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THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY'S INTERVENTION IN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO AND M23 CONFLICT FROM 2024 TO 2025

BY

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Abstract

This study assesses the effectiveness of the Southern African Development Community's (SADC) intervention in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and M23 conflict from 2024 to 2025, a period marked by escalating violence and humanitarian crises in the eastern DRC. Employing a qualitative case study approach, the research examines SADC's strategies, operations, and outcomes in the conflict, drawing on content analysis of official documents, military reports, media coverage, and semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders, including SADC officials, government representatives, and civil society organisations. Thematic analysis reveals that while SADC's intervention contributed to short-term stabilisation and facilitated humanitarian aid delivery, its effectiveness was constrained by inadequate regional coordination, limited military capacity, and the complexity of local conflict dynamics. The study finds that SADC's engagement, though well-intentioned, faced challenges in addressing the root causes of the conflict, including governance deficits, resource exploitation, and inter-group tensions. The research concludes that sustainable peace in the DRC requires a comprehensive approach that integrates regional security mechanisms, diplomatic engagement, and development initiatives, alongside strengthened collaboration with international partners and local communities. By evaluating SADC's role in the DRC conflict, the study contributes to the discourse on regional conflict resolution and offers policy recommendations aimed at enhancing SADC's future interventions in conflict management and peacebuilding efforts across Africa.

Dedication

This research is lovingly dedicated to my family, whose encouragement and support have been a constant source of motivation throughout my academic journey. To the people of Africa, who aspire to peace, stability, and prosperity, this study is for you. May it contribute, in its small way, toward the strengthening of regional cooperation and the pursuit of sustainable peace and development in the DRC and beyond.

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List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

ACLED	Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project
AEI	Assessing the Effectiveness of Intervention
AU	African Union
CSOs	Civil Society Organisations
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
FDLR	Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda
ICG	International Crisis Group
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
M23	March 23 Movement
MONUSCO	United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the DR Congo
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
PSC	Peace and Security Council
RDR	Rwandan Defence Forces
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SADCBRIG	SADC Brigade
SANDF	South African National Defence Force
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

Contents

Abstract 2
DECLARATION FORM ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**
Dedication 3
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS 4
List of Abbreviations and Acronyms 5
CHAPTER ONE 1
INTRODUCTION 1
1.1 Background of the study 1
1.2 Purpose of the study 3
1.3 Statement of the Problem 3
1.4. Objectives of the Study 4
1.5. Research questions 4
1.6. Assumptions of the Study 4
1.7. Significance of the Study 4
1.8. Delimitations of the Study 5
1.9. Limitations of the Study 5
1.10. Definition of Keywords 6
1.11. Dissertation Outline 7
CHAPTER TWO 7
LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK **7**
2.1 Introduction 8
2.2 Theoretical Framework: 8
2.2.1 Intervention Theory 8
2.2.2The Resource Curse Theory 9
2.3. Historical Context of the M23 Conflict 12
2.4. Underlying Causes of the M23 Conflict 14
2.5. The Role of Local Actors in the DRC Conflict 19
2.6 SADC's Intervention Strategies in the DRC 24
2.7. Conflict Management Solutions 29
2.8 Chapter Summary 35
CHAPTER THREE 36
3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN 36
3.1. Introduction 36
3.2. Research Philosophy 36
3.3. Research Approach 38

3.4. Research Design 38
3.5. Population and sample 39
3.6. Sampling Method 42
3.7. Data collection methods 42
3.7.1. Semi-Structured Interviews 42
3.7.2 Documentary Sources 43
3.8 Validity and reliability 44
3.9 Data presentation and analysis 45
3.9.1. Thematic Analysis Framework 45
3.9.2. Trustworthiness of the Study 46
3.9.3 Pilot testing/pretesting the questionnaire 47
3.10. Ethical considerations 47
3.11. Summary 48
CHAPTER FOUR 48
4.0 DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS 49
4.1 Introduction 49
4.2 DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION AND RESPONSE RATE 49
4.3 Historical context of conflict 51
4.3.1 The root causes 51
4.3.2 SADC's intervention and regional influence 52
4.3.3 Challenges being faced 53
4.3.4 How a regional body can operationalize and who must implement it effectively 55
4.4. The effectiveness of SADC's intervention in the DRC 56
4.5. The Roles of Local Actors in the DRC Conflict 58
4.5.1 The role of traditional governance structures 61
4.6. Intervention Strategies in the DRC M23 Conflict 62
4.7 ASSESSING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SADC'S INTERVENTION IN THE DRC AND M23 CONFLICT FROM 2024 TO 2025 64
4.7.1 Challenges Faced by SADC in the DRC 64
4.7.2 Extent of Adherence to SADC Intervention Protocols 65
4.7.3 Role of Stakeholders in SADC's Intervention 65
4.7.4 Synthesis with Existing Literature ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**
4.8 Chapter Summary 66
CHAPTER FIVE 67
5.0 SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH 67
5.1 Introduction 67

5.2 SUMMARY 68
5.3 CONCLUSIONS 69
5.3.1 KEY INTERVENTION CHALLENGES 70
5.3.2 EXTENT OF ADHERENCE TO SADC GUIDELINES 71
5.3.3 ROLE OF STAKEHOLDERS 71
5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS 73
5.4.1 Strengthening Strategic Coherence 73
5.4.2 Enhancing Local Engagement 73
5.4.3 Improving Accountability Mechanisms 74
5.4.4 Promoting Civic Education and Voter Awareness 75
5.5 SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH 75
List of References 77
Annexures Key-Informant Interview guide 85
Annexures Questionnaire: 87

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) is a central location in Central Africa, marked by an intricate web of local resentments, historical traumas, and global financial interests. The re-emergence of the M23 rebellion in 2022 has reignited debates about the DRC's stability and the efficacy of intervention strategies employed by regional organizations like the Southern African Development Community (SADC). Experts like Richard Reid (2021) stress that the DRC's vast mineral wealth, particularly resources like coltan and gold, has drawn in both local militias and foreign powers, complicating peace efforts. This intersection of local discontent and international economic ambitions raises crucial questions about the prospects for lasting peace in a nation where external actors play significant roles in both fueling and attempting to resolve conflicts.

Globally, the DRC exemplifies a situation where local conflicts are deeply intertwined with international dynamics. The United Nations Security Council has been involved in the DRC through its MONUSCO peacekeeping mission, yet its effectiveness remains debatable. Samuel Totten (2022) argues that the UN's focus often prioritizes stabilization over addressing the underlying causes of conflict, leading to a cyclical pattern of violence. This situation mirrors trends observed in other global contexts, such as Afghanistan and Iraq, where external interventions have struggled to create lasting peace. The DRC's challenges underscore the need for a nuanced understanding of how global responses can either facilitate or hinder local conflict resolution efforts.

From a continental perspective, the role of the African Union (AU) and regional bodies, such as SADC, is vital in addressing conflicts like those in the DRC. The AU's Agenda 2063 articulates a vision for peace and security across the continent, advocating for collaborative mechanisms to resolve conflicts. Paul Tiyambe Zeleza (2020) notes that while the AU has made strides in promoting dialogue and conflict

resolution, the effectiveness of these interventions is often hindered by the diverse political contexts of member states. The DRC's historical struggles, shaped by colonial legacies and post-colonial governance issues, require a comprehensive approach that acknowledges these complexities. SADC's intervention in the DRC, particularly regarding the M23 conflict, illustrates both the potential and limitations of regional cooperation in conflict resolution.

The organization's historical engagement during the Second Congo War serves as a critical case study for understanding its current role. Adekeye Adebajo (2019) highlights that although SADC has facilitated peace talks and diplomatic efforts, its consensus-driven decision-making can lead to delays in addressing urgent crises. The influence of neighboring countries, especially Rwanda's alleged support for M23, complicates SADC's mediation efforts and underscores the regional dynamics at play. This raises questions about how regional organizations can effectively navigate complex political landscapes to foster lasting peace.

Examining comparative case studies sheds light on the DRC's situation. The ongoing conflict in South Sudan, for instance, highlights the difficulties of building peace in a resource-rich nation afflicted by ethnic divisions. Alex de Waal (2020) contends that external interventions often fail to consider local contexts, resulting in ineffective solutions. This concern resonates in the DRC, where external actors frequently overlook historical grievances and socio-political realities that contribute to ongoing violence and instability. Understanding these dynamics is essential for developing effective strategies that facilitate meaningful dialogue and conflict resolution.

In contrast, the AU's intervention in Mali illustrates a different approach to conflict resolution, combining military action with political dialogue. Tunde Akinyemi (2019) asserts that comprehensive strategies are critical for addressing the complexities of modern conflicts. The lessons learned from Mali could inform SADC's approach in the DRC, suggesting that integrating military, diplomatic, and developmental efforts might yield better outcomes. This holistic perspective is crucial for fostering an

environment conducive to sustainable peace, as it recognizes the multifaceted nature of conflicts and the necessity of engaging various stakeholders.

The historical context of the DRC's conflicts, including the First and Second Congo Wars, underscores the significance of understanding the legacies of colonialism and authoritarian rule. Scholars like Johan Pottier (2021) have explored how these historical factors contribute to contemporary violence and instability. The M23 conflict, rooted in grievances related to land, ethnicity, and political representation, reflects unresolved issues from earlier conflicts. Therefore, SADC's interventions must be sensitive to these historical contexts to be effective and to foster trust among local populations.

The role of local actors in the DRC is often overlooked in discussions about external interventions. Thandika Mkandawire (2020) emphasizes that local ownership of peace processes is essential for sustainable outcomes. Civil society organizations in the DRC have not been active in advocating for peace and justice, and their involvement is crucial for any meaningful dialogue facilitated by SADC. Engaging local stakeholders can provide valuable insights into the socio-political fabric of the DRC, helping to develop context-specific solutions that resonate with affected populations.

1.2 Purpose of the study

To analyse the role of SADC's mission in the DRC conflict between government forces and M23 group.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

The eastern part of the Democratic Republic of Congo continues to suffer from a persistent conflict, causing a humanitarian emergency where women and young girls are especially vulnerable to both the immediate and long term impacts. To aid the Congolese government in re-establishing stability and safety, the SADC's SAMIDRC mission has sent forces to the nation. Widespread displacement, with millions forced from their homes and hundreds of thousands requiring critical aid, is a direct outcome of this unrest. Almost 400.000 civilians have fled eastern DRC, and a vast number of people urgently require humanitarian aid such as nourishment, housing and healthcare. Females and girls experience particularly harsh reality, encountering heightened instances of sexual violence, exploitation, and mistreatment. Since

January 2024 a total of 2900 civilians killed, 2700 wounded and about 4000 DRC soldiers have been killed and 280+ captured, this was according to the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

1.4. Objectives of the Study

1. Analyze the historical context and underlying causes of the M23 conflict in the DRC.
2. Assess the role of local actors in the DRC conflict.
3. Evaluate the effectiveness of SADC's intervention strategies in the DRC.

1.5. Research questions

1. What causes the M23 conflict in the DRC?
2. What role do local actors play in DRC conflict management?
3. How effective is SADC's intervention in the DRC?

1.6. Assumptions of the Study

1. The research assumes that there will be access to reliable and comprehensive data, including historical documents, reports, and qualitative interviews. The validity of the findings relies heavily on the quality and availability of this information.
2. The study assumes that local actors, including community leaders and civil society organizations, will be willing to participate in interviews and surveys. Their cooperation is crucial for obtaining insights into the local context and their role in the peace process.

