the ethnic conflict in Ethiopia. In our present study, we are also examining the root causes of ethnic conflict in the Darfur region as one of our research questions. Therefore, this study can provide a deeper understanding of the underlying factors fuelling ethnic differences in the region. Additionally, this study discusses potential solutions or strategies to address ethnic conflict and promote peaceful coexistence in Ethiopia. These solutions can provide valuable insights and lessons that can be applied to the challenges faced in the Darfur region. This potentially offers approaches to mitigate ethnic differences and promote sustainable development.

Alcorta et al (2016) conducted a study on inequality and ethnic conflict in Sub-Saharan Africa. The researchers argue that educational, economic, and demographic inequalities may have different effects on the incidence of

ethnic conflict. Specifically, they expected that educational inequalities would increase the risk of ethnic conflicts, while economic and demographic inequalities would reduce the risk of such conflicts. The results of their multilevel logistic regression indicate that higher levels of educational inequality are associated with an increased risk of ethnic conflict, in line with their expectations. Conversely, higher levels of economic inequality and population differences are associated with a lower risk of ethnic conflict. They also found that ethnic dyads with lower joint educational levels, ethnic dyads that make up a larger share of the country's population, and ethnic dyads with a larger joint proportion of economic elites are more likely to be involved in ethnic conflicts. These findings are important as they suggest that there is no general effect of inequality on ethnic conflict, but rather, different types of inequalities have divergent effects on conflict risk. In addition to the direct effects of their independent variables, they also examined interaction effects. The analysis revealed that the effect of educational inequality depends on the joint wealth levels of the groups in the dyad, with the negative association between educational inequality and conflict risk being even stronger if the groups are wealthier. They also found a positive interaction between average education and the level of democracy, suggesting that a higher educational level may be particularly important for conflict reduction in less democratic societies. Increasing education can improve individuals' future prospects and raise the opportunity costs for potential rebel recruits. Future research should explore whether the motivation argument extends to other types of social inequalities, such as healthcare and infrastructure differences. Additionally, the public-private element of inequality should be studied in more detail since their findings suggest that groups deprived of publicly administered resources are more likely to feel aggrieved than those deprived of private resources. The above study is relevant to our present study because it examines the relationship between inequality and ethnic conflict in sub-Saharan Africa. Therefore, it can provide theoretical and empirical evidence supporting the argument that inequality exacerbates ethnic tensions. Considering the extent of inequality in the Darfur region and its potential role in fuelling ethnic conflicts, the findings of this study can reinforce the importance of addressing socioeconomic disparities as a crucial step towards resolving ethnic differences.

Biri (2019) conducted a study concerning conflict resolution. The study analysed the role of AU in the resolution of the Darfur conflict. The researcher conducted a qualitative method to collect data through the use of document analysis, the instruments utilized for data collection were therefore from secondary sources that include books, journals, magazines, newspapers and also the internet. The study revealed that although the African Union has played important roles in managing the conflict in Darfur, it has been the AU/UN Hybrid Operation (UNAMID) that has significantly assisted in stabilizing the region. Also, with the present-day occurrence in Darfur and Sudan as a whole, the UNAMID still need to remain for now, as the AU Peace and Security Council continue to acquire more skills and dynamism in managing and resolving conflicts on the continent. Therefore, the study by Petronella Biri on the African Union and conflict resolution in the Darfur crisis from 2003-2018 is relevant to the present study on the challenges of ethnic differences in the Darfur region because it focuses on the role of the African Union in conflict resolution during the Darfur crisis from 2003-2018. The study examines the African Union's efforts to resolve the conflict and the challenges faced in the process. It also analyses the impact of the conflict on the people of Darfur and the wider region. The study provides a comprehensive analysis of the political, social, and economic factors that contributed to the conflict and the strategies used by the African Union to address them. Overall, this study aims to provide insights into the complex nature of conflict resolution in Africa and the role of regional organizations such as the African Union in promoting peace and stability. However, there is a huge gap that distinguishes these two studies. The difference is that the present study will cover the gap of investigating the challenges of ethnic differences in the Darfur region.