1.7. Significance of the Study

This study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the complex dynamics driving the M23 conflict, shedding light on the intricate web of local, regional, and global factors at play. By analyzing the multifaceted causes of the conflict, this research provides valuable insights for policymakers and scholars seeking to develop effective conflict resolution strategies. The evaluation of SADC's intervention strategies offers a critical examination of what has worked and what has not, providing essential lessons for refining future interventions. This knowledge enables SADC and other regional bodies to adopt more effective approaches to peace building, ultimately enhancing the impact of their efforts. This research

underscores the crucial role of local actors in the peace process, highlighting the importance of community engagement and empowerment. By leveraging local insights and perspectives, peace initiatives can be tailored to the specific context, leading to more sustainable and culturally relevant solutions.

The creation of a tailored conflict resolution model provides practical guidance for SADC and similar organizations in future interventions. This model serves as a framework for addressing complex conflicts in other regions, promoting effective peace building efforts and offering actionable recommendations for regional bodies. This study provides policymakers with valuable insights into the historical and socio-political context of the DRC, enabling more informed decisions regarding interventions. By recognizing the contributions of local actors, the research encourages greater involvement of civil society organizations in peace processes, leading to more inclusive and effective solutions. The developed conflict resolution model can be applied to other conflict situations in Africa, promoting a more systematic approach to peace building across the continent. This study raises awareness about the complexities of the DRC conflict, fostering a more nuanced understanding of the issues at hand and promoting engagement in peace efforts among scholars, practitioners, and the general public.

1.8. Delimitations of the Study

The study will specifically focus on the Southern African Development Community's (SADC) interventions in the M23 conflict, analyzing their strategies, effectiveness, and the roles of local actors. The study will be geographically limited to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, particularly in regions most affected by the M23 conflict, such as North Kivu from 2024 to 2025.

1.9. Limitations of the Study

The study on SADC's intervention in the DRC and M23 conflict has several limitations. Methodological limitations include a potentially small sample size, limited access to reliable data, and the challenges of collecting data in a conflict zone. The study's reliance on existing literature and data may also introduce biases, particularly if the data is incomplete or inaccurate. Furthermore, the complex nature of the conflict, involving multiple stakeholders and interests, may make it difficult to draw causal conclusions or

generalize findings. Additionally, researcher-related limitations, such as personal biases or conflicts, may impact the interpretation of results. The study's scope may also be limited by geographical constraints, time constraints, or budget restraints, which could affect the comprehensiveness of the research. Lastly, ethical limitations, such as ensuring participant confidentiality and anonymity, may also impact the study's design and methodology.

1.10. Definition of Keywords

SADC: Southern African Development Community, a regional economic community aimed at promoting economic integration and cooperation among its member states. SADC itself as "an organization that seeks to further socio-economic cooperation and integration as well as political and security collaboration among 16 countries in the Southern African region" (SADC, n.d.).According to scholar, Fredrik Söderbaum (2004), SADC is "a regional organization that has evolved from a loose coalition of countries to a more formalized and institutionalized organization".

M23: A rebel group operating in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo. According to the United Nations, M23 is "a Congolese armed group that emerged in 2012 and has been involved in several conflicts in the eastern DRC" (UN, 2022).Scholar Jason Stearns (2012) defines M23 as "a rebel group that was formed by former members of the Congolese army who mutinied against the government"

Conflict Management: The holistic approach that aims to heal deep wounds and build more just and peaceful societies by fostering transformative change rather than just temporal agreements of resolving disputes or conflicts through peaceful means. According to scholar John Lederach (2003). This is the process of identifying and handling disagreements or conflicts fairly and efficiently to minimize negative impacts and promote positive outcomes.

Peace Enforcement: The use of military force to enforce peace in a conflict zone. According to the United Nations, peace enforcement involves "the use of military force to enforce peace against the will of the

parties to a conflict" (UN, 2022).Scholar Mats Berdal (2003) defines peace enforcement as "the use of military force to impose peace on parties to a conflict".

1.11. Dissertation Outline

Chapter One: Introduction. It contains the background of the study, the purpose of the study, the statement problem, research objectives, research questions, assumptions, significance of the study, delimitations of the study, limitations of the study, definition of key terms and dissertation outline.

Chapter Two: Literature Review and Theoretical Framework. It contains major literature and validates the topic. It also contains principal theories upon which the research will be constructed. The major theories being Intervention theory and resource curse theory.

Chapter Three: Research Methodology and Design. It contains the research methodology, research design, identified appropriate population, procedures to collect data, reliability and validity of specific instruments, how data is going to be analyzed and research instruments.

Chapter Four: Data Presentation, Analysis and Discussion of Findings. It contains data presentation, some diagrams including figures, tables, graphs and pie charts, results and discussion then data analysis.

Chapter Five: Summary, Conclusions, Recommendations and areas for further research. It contains the summary of the research from chapter one to chapter five. There are conclusions which are linked with the research objectives and suggestions of areas of further research to different climate change and energy departments.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews existing literature on SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Practices, their relevance to stability and governance in Southern Africa, and the extent of their implementation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), particularly in the context of the M23 conflict. The chapter interrogates the roles of various stakeholders—including local communities, political actors, civil society, and regional bodies—in promoting peace and security. The review is structured according to the study's objectives, namely: identifying key challenges in intervention effectiveness, examining adherence to SADC guidelines, and assessing the roles of key stakeholders.

2.2 Theoretical Framework:

The theoretical framework of this study is underpinned by intervention theory and resource curse theories. These theories offer critical frameworks which allow the understanding of external engagement in the SADC interventions in the DRC and M23 conflict.

2.2.1 Intervention Theory

Intervention theory provides a critical framework for understanding the dynamics of external engagement in conflict situations, particularly in the context of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and its interventions in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) concerning the M23 conflict. This theory posits that external actors, such as regional organizations, can play a pivotal role in conflict management and peace building by addressing underlying causes of conflict and supporting local governance structures. According to Schnabel and Thakur (2019), effective intervention requires not only military support but also a comprehensive approach that incorporates political, economic, and social dimensions. They argue that interventions must be context-specific, tailored to the unique cultural and historical narratives of the affected regions to foster sustainable peace (Schnabel & Thakur, 2019).

Moreover, the work of Dwan and Pugh (2020) emphasizes the importance of local ownership in intervention strategies, asserting that for interventions to be successful, they must engage local actors and communities in the decision-making process. This engagement helps cultivate a sense of ownership and responsibility among the local population, which is crucial for the long-term success of peace initiatives. The authors further suggest that interventions that fail to consider local perspectives often lead to resistance and can exacerbate tensions rather than alleviate them (Dwan & Pugh, 2020).In the case of SADC's involvement in the DRC, it becomes essential to analyze how these theoretical principles have been applied. For instance, while SADC's military presence aimed to stabilize the region, its effectiveness has been questioned due to a perceived lack of coordination with local stakeholders and insufficient understanding of the local political landscape (Moyo, 2021).

This disconnect can hinder the potential for lasting peace, as highlighted by the challenges faced during the intervention in the M23 conflict. As argued by Moyo (2021), interventions need to adopt a holistic approach that integrates humanitarian assistance, development aid, and security measures to address the multifaceted nature of such conflicts. Ultimately, intervention theory posits that while external actors like SADC can provide critical support in conflict scenarios, their success hinges on a nuanced understanding of local context and the active involvement of local stakeholders. By adhering to these principles, SADC can enhance the effectiveness of its interventions in the DRC, fostering a more sustainable path towards peace and stability.

2.2.2The Resource Curse Theory

The resource curse theory is a compelling framework for understanding the complexities surrounding the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and the M23 conflict, particularly in the context of the Southern African Development Community's (SADC) intervention. According to scholars like Michael Ross (2021), the resource curse refers to the paradoxical

phenomenon where countries rich in natural resources often experience poor economic growth, corruption, and conflict. The DRC, endowed with vast mineral wealth including cobalt, copper, coltan, and gold, epitomizes this curse, with its resources fueling decades of instability and violence .The DRC's eastern regions, notably North and South Kivu, have been hotbeds of conflict, with groups like the M23 rebels exploiting mineral resources to finance their operations.

As noted by Brian Reuben (2025), the M23's control over areas like Rubaya, a significant coltan mining hub, illustrates how resource wealth can perpetuate conflict. Coltan, crucial for global electronics, underscores the international dimension of the DRC's resource curse, with estimates suggesting Rubaya's coltan accounts for over 15% of global tantalum supply. Scholars like Siddharth Kara (2022) highlight the human cost of cobalt extraction in the DRC, detailing exploitation and conflict linked to this critical mineral used in lithium-ion batteries. The Southern African Development Community (SADC) has sought to address regional stability, including interventions in the DRC. Researchers like Sadiki (2025) evaluate SADC's capacity to resolve conflicts in the eastern DRC, questioning the sustainability of peace efforts amidst recurring violence.

The surrender of M23 rebels and subsequent integration attempts reflect complexities in achieving lasting stability. According to John Kamoga and Andrew Kisekka (2024), international initiatives like the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) aim to mitigate the resource curse by promoting transparency, though their effectiveness in the DRC context warrants scrutiny. The resource curse theory's relevance lies in its illumination of how natural wealth can breed corruption, weaken governance, and incite violence, as posited by scholars like Michael Ross (2001). In the DRC, abundant resources have correlated with authoritarian tendencies, economic underdevelopment, and humanitarian crises. Felicia Dairo and Oluwapelumi Oginni (2025) argue that breaking the resource curse requires robust

governance, transparency, and economic diversification – strategies critical for transforming the DRC's mineral wealth into broad-based prosperity.

However, the theory also has weaknesses; critics argue it oversimplifies complex local dynamics. As Jason Stearns (2012) notes, conflicts in the eastern DRC involve intricate ethnic, political, and regional factors beyond mere resource exploitation. Similarly, Koen Vlassenroot (2013) emphasizes understanding local conflict drivers alongside resource dimensions. The M23 conflict, while linked to mineral exploitation, also reflects deeper identity-based and geopolitical tensions, including alleged Rwandan support for the rebels. Strengths of the resource curse framework include highlighting the "paradox of plenty" – where resource-rich nations like the DRC rank among the world's poorest, as per the Human Development Index (2025). Scholars like Paul Collier (2007) underscore how resource dependence can fuel rent-seeking behavior and conflict.

The theory prompts examination of institutional weaknesses and foreign interference in the DRC, with countries like Rwanda accused of backing armed groups for resource access .Applying the resource curse lens reveals gaps in current interventions. SADC's efforts, while regionally significant, may struggle with addressing deep-seated governance deficits in the DRC. Experts like John Kamoga (2024) advocate combining regulatory frameworks with community engagement to break the curse. Moreover, global supply chain accountability is crucial; initiatives like The Copper Mark certification for companies like Glencore indicate attempts at responsible sourcing, though critics question their impact on artisanal mining challenges and child labor .

The resource curse theory offers valuable insights into the DRC's enduring conflicts like the M23 insurgency, spotlighting interplay between mineral wealth, governance, and violence. Scholars including Michael Ross (2001), Brian Reuben (2025), and Siddharth Kara (2022)

contribute perspectives on this complex dynamic. Addressing the curse necessitates multifaceted strategies encompassing transparency, diversification, and regional cooperation to transform the DRC's resources from catalysts of conflict into drivers of sustainable development.

2.3. Historical Context of the M23 Conflict

The M23 conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) is rooted in a complex interplay of historical, political, and social factors that have evolved over decades. Understanding this conflict necessitates a thorough examination of its historical context, which has been explored by numerous scholars. This literature review synthesizes various academic perspectives on the M23 conflict, highlighting regional, international, and local dimensions. The origins of the M23 conflict can be traced back to the aftermath of the Rwandan Genocide in 1994. According to Prunier (2018), the influx of Hutu refugees into eastern Congo created a volatile environment that exacerbated existing tensions among various ethnic groups. This period marked the beginning of significant instability in the region, as armed groups emerged and the Congolese state struggled to maintain control. Prunier argues that the legacy of the genocide and the ensuing refugee crisis laid the groundwork for future conflicts, including the rise of the M23 rebellion.

Scholars like Turner (2020) emphasize the role of the DRC's resource wealth in fueling conflict. The eastern provinces are rich in minerals, including coltan and gold, which attract both local and international actors. Turner highlights that the competition for these resources has often been a catalyst for violence, with various armed groups, including M23, seeking to control lucrative mining areas. This economic dimension is crucial for understanding the motivations behind the conflict and the actors involved. The interplay between local grievances and international dynamics is further elaborated by Nzongola-Ntalaja (2019), who argues that the M23 conflict cannot be understood in isolation from the broader geopolitical landscape of

Central Africa. He posits that neighboring countries, particularly Rwanda and Uganda, have historically intervened in the DRC for their own strategic interests, often exacerbating local conflicts. Nzongola-Ntalaja's analysis underscores the importance of regional politics in shaping the trajectory of the M23 conflict.

In examining the roles of various actors, scholars have pointed to the involvement of the Congolese government and its military. According to Autesserre (2021), the Congolese state has often been characterized by weak governance and corruption, which have contributed to the perpetuation of violence. Autesserre argues that the government's inability to address local grievances has allowed armed groups like M23 to gain support among disenfranchised communities. This perspective highlights the internal dynamics of governance as a critical factor in the conflict. Additionally, the role of international organizations in addressing the M23 conflict has been a point of contention among scholars. Some argue that the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) has been ineffective in curbing violence. As noted by Mandianga (2022), MONUSCO's deployment has faced criticism for its limited mandate and insufficient resources, which have hindered its ability to protect civilians and facilitate peace building. Mandianga's research illustrates the challenges faced by international actors in complex conflict environments.

Scholars have also explored the local dimensions of the M23 conflict, focusing on community perspectives and experiences. For instance, a survey conducted by Mbuyamba et al. (2020) revealed that many communities in eastern Congo feel marginalized and excluded from the peace process. Their findings indicate that local voices are often overlooked in favor of elite negotiations, leading to a disconnect between formal peace efforts and grassroots realities. This research emphasizes the necessity of inclusive approaches to conflict resolution. The historical context of the M23 conflict is also deeply intertwined with issues of identity and

ethnicity. According to Ngoy (2021), ethnic tensions have played a significant role in shaping the conflict dynamics in eastern Congo. Ngoy argues that the manipulation of ethnic identities by political actors has often exacerbated violence and undermined social cohesion. This perspective highlights the need for a nuanced understanding of how identity politics influence conflict trajectories.

Furthermore, the impact of the M23 conflict on humanitarian conditions in the DRC has been extensively documented. Human Rights Watch (2021) reports that the conflict has led to widespread displacement, with millions of people forced to flee their homes. The organization emphasizes the urgent need for humanitarian assistance and protection for affected populations. This humanitarian lens adds another layer to the complexity of the conflict, as it underscores the dire consequences for local communities. The international response to the M23 conflict, scholars have noted the role of sanctions and diplomatic efforts. According to Kasaija (2021), the international community has employed sanctions against key figures associated with the M23 rebellion in an attempt to curb violence and promote peace. Kasaija's analysis suggests that while sanctions can be a useful tool, their effectiveness is often contingent upon the broader political context and the willingness of regional actors to cooperate.

2.4. Underlying Causes of the M23 Conflict

The M23 conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) is a manifestation of deep-rooted issues that have evolved over decades. Understanding the underlying causes of this conflict necessitates a thorough exploration of historical, political, economic, and social dimensions. This literature review synthesizes various scholarly perspectives, case studies, and surveys to provide a comprehensive analysis of the factors contributing to the M23 conflict.

One of the primary underlying causes of the M23 conflict is the legacy of the Rwandan Genocide in 1994. According to Turner (2018), the aftermath of the genocide resulted in a massive influx of Hutu refugees into eastern Congo, creating a volatile environment fraught

with ethnic tensions. This demographic shift not only exacerbated existing grievances but also precipitated the rise of armed groups, including the M23. Turner emphasizes that the consequences of the genocide laid the groundwork for ongoing instability in the region. Scholars have also pointed to the role of resource wealth as a significant factor in the M23 conflict. Autesserre (2019) argues that the DRC's rich mineral deposits, including coltan and gold, have attracted various actors seeking to exploit these resources. The competition for control over lucrative mining areas has fueled violence and conflict, as armed groups, including M23, vie for dominance. Autesserre's analysis highlights the economic motivations that underpin the conflict, revealing how resource exploitation exacerbates local grievances. The political landscape in the DRC further complicates the causes of the M23 conflict. As Nzongola-Ntalaja (2020) notes, the Congolese state has historically been characterized by weak governance and corruption. This lack of effective governance has created a power vacuum in eastern Congo, allowing armed groups to thrive. Nzongola-Ntalaja argues that the failure of the state to address local grievances has contributed to the persistence of violence and unrest in the region.

Moreover, the impact of ethnic identity on the M23 conflict cannot be overlooked. Research by Ngoy (2021) indicates that ethnic tensions have played a significant role in shaping the dynamics of the conflict. Ngoy posits that political actors have often manipulated ethnic identities to further their agendas, exacerbating divisions among communities. This manipulation of identity politics underscores the complexity of the conflict and highlights the need for nuanced approaches to peace building. International interventions and their consequences have also been pivotal in understanding the M23 conflict. Kasaija (2021) discusses the role of foreign governments, particularly Rwanda and Uganda, in supporting various armed groups in the DRC. Kasaija argues that external involvement has not only fueled the conflict but has also complicated efforts to achieve lasting peace. This perspective

emphasizes the importance of addressing regional dynamics in any analysis of the M23 conflict.

The humanitarian impact of the M23 conflict is another critical dimension that has been explored by scholars. A report by Human Rights Watch (2021) indicates that the conflict has led to widespread displacement and humanitarian crises, affecting millions of people in eastern Congo. The report highlights the urgent need for humanitarian assistance and protection for affected populations. This humanitarian lens adds complexity to the understanding of the conflict, as it emphasizes the dire consequences for local communities. In examining local perspectives, a survey conducted by Mbuyamba et al. (2020) revealed that many communities in eastern Congo feel marginalized and excluded from the peace process. Their findings indicate that local voices are often overlooked in favor of elite negotiations, leading to a disconnect between formal peace efforts and grassroots realities. This research underscores the necessity of inclusive approaches to conflict management that considers the experiences and needs of affected communities.

The relationship between governance and conflict is further illustrated by Autesserre's (2021) exploration of the Congolese military's role in the M23 conflict. Autesserre argues that the military's involvement has often been characterized by corruption and inefficiency, undermining efforts to establish peace and security. This perspective highlights the internal dynamics of governance as a critical factor in perpetuating violence and instability. Furthermore, the historical context of the DRC's colonial legacy plays a significant role in the underlying causes of the M23 conflict. According to Mamdani (2019), the colonial history has contributed to persistent inequalities and social divisions that continue to affect contemporary dynamics. This historical perspective provides valuable insights into the structural factors that underpin the conflict and the challenges of achieving lasting peace.

In exploring the role of civil society in the M23 conflict, scholars like Tshibaka (2022) emphasize the importance of grassroots initiatives in advocating for peace. Tshibaka's research highlights the resilience of local organizations and their potential to contribute to conflict resolution efforts. This perspective underscores the significance of community engagement in addressing the underlying causes of the conflict. The intersection of gender and conflict is also an important aspect of the M23 conflict. Research by Bafou (2021) indicates that women have been disproportionately affected by the violence, facing sexual violence and displacement. Bafou argues for targeted interventions that address the specific needs and experiences of women in peace building processes. This gendered perspective highlights the importance of inclusivity in conflict management efforts.

The economic motivations behind the conflict are further elaborated by Mandele (2020), who examines the role of multinational corporations in exploiting the DRC's resources. Mandele argues that the interests of foreign companies often align with those of armed groups, perpetuating cycles of violence and exploitation. This analysis emphasizes the need for accountability and regulation in resource extraction to mitigate conflict risks. In considering the role of international organizations, scholars have noted the limitations of interventions in addressing the underlying causes of the M23 conflict. According to Mandianga (2022), the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) has faced criticism for its inability to effectively curb violence. Mandianga argues that a more comprehensive approach is needed, one that prioritizes local ownership and addresses the root causes of conflict.

The significance of youth engagement in peace building is a growing area of research. Ndundu (2022) emphasizes that young people have been both victims and perpetrators of violence in the M23 conflict. Ndundu advocates for programs that empower youth and provide them with opportunities for positive engagement in their communities. This focus on youth

underscores the importance of addressing the demographic realities of the conflict. In examining the implications of the M23 conflict for regional security, Adebajo (2019) argues that the conflict poses significant challenges to stability in Central Africa. Adebajo emphasizes the need for coordinated regional efforts to address the underlying causes of conflict and promote sustainable peace. This perspective highlights the interconnectedness of conflicts in the region and the necessity of collaborative approaches to peace building.

The historical context of the M23 conflict is also informed by previous conflicts in the DRC, particularly the Second Congo War (1998-2003). Mavungu (2020) notes that the unresolved issues from this war continue to affect contemporary dynamics, as various armed groups emerged during this tumultuous period. Mavungu argues that the legacy of past conflicts contributes to the persistence of violence and instability in eastern Congo. The manipulation of ethnic identities by political actors is further explored by Ngoy (2021), who examines how identity politics have influenced the M23 conflict. Ngoy argues that the politicization of ethnicity has often led to violence and division among communities, complicating efforts to achieve reconciliation. This analysis underscores the need for addressing identity issues in peace building initiatives. In considering the role of external actors, Kasaija (2021) discusses the involvement of foreign governments and NGOs in the M23 conflict. Kasaija argues that while international interventions can provide support, they must be carefully coordinated to avoid exacerbating existing tensions. This perspective highlights the importance of strategic engagement by external actors to promote peace. Furthermore, the impact of environmental degradation on the M23 conflict has been explored by Kambale (2022). Kambale emphasizes that resource exploitation and environmental destruction have exacerbated tensions among communities, contributing to conflict dynamics. This environmental lens adds another layer to the understanding of the underlying causes of the conflict, highlighting the need for sustainable development approaches.

In examining the role of transitional justice, Kambale (2021) argues that accountability mechanisms are essential for addressing historical grievances and promoting reconciliation. Kambale emphasizes that without accountability, cycles of violence are likely to persist. This perspective underscores the importance of addressing past injustices in conflict management efforts. The significance of media representations in shaping public perceptions of the M23 conflict has also been addressed in recent scholarship. Mbuyi (2022) highlights how media coverage often emphasizes sensational aspects of the conflict, potentially obscuring deeper structural issues. Mbuyi argues for a more nuanced media narrative that recognizes the complexities of the conflict and the voices of affected communities. The underlying causes of the M23 conflict in the DRC are multifaceted, shaped by a myriad of factors including historical legacies, political dynamics, economic motivations, and social tensions. The literature on this topic reveals a rich tapestry of scholarly perspectives that illuminate the complexities of the conflict. As researchers continue to explore these dimensions, it becomes increasingly clear that addressing the M23 conflict requires a comprehensive understanding of its underlying causes and an inclusive approach to peacebuilding that engages all stakeholders.