Agena (2013) conducted a study concerning the contributory factors to the 2003 Darfur Conflict in Sudan and African Union (AU) Intervention Strategies. This paper is designed to interrogate into these factors with a view to establishing the extent they contributed to the escalation of the conflict. The study used the theory of Relative Deprivation as a framework to guide the work, the researcher concludes that structural inequality among the citizens and the different divides that make up the state of Sudan as well as the agitation of the perceived

marginalized people of Darfur for inclusion in the political and economic gains of the country as the major causes of the conflict. The activities of the Sudanese government that used the Janjaweed militias on the people instead reeling out policies for de-escalating the conflict was also a point of focus. Moreover, He investigated the strategies used by the African Union to stop the conflict. He also mentioned other factors that contributed to the Darfur crisis such as: political marginalization economic deprivation, islamization and Arabism, mobilization of armed militias, north-south civil war, and political polarization within Darfur. In this work, the researcher focused on the factors that contributed of the Darfur conflict (2003), his focus was a combination of many factors that we mentioned above, in addition to the intervention of the African Union to resolve the conflict of Darfur. But the present study focuses on the role of ethnic diversity in the Darfur region.

VII.   Methodology of research

To collect data in this research, the researchers made use of secondary and primary sources of data collection. Secondary data was collected from documentary sources in libraries and from the internet. Primary data was collected through field research in the conflict Darfur region. Fieldtrips to the Darfur enabled the collection of primary data. This study utilised the purposive sampling method to select research participants. Focus was solely on individuals who possessed expertise and experience in the subject matter being investigated. A sample of 60 persons was used for the collection of data. From this sample population,50 persons were selected for the collection of data using questionnaires, while 10 persons were selected for the collection of data using interviews. A total of 50 questionnaires were filled by 35 male and 15 female respondents. Concerning interviews, 3 traditional leaders and 7 other natives were interviewed in the conflict region.

Quantitative data from questionnaires were analysed using the Statistics Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). This method of data analysis helped to covert quantitative data to frequencies and percentages. The cross-tabulation method was used to present the frequencies and percentages. Tables showing the relationship between two or more variables were used to analyse related quantities of data obtained in this study.

Qualitative data was analysed using content analysis method. Qualitative data obtained from the field and from documentary research were examined and conclusions drawn.

Findings

Main causes of ethnic conflict in the Darfur region

Results from this study show that the recent Darfur conflict in Sudan originates from many causes (Musa, 2022). These causes include ethnic and tribal differences, inequality in job appointment, poor management of natural resources and interethnic disputes. Respondents were diversified on the main cause of the ethnic conflict. Majority of respondents, 19 (38%), agreed that the main cause of ethnic conflict in the Darfur region of Sudan was ethnic and tribal differences among the inhabitants of the Darfur region. Political marginalization of people from different ethnic groups was considered by some respondents as the main cause of the ethnic conflict. Precisely, 12 (24%) respondents claimed that political marginalization of people from other ethnic group was the main cause of the ethnic conflict. Ajena (2013) claimed that economic deprivation and poor management of natural resources were very important causes of recurrent conflicts in the Darfur region. Table 1 below illustrates the main causes of ethnic conflict in the Darfur region of Sudan selected by respondents.

Table 1. Main causes of the ethnic conflict in the Darfur region

Main causes of ethnic conflict	Frequency	Percentage
Ethnic and tribal differences	19	38
Inequality in appointments	6	12
Poor management of natural resources	4	8
Interethnic disputes	2	4

Economic deprivation	5	10
Political marginalization	12	24
Lack of education	2	4
Total	**50**	**100**

Source: fieldwork, 2023

Main challenges faced by inhabitants of the Darfur region due to ethnic differences

This research was able to prove that inhabitants of the Darfur region of Sudan face many challenges stemming from ethnic difference among these people. Identified as ethnic challenges are ethnocentrism, ethnic hostility, aggression and social inequality. Respondent were also diversified on the main challenge faced by inhabitants of the Darfur region stemming from ethnic differences. A large group of respondents, 12 in total making 24% claimed that social inequality was the main challenge faced by the inhabitants due to ethnic differences in the Darfur region. Another group of respondents, 11in total making 22% identified ethnocentrism as the main challenge faced by inhabitants of the Darfur region due to ethnic differences. As high as 20% of respondents considered ethnic hostility as a challenge faced by those in the Darfur region. In addition,14% of respondents claimed not to face any challenge in the Darfur region based on ethnic differences. Table 2 below analyses the main challenges resulting from ethnic differences as chosen by respondents in the Darfur region of Sudan.