2.5. The Role of Local Actors in the DRC Conflict

The conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) is characterized by a complex interplay of local, regional, and international factors. Local actors, including communities, civil society organizations, and grassroots movements, play a critical role in shaping the dynamics of this conflict. This literature review synthesizes various scholarly perspectives, case studies, and surveys to provide a comprehensive understanding of the contributions and challenges faced by local actors in the DRC conflict. Local actors have often been at the forefront of conflict management efforts in the DRC, despite facing significant challenges. According to Autesserre (2021), community-based organizations have emerged as vital agents of peace, working to mediate disputes and foster dialogue among conflicting

parties. Autesserre emphasizes that these grassroots initiatives are essential for addressing local grievances that are often overlooked by national and international actors. The effectiveness of these organizations highlights the importance of local knowledge and context in conflict management.

The historical context of local actors' involvement in the DRC conflict is crucial for understanding their current roles. Nzongola-Ntalaja (2020) argues that the legacy of colonialism and post-colonial governance has shaped the capacity of local actors to influence conflict dynamics. He posits that marginalized communities often resort to local forms of governance and self-organization in response to the failure of the state to provide security and services. This perspective underscores the resilience of local actors and their ability to adapt to challenging circumstances. Furthermore, the role of local actors is intricately linked to issues of identity and ethnicity in the DRC. Research by Ngoy (2021) indicates that local communities often mobilize along ethnic lines, which can both exacerbate tensions and facilitate collaboration. Ngoy argues that while ethnic identities can be manipulated by political elites, they also serve as a source of solidarity among local actors seeking to address shared grievances. This duality highlights the complexities of local agency in the context of the DRC conflict.

The engagement of local actors in peace building processes has been documented through various case studies. For example, a survey conducted by Mbuyamba et al. (2020) revealed that local communities in eastern Congo have developed innovative approaches to conflict resolution, such as traditional reconciliation ceremonies. These practices not only promote healing and understanding but also empowers local actors to take ownership of the peace process. Mbuyamba's findings emphasize the need for external actors to recognize and support these local initiatives. In addition to community-based organizations, local women’s groups have played a significant role in peacebuilding efforts. Bafou (2021) highlights that women in

the DRC have organized themselves to address the specific impacts of conflict on their lives, advocating for peace and security. Bafou argues that women's participation is crucial for achieving sustainable peace, as they bring unique perspectives and experiences to the negotiation table. This gendered lens is essential for understanding the multifaceted contributions of local actors.

The challenges faced by local actors in the DRC conflict are significant. According to Turner (2019), local organizations often operate in hostile environments marked by violence and insecurity. Turner emphasizes that the lack of resources, political support, and security can hinder the effectiveness of local initiatives. This perspective underscores the need for a supportive environment that enables local actors to thrive and contribute to conflict resolution. The relationship between local actors and international organizations is another critical dimension of the DRC conflict. Kasaija (2021) discusses how international NGOs often partner with local organizations to implement peacebuilding initiatives. However, Kasaija notes that these partnerships can sometimes lead to power imbalances, with international actors dominating decision-making processes. This dynamic raises important questions about the agency of local actors and the need for equitable collaboration.

Moreover, the role of local actors in the DRC conflict is influenced by the broader political landscape. According to Mandianga (2022), local organizations often navigate a complex web of local and national politics, which can impact their ability to engage effectively in peacebuilding. Mandianga argues that the political context shapes the strategies employed by local actors, highlighting the necessity of understanding these dynamics in conflict analysis. In examining the impact of local actors on peace processes, researchers have identified various successes and challenges. A study by Tshibaka (2022) found that local actors have facilitated successful dialogues between conflicting parties, resulting in temporary ceasefires and agreements. However, Tshibaka also notes that these achievements are often fragile and can be

undermined by external influences or a lack of sustained support. This duality emphasizes the need for both local and international actors to commit to long-term peacebuilding efforts.

The role of local governance structures in the DRC conflict has also garnered attention in recent scholarship. According to Mavungu (2020), local chiefs and traditional leaders often play a crucial role in mediating disputes and maintaining social order. Mavungu argues that these local governance systems can complement formal structures, providing a more accessible means for communities to address grievances. This perspective highlights the importance of integrating traditional governance into broader peacebuilding strategies. Additionally, the intersection of local actors and humanitarian organizations is a vital aspect of the DRC conflict. Research by Ndundu (2022) indicates that local communities often serve as first responders in humanitarian crises, providing support and resources to those affected by conflict. Ndundu emphasizes the need for humanitarian actors to engage with local networks to enhance the effectiveness of their interventions. This collaboration can strengthen community resilience and foster greater ownership of humanitarian efforts.

The impact of local actors on the DRC conflict is also evident in the realm of advocacy. Bafou (2021) notes that local organizations have been instrumental in raising awareness about human rights violations and advocating for accountability. This advocacy work empowers communities to demand justice and challenge impunity, contributing to a broader culture of accountability. Bafou's analysis underscores the importance of supporting local voices in the fight for human rights. The relationship between local actors and the Congolese state is another critical area of exploration. Nzongola-Ntalaja (2020) argues that local actors often face challenges in engaging with state institutions, which can be characterized by corruption and inefficiency. This disconnect between local initiatives and state support can hinder the effectiveness of peacebuilding efforts. Nzongola-Ntalaja emphasizes the need for greater collaboration between local actors and the state to address shared goals and foster trust.

Furthermore, the role of youth in the DRC conflict has emerged as an important area of research. A study by Mbuyi (2022) highlights how young people have mobilized to advocate for peace and challenge violence. Mbuyi argues that youth engagement is essential for sustainable peace, as they represent a significant demographic in the DRC. This perspective emphasizes the potential of local youth as agents of change in conflict management. In examining the impact of local actors on peace negotiations, scholars have pointed to both successes and limitations. According to Kambale (2021), local actors have often been sidelined in formal peace processes, which can lead to agreements that do not reflect the realities on the ground. Kambale advocates for greater inclusion of local voices in negotiations to ensure that peace agreements are more relevant and sustainable. This emphasis on inclusivity is crucial for effective conflict management.

The intersection of local actors and international interventions also raises important questions about effectiveness and accountability. Turner (2019) argues that international actors must prioritize local engagement and support in their interventions to enhance the impact of their efforts. This perspective emphasizes the need for a more nuanced understanding of the roles and capabilities of local actors in peacebuilding. The role of local actors in the DRC conflict is also shaped by external funding dynamics. Research by Mandele (2020) indicates that many local organizations rely on international funding, which can create dependencies and limit their autonomy. Mandele emphasizes the need for sustainable funding models that empower local actors and enhance their capacity to engage in peacebuilding efforts independently.

In considering the successes of local actors, it is essential to recognize the broader context in which they operate. A study by Autesserre (2021) highlights that local actors often face significant barriers, including violence, repression, and limited resources. Despite these challenges, Autesserre emphasizes the resilience and creativity of local actors in developing

strategies to navigate these obstacles. The importance of local knowledge in conflict resolution is further underscored by research from Kasaija (2021), which argues that local actors possess unique insights into the historical and cultural contexts of their communities. This local knowledge can inform peacebuilding strategies and enhance the effectiveness of interventions. Kasaija's analysis emphasizes the need for external actors to value and incorporate local perspectives in their approaches. The role of local actors in the DRC conflict is multifaceted and critical for understanding the dynamics of violence and peacebuilding. This literature review highlights the diverse contributions of local actors, their challenges, and the importance of inclusive approaches to conflict management. As researchers continue to explore these dimensions, it becomes increasingly clear that supporting local agency and engagement is essential for fostering sustainable peace in the DRC.

2.6 SADC's Intervention Strategies in the DRC

The Southern African Development Community (SADC) has played a significant role in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) through various intervention strategies aimed at addressing the ongoing conflict and fostering stability. Understanding the effectiveness and challenges of these interventions requires a comprehensive examination of the relevant literature, including diverse scholarly views, case studies, and empirical research. One of the key frameworks for analyzing SADC's intervention strategies is the concept of regionalism in conflict management. According to Adebajo (2019), regional organizations like SADC are crucial for addressing conflicts that transcend national boundaries. Adebajo argues that SADC's interventions in the DRC highlight the importance of regional collaboration in managing security challenges. This perspective underscores the need for a coordinated approach to peacebuilding, taking into account the interconnectedness of conflicts in Central Africa.

Scholars have highlighted the historical context of SADC's involvement in the DRC, particularly following the Second Congo War (1998-2003). As Nzongola-Ntalaja (2020) notes, SADC's engagement emerged in response to the catastrophic consequences of this war, which resulted in millions of deaths and widespread instability. Nzongola-Ntalaja emphasizes that the regional organization was compelled to act not only due to humanitarian concerns but also to prevent the spillover of conflict into neighboring countries. The role of SADC in facilitating peace negotiations has been documented through various case studies. Turner (2021) discusses the interventions leading to the 2002 Pretoria Accord, which aimed to bring together conflicting parties in the DRC. Turner highlights that while the accord was a significant step toward peace, the implementation of its provisions faced numerous challenges, including lack of commitment from key stakeholders. This case study illustrates the complexities of mediating peace in a fractured political landscape.

Furthermore, the effectiveness of SADC's intervention strategies has been assessed through empirical research. A survey conducted by Mbuyamba et al. (2021) revealed that many local communities in the DRC perceive SADC's presence as beneficial, particularly in providing security and facilitating dialogue. However, the survey also indicated that local populations feel a disconnect between SADC's high-level negotiations and grassroots realities. This highlights the need for SADC to engage more directly with local communities to enhance the legitimacy of its interventions. The political dynamics within the DRC also influence SADC's intervention strategies. According to Kasaija (2022), the internal power struggles among Congolese political actors complicate SADC's efforts to mediate conflict. Kasaija argues that the lack of a unified political front in the DRC often undermines regional initiatives, as different factions pursue divergent interests. This perspective emphasizes the importance of understanding the local political landscape when designing intervention strategies.

Moreover, the role of external actors in shaping SADC's interventions cannot be overlooked. Mandianga (2022) discusses the influence of international powers, particularly the United States and European Union, on SADC's approach to the DRC. Mandianga argues that while international support can enhance SADC's capabilities, it can also impose external agendas that may not align with local needs. This dynamic raises critical questions about the sovereignty of regional organizations in conflict management. The humanitarian dimension of SADC's interventions has been a focal point in recent scholarship. According to Bafou (2021), SADC has increasingly recognized the importance of addressing humanitarian needs as part of its peacebuilding efforts. Bafou highlights that integrating humanitarian assistance with security initiatives can create a more holistic approach to conflict management. This perspective underscores the need for SADC to adopt multi-dimensional strategies that encompass both immediate relief and long-term development goals.

Additionally, the impact of SADC's interventions on local governance structures has been explored by Autesserre (2021). Autesserre argues that SADC's presence has the potential to strengthen local governance by promoting dialogue and collaboration among various stakeholders. However, she also notes that the effectiveness of these interventions depends on the willingness of local actors to engage constructively with regional initiatives. The challenges of implementing SADC's intervention strategies are further illustrated by the experience of the MONUSCO mission (United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo). Research by Kambale (2021) indicates that SADC must navigate the complexities of working alongside MONUSCO, as both organizations have overlapping mandates but different operational frameworks. Kambale emphasizes the importance of coordination between these entities to avoid duplication of efforts and maximize impact.

The role of civil society organizations in supporting SADC's interventions has also been highlighted in the literature. According to Tshibaka (2022), local NGOs play a crucial role in

advocating for peace and holding both SADC and the Congolese government accountable. Tshibaka argues that empowering civil society is essential for ensuring that SADC's interventions are responsive to the needs of local communities, thereby enhancing their effectiveness. The intersection of gender and SADC's intervention strategies has emerged as an important area of research. A study by Ndundu (2022) emphasizes the need for SADC to incorporate gender perspectives in its peacebuilding efforts, particularly in addressing the unique experiences of women in conflict. Ndundu argues that a gender-sensitive approach can enhance the inclusivity and effectiveness of SADC's interventions, ultimately contributing to more sustainable peace.

The economic implications of SADC's interventions in the DRC have also been explored. According to Mandele (2021), SADC's strategies must consider the economic interests of various stakeholders, including local communities and international corporations. Mandele underscores that neglecting economic dimensions can undermine the sustainability of peace initiatives, as unresolved economic grievances may lead to renewed conflict. In examining the engagement of local actors in SADC's interventions, researchers have identified both successes and limitations. A study by Kasaija (2022) found that local actors have been instrumental in facilitating dialogue and reconciliation efforts, yet they often lack the resources and support needed to effectively contribute to peace processes. Kasaija's findings highlight the need for SADC to prioritize local engagement and capacity-building in its intervention strategies.

The evaluation of SADC's interventions requires a critical assessment of their long-term impact on peace and stability in the DRC. According to Adebajo (2019), measuring the effectiveness of interventions is complex, as it involves not only immediate outcomes but also the broader socio-political context. Adebajo emphasizes that SADC must develop robust evaluation frameworks to assess the sustainability of its initiatives and adapt strategies

accordingly. Furthermore, the role of regional cooperation among SADC member states is crucial for the success of interventions in the DRC. Research by Mavungu (2020) indicates that solidarity among member states can enhance SADC's bargaining power in negotiations and amplify its influence on the ground. Mavungu argues that fostering regional unity is essential for addressing the transnational nature of conflicts in Central Africa.

The importance of public perception in shaping the effectiveness of SADC's interventions has been explored through various surveys. A study by Mbuyamba et al. (2021) found that local communities in the DRC often view SADC's efforts with skepticism, citing concerns about the organization's ability to deliver tangible results. This perception can significantly impact the legitimacy of SADC's interventions and highlights the need for transparent communication and engagement with local populations. The historical context of SADC's involvement in the DRC is also significant. As noted by Nzongola-Ntalaja (2020), SADC's initial interventions were shaped by the geopolitical dynamics of the region, particularly the influence of external actors. Nzongola-Ntalaja emphasizes that understanding this historical backdrop is crucial for assessing the motivations and effectiveness of SADC's strategies.

In addition to formal interventions, SADC has also engaged in diplomatic efforts to foster dialogue among conflicting parties. According to Turner (2021), dialogue initiatives facilitated by SADC have played a vital role in building trust and confidence among stakeholders. Turner argues that these diplomatic efforts are essential for creating an environment conducive to sustainable peace. The role of SADC in addressing the root causes of conflict in the DRC has been a focal point in recent scholarship. Bafou (2021) emphasizes that interventions must go beyond immediate security concerns and address underlying socio-economic grievances. This comprehensive approach can help to mitigate the factors that contribute to conflict and foster long-term stability.

The challenges of coordinating regional interventions are further illustrated by the experiences of various SADC missions. Research by Kambale (2021) indicates that differences in mandates and operational frameworks among regional organizations can complicate collaboration efforts. Kambale underscores the importance of establishing clear communication channels and cooperative mechanisms to enhance the effectiveness of regional interventions. The impact of SADC's interventions on the humanitarian situation in the DRC has also garnered attention. According to Mandianga (2022), addressing humanitarian needs must be an integral part of SADC's peacebuilding strategies. Mandianga argues that by prioritizing humanitarian assistance alongside security initiatives, SADC can create a more comprehensive approach to conflict management.

The role of technology and innovation in SADC's interventions has emerged as a relevant area of exploration. A study by Ndundu (2022) highlights how technology can facilitate communication and coordination among local actors and SADC. Ndundu emphasizes that leveraging technology can enhance the effectiveness of interventions and improve information-sharing in conflict situations.SADC's intervention strategies in the DRC represent a multifaceted approach to addressing a complex conflict. This literature review highlights the diverse perspectives and insights from scholars, case studies, and surveys that illuminate the challenges and successes of these interventions. As SADC continues to engage in the DRC, understanding the dynamics at play will be essential for fostering sustainable peace and stability in the region.

2.7. Conflict Management Solutions

Conflict management solutions are essential for addressing the multifaceted nature of conflicts that arise in various contexts. This literature review synthesizes scholarly perspectives, case studies, and empirical research to explore effective strategies for conflict management both locally and internationally, emphasizing the need for integrated approaches

that consider social, political, and economic dimensions. One foundational aspect of comprehensive conflict management is the recognition of conflict as a complex phenomenon that requires multi-dimensional solutions. According to Fisher (2018), effective conflict management must integrate various elements, including negotiation, mediation, and dialogue, to address the underlying causes of conflict. Fisher emphasizes that a holistic approach can enhance the effectiveness of interventions and fosters sustainable peace.

The role of local actors in conflict management has been increasingly recognized in recent years. As Autesserre (2021) notes, local communities often possess valuable insights into the dynamics of conflict, making their involvement crucial for effective solutions. Autesserre argues that empowering local actors can lead to more context-sensitive approaches that resonate with the needs and aspirations of affected populations. This perspective highlights the importance of inclusivity in conflict management strategies. Case studies of successful conflict management initiatives illustrate the effectiveness of comprehensive approaches. For instance, the peace process in Colombia, as analyzed by Vargas (2020), exemplifies how integrating political, social, and economic dimensions can lead to lasting solutions. Vargas emphasizes that the Colombian government's commitment to addressing land reform and social inequality as part of the peace agreement has been instrumental in fostering sustainable peace. This case underscores the need for comprehensive solutions that address root causes rather than merely focusing on immediate cessation of hostilities.

The importance of mediation in conflict management is also well-documented in the literature. According to Zartman (2019), mediation can serve as a critical tool for facilitating dialogue between conflicting parties. Zartman argues that effective mediators must be able to navigate the complexities of conflict dynamics while fostering an environment conducive to negotiation. This perspective highlights the need for skilled mediators who can employ various strategies to bridge divides and promote understanding. Moreover, the integration of gender

perspectives in conflict management is gaining recognition as essential for comprehensive solutions. A study by Bafou (2021) emphasizes that women's participation in peace processes leads to more inclusive and sustainable outcomes. Bafou argues that addressing gender-specific grievances and ensuring women's representation in negotiations can enhance the legitimacy and effectiveness of conflict management efforts. This gender-sensitive approach is crucial for fostering equitable solutions.

The role of international organizations in conflict management has been extensively examined in recent research. According to Kasaija (2022), organizations such as the United Nations play a vital role in facilitating conflict resolution by providing resources and expertise. Kasaija notes that while international support can enhance local efforts, it is essential that interventions respect the sovereignty of affected states and prioritize local agency. This perspective emphasizes the need for a balanced approach to international engagement in conflict management. The humanitarian dimension of conflict management is another critical aspect that must be considered. Research by Mandianga (2021) indicates that addressing humanitarian needs can significantly contribute to conflict management. Mandianga argues that integrating humanitarian assistance with peacebuilding initiatives fosters trust among conflicting parties and can create a conducive environment for dialogue. This approach underscores the importance of a comprehensive framework that encompasses both immediate relief and long-term development goals.

In addition to humanitarian considerations, the economic dimensions of conflict management are crucial for sustainable solutions. According to Mandele (2020), addressing economic grievances and promoting development can mitigate the factors that contribute to conflict. Mandele emphasizes that comprehensive conflict management strategies must include economic reforms and opportunities for marginalized communities to foster stability and resilience. The impact of local governance structures on conflict management has also been a

focal point in recent scholarship. As Nzongola-Ntalaja (2020) points out, effective local governance can facilitate conflict resolution by providing platforms for dialogue and negotiation. Nzongola-Ntalaja argues that strengthening local governance structures can empower communities to address grievances and promote social cohesion. This perspective highlights the importance of local agency in comprehensive conflict management solutions.

The intersection of environmental issues and conflict management is an emerging area of research. According to Kambale (2022), environmental degradation can exacerbate tensions and contribute to conflict dynamics. Kambale argues that comprehensive conflict management solutions must address environmental concerns and promote sustainable resource management to mitigate potential conflicts. This perspective emphasizes the need for an integrated approach that considers the environmental dimensions of conflict. In examining the role of education in conflict management, a study by Ndundu (2022) highlights the potential of education to promote peace and social cohesion. Ndundu argues that educational programs that foster critical thinking and conflict management skills can empower individuals to engage constructively in their communities. This emphasis on education underscores the importance of long-term strategies in conflict management.

Furthermore, the role of technology in facilitating conflict management has gained attention in recent years. Research by Mbuyamba et al. (2021) indicates that technology can enhance communication and coordination among stakeholders in conflict situations. Mbuyamba emphasizes that leveraging technology can improve information-sharing and facilitate dialogue, thereby contributing to more effective conflict management strategies. This technological dimension is increasingly relevant in today's interconnected world. The importance of public perception in shaping conflict management outcomes has also been explored. According to Adebajo (2019), public support for conflict management initiatives is crucial for their success. Adebajo argues that effective communication and engagement with

local populations can enhance the legitimacy of interventions and foster greater cooperation among conflicting parties. This perspective highlights the need for transparency and inclusivity in conflict management strategies.

The role of youth in conflict management is another critical dimension that requires attention. A study by Bafou (2021) emphasizes that young people can play a significant role in advocating for peace and challenging violence. Bafou argues that empowering youth to participate in conflict resolution efforts can lead to innovative solutions and foster a culture of peace. This youth-centric approach underscores the importance of engaging diverse stakeholders in comprehensive conflict management strategies.The evaluation of conflict management initiatives is essential for assessing their effectiveness and adapting strategies accordingly. According to Kasaija (2022), establishing robust evaluation frameworks can provide valuable insights into the outcomes of interventions. Kasaija emphasizes that ongoing assessment and feedback mechanisms are crucial for refining conflict management approaches and ensuring their relevance in dynamic contexts.

Furthermore, the historical context of conflicts plays a significant role in shaping conflict management solutions. Mavungu (2020) argues that understanding the historical grievances and narratives of affected communities is essential for developing effective strategies. Mavungu emphasizes that comprehensive conflict management solutions must acknowledge and address historical injustices to foster genuine reconciliation and healing. The role of cultural factors in conflict management is also a critical area of exploration. Research by Nzongola-Ntalaja (2020) highlights that cultural practices and traditions can influence conflict dynamics and management processes. Nzongola-Ntalaja argues that incorporating cultural considerations into conflict management strategies can enhance their effectiveness and promote community ownership of solutions. This cultural sensitivity is vital for fostering trust and cooperation among conflicting parties.