Table 2: Main challenges faced by inhabitants of the Darfur region due to ethnic differences

Main challenges	Frequency	Percentage
Ethnocentrism	11	22
Ethnic hostility	10	20
Aggression	10	20
Social inequality	12	24
I do not face any challenge	7	14
Total	**50**	**100**

Source: fieldwork, 2023

VIII.   Main impact of ethnic differences in the Darfur region of Sudan prior to the recent Darfur conflict

This study discovered that prior to the recent Darfur conflict, ethnic differences in the Darfur region of Sudan had many impacts among which are ethnic division, obstacle to living together, source of enrichment and means to protect the local community. Figure 4 revealed that the majority of respondents considered ethnic differences to be the main causes of ethnic intolerance and difficulty in living together of the inhabitants of the Darfur region prior to the recent Darfur conflict

Table 3. Main impact of ethnic differences in the Darfur region prior to the recent conflict

Main impact of ethnic differences	Frequency	Percentage
Source of ethnic intolerance	26	52
Obstacle to living together	20	40
Source of enrichment	3	6
Means to protect the local community	1	2

Total	50	100

Source: fieldwork, 2023

IX.   Nature of coexistence of ethnic differences in the Darfur region

The people of the Darfur region of Sudan have diverse feelings and appreciations of the nature of coexistence among different ethnic groups in the region. The highest number of respondents that make up 82% declared that some ethnic groups in the Darfur region feel superior to others. In the same line, 64% of respondents claimed that there was the presence of high ethnic segregation in the Darfur region. A good number of respondents that make up 56% of respondents were of the opinion that there was high ethnic persecution by other ethnic groups in the Darfur region. Figure 4 below give a detail revelation of the nature of coexistence of ethnic differences in the Darfur region

X.   Table 4. Nature of coexistence of ethnic differences in the Darfur region

Nature of coexistence of ethnic differences	Frequency	Percentage
Some ethnic groups feel superior to others	41	82
Presence of high ethnic segregation	32	64
High cultural tolerance by other cultures	8	16
No contact between ethnic groups	0	0
High ethnic persecution by other groups	28	56

Source: fieldwork, 2023

Role of ethnic difference in the recent Darfur conflict

The recent Darfur ethnic conflict in Sudan has been caused mainly by ethnic differences. The people of the Darfur regions claimed that ethnic differences caused many problems that fuelled the conflict. Among these generated problems are tribalism and antagonism; regional inequality and violence; ethnic cleansing; Intertribal disputes and wars; and creation of ethnic militia groups. Based on findings presented in Figure 5 below, 37 respondents (74%) considered tribalism and antagonism as the primary consequence of ethnic differences. 29 participants (58%) considered regional inequality and violence as the main role of ethnic difference in the recent Darfur conflict. To 18 respondents (36%), the main role of ethnic difference in the recent Darfur conflict was the promotion of ethnic cleansing.

Table 5. Role of ethnic difference in the recent Darfur conflict

Role of ethnic difference	Frequency	Percentage
Tribalism and antagonism	37	74
Regional inequality and violence	29	58
Ethnic cleansing	18	36
Intertribal disputes and wars	17	34
Creation of ethnic militia groups	11	22

Source: fieldwork, 2023

XI.   Discussion

The Darfur region of Sudan has suffered many conflicts in recent decades. Many attempts have been made by stakeholders of peace, especially international bodies. Within, the countries, many attempts have also been made to promote peace and avoid war. Unfortunately, these efforts have not produced the desired fruits as political

conflicts in the Darfur region are recurrent. These conflicts have been blamed on ethnic differences that have remained a significant obstacle to peace in the region. Ethnic diversity which is heritage that can promote socio-economic development is instead a cause of doom in the Darfur region of Sudan. These conflicts have brought untold sufferings to the population. Since May 2023, one of the worst conflicts ever known in this region is on-going. The ethnic conflict in the Darfur region is considered as one of the worst humanitarian crises observed in the region in the 21st century.