The relationship between conflict management and peacebuilding is another important aspect of the literature. According to Zartman (2019), effective conflict management is a foundational element of sustainable peacebuilding. Zartman emphasizes that addressing the root causes of conflict through comprehensive strategies can lay the groundwork for lasting peace. This perspective highlights the interconnectedness of conflict management and peacebuilding efforts. In addition to these considerations, the role of international law in conflict management has been examined in recent scholarship. Kambale (2022) argues that adherence to international legal frameworks can enhance the legitimacy of conflict management initiatives. Kambale emphasizes that incorporating legal principles into conflict resolution processes can promote accountability and foster respect for human rights. This legal dimension is critical for ensuring that conflict management strategies align with international norms.

The impact of social media on conflict management is an emerging area of research. A study by Mbuyi (2022) indicates that social media platforms can serve as tools for mobilizing communities and facilitating dialogue. Mbuyi argues that harnessing the power of social media can enhance communication and collaboration among stakeholders in conflict situations. This technological aspect underscores the potential for innovative approaches to conflict management in the digital age. The challenges of implementing comprehensive conflict management solutions are significant and require careful consideration. According to Mandianga (2021), resistance from various stakeholders can hinder the effectiveness of interventions. Mandianga emphasizes that addressing power dynamics and fostering collaboration among conflicting parties is essential for overcoming these challenges. This perspective highlights the need for adaptive strategies that can navigate the complexities of conflict environments.

The importance of community engagement in conflict management is further underscored by research from Autesserre (2021), which emphasizes that local ownership of conflict management efforts can enhance their sustainability. Autesserre argues that involving communities in decision-making processes fosters a sense of agency and responsibility, ultimately contributing to more effective conflict management solutions. This emphasis on community engagement is vital for fostering long-term peace.Comprehensive conflict management solutions require a multifaceted approach that integrates various dimensions, including local knowledge, gender perspectives, and economic considerations. This literature review highlights the diverse scholarly perspectives, case studies, and empirical research that illuminate the complexities of conflict management. As scholars and practitioners continue to explore these dimensions, it becomes increasingly clear that effective conflict management requires inclusive, context-sensitive, and adaptive strategies that engage all stakeholders.

2.8 Chapter Summary

This chapter explores the existing gaps in the literature regarding the M23 conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the role of local actors, SADC's intervention strategies, and comprehensive conflict management solutions. It highlights the need for longitudinal studies to assess the long-term impacts of interventions, the importance of understanding intersectional identities in conflict dynamics, and the necessity of examining informal economies and systemic challenges faced by local actors. Additionally, it emphasizes the lack of community perspectives on regional interventions, the integration of humanitarian and developmental efforts, and the influence of public perception and gender norms. By identifying these gaps, the chapter underscores the importance of targeted research to inform more effective and inclusive conflict management strategies, ultimately contributing to sustainable peacebuilding efforts.

CHAPTER THREE

3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

3.1. Introduction

This chapter outlines the research methodology for assessing the effectiveness of SADC's intervention in the DRC and M23 conflict, covering aspects such as research design, population and sampling, data collection methods, and ethical considerations. The chapter provides a framework for the study, ensuring a systematic and rigorous approach to investigating the research question..

3.2. Research Philosophy

The research philosophy encompasses the core beliefs and philosophical premises that shape how a researcher approaches knowledge, reality, and inquiry processes (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). This study adopts an interpretivist framework as its guiding philosophy. Interpretivism is rooted in the understanding that reality is constructed socially, is subjective, and is shaped by the specific contexts in which it arises (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This approach is particularly suitable for examining intricate sociopolitical phenomena like conflict management, where human experiences, institutional interactions, and normative systems converge. In contrast to positivism, which seeks objective and quantifiable truths, interpretivism emphasizes the significance of comprehending the interpretations, values, and meanings that participants ascribe to their social contexts (Ryan, 2018).

Given this study's goal of evaluating SADC's intervention in the DRC and the M23 conflict, a paradigm that prioritizes context, subjectivity, and depth over generalizability is more fitting. In the context of the DRC, where political dynamics, legal interpretations, and institutional roles are frequently disputed, grasping the perspectives of various stakeholders is essential. The interpretivist approach facilitates a deeper understanding of the lived experiences and realities of those involved, including local leaders, civil society members, political actors, and international observers. Their insights yield rich qualitative data regarding the effectiveness of SADC's interventions during the conflict.

Moreover, interpretivism supports qualitative methodologies, such as detailed interviews and thematic analysis, which are vital for this study. These methods enable the researcher to capture firsthand accounts and interpret the meanings found within documents, reports, and media narratives (Nowell et al., 2017). Rather than viewing participants' subjective experiences as biases to be minimized, they are considered valuable contributions to the understanding of conflict dynamics and governance (Lincoln, Lynham & Guba, 2018).This paradigm also resonates with critical approaches to electoral governance in the Global South, where researchers must consider structural limitations, historical contexts, and evolving political frameworks (Chiroro, 2022). The conflict in the DRC is influenced by a complex interaction of regional norms (like the SADC Guidelines), national laws, and actions by political leaders.

Thus, an interpretivist perspective allows the researcher to navigate these overlapping influences by highlighting context-specific narratives and interpretations. Furthermore, interpretivism encourages reflexivity on the part of the researcher. Given the sensitive political nature of the DRC conflict, it is crucial for the researcher to remain cognizant of their positionality and the potential impact of their assumptions on data collection and interpretation. Reflexivity enhances the credibility and reliability of qualitative research within the interpretivist framework (Berger, 2015).The interpretivist paradigm was chosen for its focus

on subjectivity, context, and meaning-making, which are vital for understanding the complexities of conflict governance in the DRC. It offers a flexible yet robust philosophical foundation for exploring how stakeholders perceive and experience the effectiveness of interventions, particularly in a context marked by political instability.

3.3. Research Approach

In assessing the effectiveness of SADC's intervention in the DRC and M23 conflict, a qualitative research methodology would be particularly useful, as noted by scholars like Creswell (2013). This approach would enable researchers to gather in-depth insights into the experiences and perceptions of stakeholders involved in the conflict, including local communities, government officials, and SADC personnel. Through methods like semi-structured interviews, researchers could explore the complex dynamics of the conflict, including the role of regional actors, the impact of SADC's intervention on local populations, and the challenges faced by peacekeeping forces.

By analyzing the data thematically, researchers could identify patterns and meanings that might not be immediately apparent through quantitative methods. This qualitative approach would provide a nuanced understanding of the conflict and SADC's intervention, highlighting areas of success and opportunities for improvement. As argued by scholars like Denzin and Lincoln (2011), qualitative research is well-suited to studying complex social phenomena, allowing researchers to capture the richness and depth of human experiences and perceptions. By adopting a qualitative research methodology, researchers could provide a comprehensive and contextualized assessment of SADC's intervention in the DRC and M23 conflict.

3.4. Research Design

This research is structured around a case study design, which serves as a methodological approach for conducting a thorough and contextual analysis of a specific phenomenon (Yin,

2018). A single-case framework has been adopted to concentrate on the DRC and the M23 conflict, providing an in-depth exploration of how SADC's interventions were implemented throughout this situation. The case study approach is particularly relevant when the lines between the phenomenon being studied (i.e., the effectiveness of SADC's intervention) and its context (i.e., the political, legal, and institutional environment of the DRC) are not distinctly defined (Mills, Durepos & Wiebe, 2010). This methodology enables the incorporation of various data sources, including legal texts, official documentation, and interviews with stakeholders, thereby enhancing the depth and reliability of the findings. One of the primary benefits of employing a case study design is its adaptability in accommodating both empirical data and theoretical exploration.

It allows the researcher to triangulate information from multiple sources and derive meaningful insights regarding the actions of institutions involved, the impact of intervention strategies, and the perspectives of political actors and civil society groups (Thomas, 2021).The situation involving the M23 conflict in the DRC serves as a particularly significant case due to its implications for the country's ongoing peace and stability efforts and the heightened international focus it has received. By utilizing a case study approach, this research can thoroughly investigate systemic challenges, institutional responses, and the experiences of various stakeholders with greater contextual sensitivity. Ultimately, the case study design aligns with the overall goal of assessing the practical implications of regional interventions within a specific national context.

3.5. Population and sample

The population for this study consists of a diverse range of stakeholders engaged in the dynamics of the DRC and the M23 conflict. This includes officials from the Congolese government, representatives from various political factions, civil society organizations (CSOs), legal analysts, both domestic and international conflict monitors, media professionals, and

political commentators. Each of these groups plays a vital role in implementing, observing, or critiquing interventions, thus serving as crucial informants for evaluating the effectiveness of SADC's strategies in the region. As noted by Ritchie et al. (2019), identifying a relevant and information-rich population is essential for qualitative research, particularly when the objective is to gain nuanced insights into complex processes and perceptions.

In the context of the DRC, the chosen population is expected to possess firsthand experience or specialized knowledge regarding the conflict landscape, legal frameworks, operational challenges, political dynamics, and institutional responses related to SADC's interventions. Given the qualitative nature of this investigation, non-probability purposive sampling was employed. This technique allows for the deliberate selection of participants based on their expertise, roles, and relevance to the research questions (Etikan, Musa & Alkassim, 2016). Purposive sampling was especially suitable for this study as it sought to gather rich, detailed, and context-specific information rather than generalizable statistical data. The researcher identified individuals most likely to provide valuable insights into the complexities of the conflict, institutional effectiveness, and stakeholder interactions.

Moreover, this sampling method enabled the researcher to gather perspectives from individuals with varied yet interconnected viewpoints. For example, government officials were expected to share insights regarding the operational and regulatory frameworks guiding SADC's efforts, while representatives from political factions, particularly those in opposition, were anticipated to provide experiences related to intervention fairness and the prevailing political climate. CSO members and election monitors from organizations such as the Congolese Election Support Network and the SADC Electoral Observation Mission could offer independent evaluations on the alignment of interventions with regional standards.

Legal scholars were included to analyze the compatibility of Congolese laws with SADC guidelines. In accordance with the recommendations of Creswell and Poth (2018), a relatively small but diverse sample of 8 participants was deemed sufficient to achieve data saturation—the point at which no new themes or information emerge from the interviews. The sample distribution included: 2 government officials providing insights on policy and operational preparedness; 2 representatives from different political factions discussing access to resources and the political environment; 2 members from CSOs and observing groups, including local and international organizations; 1 legal experts assessing the alignment of Congolese laws with SADC standards; and 1 political analysts offering perspectives on media coverage and narrative framing of the conflict.

While this sample may not statistically represent all stakeholders in the DRC, the depth and diversity of the participants' experiences allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and mechanisms influencing the situation. The aim was to ensure a broad inclusion of voices from various sectors, enabling a more nuanced and layered analysis (Marshall & Rossman, 2016).It is also important to acknowledge that access to certain influential stakeholders, particularly within the government, posed challenges. Political sensitivities and institutional protocols often limited cooperation or transparency in responses.

Nevertheless, the insights gathered from available participants were deemed rich and relevant, with an emphasis on maintaining ethical standards and objectivity throughout the data collection process. The selected population and purposive sampling strategy were critical in facilitating an in-depth qualitative inquiry into the application of SADC's interventions in the DRC. This methodology aligns with the broader goals of interpretive qualitative research, which seeks to explore the meanings, power dynamics, and institutional behaviors inherent in conflict resolution processes (Silverman, 2021).

3.6. Sampling Method

Sampling is a crucial aspect of research design, particularly when assessing the effectiveness of SADC's intervention in the DRC and M23 conflict. According to scholars like Creswell (2014), sampling involves selecting a subset of individuals or entities from a larger population, with the goal of gathering representative data that can be used to make inferences about the population as a whole. In this context, a purposive sampling method would be particularly suitable, as it involves selecting participants based on their expertise, experience, or knowledge of the conflict and SADC's intervention. By targeting key stakeholders, such as local communities, government officials, SADC personnel, and civil society organizations, researchers can ensure that their sample is representative of the diverse perspectives and experiences relevant to the conflict. As noted by Patton (2002), purposive sampling is a valuable approach in qualitative research, as it enables researchers to select participants who can provide in-depth and detailed information about the research topic. By employing purposive sampling, researchers can gather valuable insights into the effectiveness of SADC's intervention in the DRC and M23 conflict, and provide recommendations for improvement.

3.7. Data collection methods

3.7.1. Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a carefully selected group of 8 participants who possessed direct experience or expert knowledge regarding SADC's role in the DRC. This method was chosen for its adaptability, allowing the researcher to delve into predetermined themes while also exploring unanticipated insights based on participant responses (Adams, 2015; Brinkmann, 2022).The interviewees included government representatives, leaders from various political factions, civil society advocates, legal advisors, and independent journalists. The participants were selected due to their know how in the issue being researched. These discussions provided critical perspectives on the challenges and successes of SADC's initiatives, as well as insights into the broader political and social

dynamics at play. The interviews were structured around key themes tied to the research objectives, such as the effectiveness of SADC interventions, stakeholder responsibilities, and the overall impact on democratic governance.

Interviews were conducted in a secure environment, and participants provided informed consent for the sessions, which were recorded and subsequently transcribed for analysis. While in-person interviews were preferred, some were conducted via secure digital platforms to accommodate logistical challenges and ensure participant safety (King et al., 2019). All participant identities were anonymized to protect confidentiality, reflecting the sensitivity of the political context in the DRC. Ethical guidelines were strictly followed throughout the research process, ensuring respect for participants and adherence to institutional standards (Resnik, 2020; Orb et al., 2022). The qualitative data obtained from the interviews complemented the documentary evidence, allowing for a more comprehensive exploration of stakeholder perspectives and institutional practices. This method proved invaluable in capturing the voices of those often marginalized in discussions about electoral processes and governance, highlighting the need for inclusivity in assessing SADC's impact on democratic integrity (Silverman, 2021).

3.7.2 Documentary Sources

The documentary analysis served as a crucial component of the research, yielding a substantial array of secondary data essential for evaluating the structural and procedural aspects of SADC's interventions. Key documents analyzed included official SADC reports, legal frameworks, and assessments from various observer missions. Critical resources examined comprised the SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections, which outline fundamental standards for democratic governance, and relevant Congolese legal texts that frame the electoral landscape. Additionally, reports from organizations such as the African Union and the European Union provided valuable insights into the context and effectiveness

of SADC's initiatives. Media articles from local and international outlets were also reviewed to identify discrepancies between official narratives and public perceptions. This methodological approach allowed for the identification of patterns and inconsistencies in the implementation of SADC's guidelines, including issues of transparency, inclusivity, and accountability (Bowen, 2009; O'Leary, 2021). By systematically categorizing and thematically analyzing the content, the study was able to triangulate findings and validate insights gained from participant interviews, thereby enhancing the robustness of the overall analysis.

3.8 Validity and reliability

Data collection is a critical aspect of assessing the effectiveness of SADC's intervention in the DRC and M23 conflict, and researchers can employ a range of methods to gather relevant information. According to Creswell (2014), primary data collection methods, such as in-depth interviews and focus groups, can provide rich and nuanced insights into the conflict and the impact of SADC's intervention on local communities and other stakeholders. By conducting interviews with key stakeholders, including government officials, SADC personnel, and civil society organizations, researchers can gather valuable information on the effectiveness of the intervention and identify areas for improvement.

Additionally, secondary data collection methods, such as documentary analysis, can provide valuable insights into the conflict and the intervention, by analyzing existing reports and documents from SADC, the African Union, and other organizations. To ensure the validity and reliability of the findings, researchers can employ strategies such as triangulation, member checking, and data validation, as noted by Lincoln and Guba (1985). By combining primary and secondary data collection methods and ensuring the validity and reliability of the findings, researchers can gather a comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of SADC's intervention in the DRC and M23 conflict, and provide valuable recommendations for practitioners.

3.9 Data presentation and analysis

Data presentation and analysis are crucial steps in assessing the effectiveness of SADC's intervention in the DRC and M23 conflict. According to Miles and Huberman (1994), effective data presentation and analysis involve organizing and interpreting the data in a way that facilitates understanding and insight. In this study, data presentation could involve using tables, figures, and graphs to display the findings, while data analysis could involve using thematic analysis or content analysis to identify patterns and themes in the data. As noted by Silverman (2013), the goal of data analysis is to move beyond description to interpretation, identifying the underlying meanings and implications of the findings. By presenting and analyzing the data in a clear and systematic way, researchers can provide a comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of SADC's intervention in the DRC and M23 conflict, and offer valuable insights for policymakers and practitioners seeking to improve conflict management and peace building efforts in the region.

3.9.1. Thematic Analysis Framework

The thematic analysis framework utilized in this study was guided by a structured six-phase process that facilitated a thorough examination of the qualitative data. This framework involved familiarization with the data, generating initial codes, and subsequently searching for themes that emerged from the analysis. Each of these phases was crucial in ensuring that the analysis was comprehensive and reflective of the data collected. During the familiarization phase, the researcher engaged deeply with the interview transcripts and documentary evidence, allowing for a rich understanding of the context. The process of generating initial codes involved systematically identifying key phrases and concepts that were relevant to SADC's intervention strategies. Emerging themes such as "institutional constraints," "media bias," and "stakeholder accountability" were critically analyzed and refined to ensure clarity and coherence. According to Clarke and Braun (2018), this level of detail in thematic analysis

supports the development of a well-rounded narrative that accurately reflects the complexities of the subject matter.

3.9.2. Trustworthiness of the Study

Establishing trustworthiness is crucial in qualitative research, especially when assessing the effectiveness of interventions like those of SADC in the DRC. Trustworthiness encompasses credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability, all of which are essential for validating the findings. In this study, various strategies were employed to enhance these criteria, ensuring that the conclusions drawn were both reliable and reflective of the actual experiences of stakeholders. Credibility was achieved through data triangulation, which involved gathering information from a diverse range of sources, including interviews, official documents, and observer reports. This method bolstered the authenticity of the findings by corroborating evidence across multiple datasets, as noted by Fusch et al. (2019). Furthermore, member checking was conducted to validate the interpretations made from the data, allowing participants to confirm that their perspectives were accurately represented. Transferability pertains to the applicability of the findings to other contexts, and while generalizability is often challenging in qualitative research, this study aimed to provide rich descriptions of the DRC context. By detailing the socio-political environment and the specific challenges faced, the research allows other scholars and practitioners to assess the relevance of these findings in similar settings. Dependability was maintained through meticulous documentation of the research process, ensuring that future researchers can follow the same procedures and understand the decisions made throughout the study. Peer debriefing further enhanced dependability, as discussions with colleagues provided opportunities to critique and refines the coding strategies and thematic developments. Conformability was promoted through reflexivity, with the researcher maintaining a reflective journal to document personal biases and assumptions throughout the process. Berger (2016) emphasizes that such practices allow

for greater transparency and self-awareness, ultimately strengthening the validity of the research findings. Incorporating these comprehensive strategies—triangulation, member checking, and reflexivity—the study achieved a high level of trustworthiness in its qualitative research. These efforts not only enhance the legitimacy of the findings but also contribute significantly to the discourse surrounding SADC's effectiveness in addressing the challenges posed by the DRC and the M23 conflict. The robustness of the research methodology and the depth of analysis provide a solid foundation for understanding the complexities of regional interventions in conflict situations, thereby offering valuable insights for policymakers and practitioners in the field.

3.9.3 Pilot testing/pretesting the questionnaire

Pilot testing the questionnaire is a crucial step in ensuring the validity and reliability of the data collected in a study assessing the effectiveness of SADC's intervention in the DRC and M23 conflict. According to scholars like Fowler (2014), pilot testing involves administering the questionnaire to a small sample of participants, similar to those who will be included in the main study, to assess its clarity, relevance, and effectiveness. This process allows researchers to identify and address any issues with the instrument, such as ambiguous or confusing questions, and make necessary revisions before it is used in the main study. By pilot testing the questionnaire, researchers can increase the validity and reliability of their findings, and ensure that the data collected is accurate and relevant to the research question. As noted by Presser et al. (2004), pilot testing is an essential step in questionnaire development, and can help researchers avoid common pitfalls and errors that can compromise the quality of their data.

3.10. Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations are a crucial aspect of any research study, particularly when assessing the effectiveness of SADC's intervention in the DRC and M23 conflict. According to scholars like Beauchamp and Childress (2001), researchers have a responsibility to ensure

that their methods and procedures are respectful, fair, and do not cause harm to participants or communities. In this context, researchers must prioritize informed consent, ensuring that participants are fully aware of the purpose, risks, and benefits of the study before agreeing to participate. Additionally, confidentiality and anonymity must be protected, particularly when dealing with sensitive topics or vulnerable populations, to prevent potential retribution or harm. Researchers must also be mindful of power dynamics and ensure that their methods do not exploit or disadvantage certain groups. By prioritizing ethical considerations, researchers can build trust with participants, ensure the integrity of their findings, and contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the conflict and the effectiveness of SADC's intervention. As noted by Christians (2011), researchers must be reflexive and critically aware of the ethical implications of their research, and take steps to mitigate any potential harm or negative consequences.

3.11. Summary

This chapter has outlined the research methodology for assessing the effectiveness of SADC's intervention in the DRC and M23 conflict, covering aspects such as research design, population and sampling, data collection methods, and ethical considerations. The chapter has provided a comprehensive framework for the study, ensuring a systematic and rigorous approach to investigating the research question. The next chapter will present the findings of the study, analyzing the data collected and discussing the implications of the results in the context of the conflict and SADC's intervention.

CHAPTER FOUR

4.0 DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents and discusses the findings obtained from the qualitative data gathered through in-depth interviews with regional diplomats, conflict analysts, and representatives from humanitarian organizations, complemented by content analysis of policy documents, SADC communiqués, UN Reports and media coverage of the DRC conflict. The findings are organized according to the research objectives, namely: examining the nature of SADC's military and diplomatic intervention in the DRC concerning the M23 conflict, analyzing the impact of regional dynamics on intervention effectiveness, and evaluating the humanitarian outcomes of SADC's engagement. Themes were identified through inductive coding and triangulated across data sources, highlighting patterns of cooperation, challenges in mandate implementation, and perceptions of legitimacy among Congolese stakeholders.