In the Darfur region the population had diverse causes of the ethnic conflict. However, 38% of the population declared that ethnic and tribal differences were the main causes of the conflict. Smiles (2008) goes further to show that the desert and barren nature of the northern part of Sudan caused Arabs from the north to migrate southward, displacing tribes of the south and causing ethnic animosity. According to the people, political ruling class in Sudan is dominated mostly by people from Arab tribes who promote tribalism in recruitment of workers, in the distribution of development opportunities. The non-Arab tribes feel marginalized and this creates hatred and tension among people of the different ethnic groups. Danielova (2014) confirms the allegation that the marginalization of many local tribes in the Darfur region by the central government pushed the local tribes to create militia groups that caused past conflicts in the Darfur region. Generally, conflicts will easily occur in any society where a group of people feel oppressed by people who have political power. Thus in the Darfur region, the marginalization of many ethnic groups by political elites from other ethnic groups has created a deadly ethnic conflict.

The Darfur region has many serious challenges. The people in this region picked out social inequality as the main challenge plaguing the region. 24% claimed that social inequality was the main challenge faced by the inhabitants due to ethnic differences in the Darfur region. The Darfur region is made up of many socio-economic classes. These classes include the economically rich class, the poor class, the ruling class and the politically oppressed class. The presence of these socio-economic classes has created great inequality among the people. Wadi (2000) claimed that political disputes among the different ethnic groups also helped to fuel past conflicts in the Darfur region. This inequality is part of the reason while the spirit of living together is greatly absent and many people feel that a solution to the challenges they face is war in order to overcome those who promote class inequality.

In the Darfur region the Arabs are the ruling class. These Arabs have developed a great feeling of superiority complex over the non-Arab tribes. The development of superiority complex by the Arabs is seen where they claim to have the right to every opportunity in the country. The Arab tribes consider the other tribes inferior. This creates antagonism in the Darfur region. Most non-Arab tribes have developed hatred for the Arab tribes. This hatred is part of the cause of the recent Darfur conflict in Western Sudan.

This research had some limitations. Firstly, the insecure nature of the region due to the current ethnic conflict in the Darfur made it difficult to obtain the sample population. Many people cared for their safety and cared less responding to research questions. The researchers had to spend longer durations in the field in order to obtain the required sample population for the collection of primary data. Initially, the researchers intended distributing 75 questionnaires. However, this was reduced to 50 questionnaires due to the difficulty in obtaining respondents. In addition, the insecurity in the Darfur region due to the armed conflict made movement of the researchers difficult. This delayed the time taken by the researchers to collect data in the field as the researchers had to take all safety precautions before moving in the field.

The main recommendation of this research is for the Sudanese government together with her international partners to promote inclusive and sincere dialogue among the warring groups. The government should be courageous to appease the groups that have been oppressed for a long time in this country. Justice must be promoted for peace to reign. The Sudanese government should promote equal human rights for every Sudanese and ensure equal opportunities for all its citizens.

XII.   Conclusion

The main goal of this study was to investigate the challenges presented by ethnic differences in the Darfur region located in western Sudan. The Darfur region is home to a diverse range of ethnic groups, each with their own unique languages, traditions, beliefs, and practices. Unfortunately, these differences have also contributed to tensions and conflicts in the region. In May 2003, a recent and ongoing ethnic conflict started in the Darfur region. Despite various efforts to promote mutual understanding and cooperation among the different groups, ethnic differences continue to pose significant challenges for the region. The mixed research approach was adopted to collect, analyse, interpret and report the findings of this study, where a total number of 60 participants were involved. The factors that contributed in the recent Darfur conflict include ethnic and tribal differences, inequality in appointments, poor management of natural resources, interethnic disputes, economic interests, and political marginalization. Based on the research findings of the study, the research concludes by recommending the promotion of dialogue and reconciliation between different ethnic groups in the region; and the promotion of justice and human rights in the region.

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