4.2 DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION AND RESPONSE RATE

This section presents the demographic characteristics of the participants involved in the qualitative phase of the study examining SADC's intervention in the DRC and the M23 conflict. The study employed purposive sampling to select 8 key informants drawn from regional stakeholders, including a DRC Ambassador to Zimbabwe (P1, male, 20 years), SADC regional officers (P2, female, 15 years; P6, female, 6 years), a Minister (P3, female, 20 years), a Deputy Speaker of National Assembly (P4, female, 15 years), a Professor (P5, male, 26 years), a Former Army General (P7, male, 30 years), and a Legal Officer with Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights (ZLHR) (P8, female, 11 years), ensuring a balanced representation of perspectives from diplomats, government officials, academics, military experts, and legal professionals involved in regional conflict dynamics and intervention strategies in the DRC. The data collected included information on the participants' gender, affiliation, role, and years of experience in matters related to regional security, conflict management, and diplomacy, with experience ranging from 6 to 30 years, thereby enhancing the credibility and depth of the qualitative findings (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Table 4.1: Demographic Profile of Interview Participants

Participant ID	Gender	Affiliation	Role	Years of Experience
P1	Male	ONE Ambassador to Zimbabwe	Ambassador	20
P2	Female	SADC'S REGIONAL OFFFICER	SADC'S OFFICERS	15
P3	Female	MINISTER	MINISTER	20
P4	Female	DEPUTY SPEAKER OF NATIONAL ASSEMBLY	SPEAKER	15
P5	Male	PROFESSOR	PROFESSOR	26
P6	Female	SADC'S REGIONAL OFFICER	PEACE KEEPING OFFICER	6
P7	Male	FORMER ARMY GENERAL	GENERAL	30
P8	Female	Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights (ZLHR)	Legal Officer	11

As reflected in the participant profile, the sample comprised an equal distribution of male (n=3) and female (n=5) stakeholders, fostering gender inclusivity in the examination of SADC's intervention in the DRC and the M23 conflict. Participants occupied diverse roles, spanning diplomatic representation (P1, P3, P4), regional security and peacekeeping (P2, P6, P7), academia (P5), and legal advocacy (P8). The years of experience ranged markedly from 6 years (P6) to 30 years (P7), with an average of approximately 18.1 years, underscoring that informants possessed substantial expertise in regional diplomacy, conflict dynamics, and security matters pertinent to the DRC. This multifaceted representation enabled the study to capture a broad spectrum of insights, consonant with qualitative research principles emphasizing the centrality of rich, varied perspectives for elucidating complex regional phenomena (Marshall & Rossman, 2016).

4.3 Historical context of conflict

4.3.1 The root causes

The research found out that M23 conflict, with its deep historical roots, has been a source of instability not only in the DRC but also in the entire region. The research noted that M23 insurgency is not merely a recent phenomenon; it reflects decades of political, social, and economic turmoil in the DRC. The respondent noted that the historical context of the conflict detailed that the M23 group arose from remnants of earlier rebel movements, particularly the National Congress for the Defence of the People (CNDP). It was noted that the roots of M23 can be traced to the aftermath of the Congo Wars, which ended in 2003 and left a power vacuum and unresolved grievances. Emphasis was placed on the necessity for the international community to grasp this historical backdrop to fully understand the current dynamics.

"The DRC situation is critical not only for the country itself but for the entire Southern African region,"

setting a serious tone for the discussion. The respondent emphasized the historical context of the M23 conflict, noting that it is rooted in a complex history dating back to the Congo Wars. The aftermath of these wars left deep-seated grievances and political instability

that various factions have exploited. She asserted that understanding these historical dynamics is pivotal for effectively addressing the current crisis.

The research also found out that M23 conflict in the DRC has roots tracing back to the aftermath of the Second Congo War. The movement emerged in April 2012, formed by defectors from the Congolese National Army (FARDC), primarily from the former Congrès National pour la Défense du Peuple (CNDP). Contextualization of the rebellion points to historical and structural factors, including colonial legacies, ethnicization of politics, and the marginalization of Rwandophones. The actions of M23 reflect a complex interplay of local grievances, regional dynamics, and strategic interests.

4.3.2 SADC's intervention and regional influence

When discussing SADC's intervention, The Southern African Development Community has taken steps to mediate and foster dialogue among the conflicting parties, but the effectiveness of these interventions is still under scrutiny. While SADC has deployed peacekeeping forces, the situation on the ground remains complex and that mere military presence cannot resolve underlying issues. Frustration was expressed regarding the slow progress of peace efforts, with a recognition that the conflict is multifaceted, involving not just military actors but also political and ethnic dimensions. SADC's role should extend beyond military intervention to also address socioeconomic factors that fuel the conflict, highlighting the critical importance of economic development to stabilize the region, as poverty and unemployment often drive young people to join armed groups.

SADC has played a crucial role in facilitating dialogue and deploying peacekeeping forces, but also recognized that military intervention alone is insufficient for lasting peace. A comprehensive approach, including diplomatic efforts, socioeconomic development, and community engagement, was highlighted as necessary. The lack of trust among the conflicting parties was identified as a significant barrier, with the minister asserting that for SADC's

intervention to be effective, it is essential to encourage genuine dialogue among all stakeholders, including marginalized communities often left out of the conversation. This emphasizes the importance of inclusivity in peace processes.

SADC's intervention has been crucial in mediating dialogue and providing support for peacekeeping efforts, while also acknowledging that military presence alone does not guarantee peace. It is worth noting that intervention requires a multifaceted approach, combining military, diplomatic, and developmental efforts. However, lack of trust among conflicting parties is a major hurdle and one of the respondents stated,

"For SADC to be effective, there must be genuine engagement from all sides. We need to create an environment where dialogue can flourish."

The research also noted that regional actors also play significant roles in the M23 conflict. Rwanda faces accusations of backing M23, influencing the group's military capabilities. Tensions between DRC leadership and the Rwandan government impact regional diplomacy. Reports indicate Rwandan troop deployments alongside M23 operations, amid allegations of pursuing strategic and economic interests in eastern DRC. The conflict intertwines with Rwanda's security narratives and perceived threats from groups such as the Forces Démocratiques de Libération du Rwanda (FDLR).The advances of M23 have severe humanitarian consequences. Reports note nearly 3,000 deaths and 500,000 displaced individuals, compounding the crisis in eastern DRC. The objectives of M23 reportedly include safeguarding the interests of Rwandophone communities and contesting governance and land access in North Kivu. Their actions involve targeting specific localities, reportedly including FDLR strongholds, reflecting the complex dynamics of the conflict. Human rights organizations document violations, including acts of sexual violence and civilian killings.

4.3.3 Challenges being faced

The research also noted that challenges of political dialogue were also addressed. Engaging all stakeholders was deemed crucial, yet the process has been hampered by mistrust

and a lack of commitment from some parties. There was a call for SADC to facilitate inclusive dialogue that recognizes the voices of marginalized communities, especially women and youth. The ambassador asserted that lasting peace can only be achieved through genuine participation and representation.

The research also found out that as the discussion deepened, the influence of foreign powers in the conflict. External actors have their interests, complicating the peace process, and there is a need to navigate these relationships carefully to balance regional cooperation with the sovereignty of the DRC. A united front among African nations was called for to address external influences and promote peaceful resolutions. The conversation then turned to humanitarian concerns, ongoing violence has led to a dire humanitarian crisis, resulting in millions of displaced individuals and severely restricted access to basic services. Emphasis was placed on the need for SADC and the international community to prioritize humanitarian aid, ensuring that support reaches those most affected by the conflict. Education and awareness were identified as vital in combating the cycle of violence, with a focus on investing in programs that educate young people about peacebuilding and conflict management. There was a strong belief that empowering the next generation is essential for sustainable peace and for breaking the cycle of recruitment into armed groups.

The research also noted that as the discussion drew to a close, a message of hope emerged. Despite the challenges, there was optimism about the future of the DRC, with an assertion that with the right support and commitment to peace, a positive shift is possible. The pivotal role of SADC was reiterated, along with a belief that collective efforts can lead to lasting change.

It is important to note that Historical partitions of Africa and the presence of groups such as the Forces Démocratiques de Libération du Rwanda (FDLR) contribute to these

complexities. SADC's deployment faces challenges, including limited force strength in vast eastern DRC territories and potential antagonism with the East African Community (EAC), which had prior involvement. Rwandan leadership criticized SADC's Mission in DRC (SAMIDRC) as engaging in offensive combat alongside Congolese forces and groups like FDLR, complicating regional diplomacy. Scholars stress addressing root causes like governance gaps and ethnic tensions for lasting peace.

4.3.4 How a regional body can operationalize and who must implement it effectively

The interviewer sought insights on the effectiveness of SADC's intervention in the M23 conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo. To effectively assess SADC's intervention, it is crucial to consider both historical context and current realities. The respondent detailed the historical backdrop of the M23 conflict, explaining that the formation of the group in 2012 has deep roots in the tumultuous history of the DRC, especially the aftermath of the Congo Wars, which left a legacy of distrust and unresolved grievances among various ethnic and political factions. Understanding this historical context was deemed essential for any successful peacekeeping or mediation effort.

Concerns were expressed about external influences on the conflict. The geopolitical significance of the DRC attracts various international interests, complicating peacekeeping efforts. The respondent indicated that SADC must navigate these relationships carefully, ensuring that interventions remain focused on the needs and sovereignty of the DRC. This sentiment echoed the ambassador's concerns about foreign meddling in regional affairs. The humanitarian crisis resulting from the conflict was also addressed, with emphasis on the millions who have been displaced and the challenges that humanitarian access faces. The officer affirmed SADC's mission includes advocating for humanitarian support but stressed the necessity of working closely with international organizations to ensure aid reaches that in need.

A commitment to addressing humanitarian concerns was evident throughout the conversation, accompanied by a passionate appeal for protecting vulnerable populations.

The research noted that education and capacity-building emerged as crucial elements in the vision for peace. Investing in education and community programs was deemed vital for breaking the cycle of violence, with an emphasis on empowering young people to become agents of change and promote peace and reconciliation within their communities. The respondent highlighted that sustainable peace requires a long-term investment in human capital. As the conversation neared its conclusion, thoughts on the future were shared with cautious optimism. While the situation poses significant challenges, the officer expressed hopefulness about SADC's potential to effect change, emphasizing that cooperation from all parties involved is essential. The insights shared provided a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted challenges faced by SADC, reinforcing the need for continued dialogue and action. The officer reiterated the importance of collaboration. The research also noted that success of SADC's interventions hinges not just on cooperation among African nations but also with international partners. Together, a framework for lasting peace in the DRC and the broader region can be created. The insights provided a comprehensive understanding of the complexities faced by SADC and reinforced the necessity for ongoing dialogue and action.

4.4. The effectiveness of SADC's intervention in the DRC

The research found out that the respondent acknowledged the impact of regional dynamics on the conflict.

"The DRC's neighbors have their interests, which can complicate our internal issues," he said. "SADC’s intervention is vital, but we need to ensure that it respects our sovereignty and addresses the root causes of the conflict rather than merely providing a military solution."

His remarks underscored the importance of external support being aligned with local needs. A strong belief in the power of dialogue was articulated.

"Engaging all stakeholders is crucial for any peace process to succeed," he asserted. "This means not only involving political leaders but also civil society, women, and youth who are often the most affected by conflict."

He emphasized that inclusive dialogue is essential for building trust and creating a sustainable path forward.

There was a comprehensive understanding of the underlying causes of the M23 conflict, highlighting the need for a multifaceted approach that addresses historical grievances, governance issues, socio-economic challenges, and the importance of inclusive dialogue to achieve lasting peace in the DRC.

The research also noted that Scholars, including Delphin R. Ntanyoma (2023), highlight that SADC's military intervention in the DRC carries significant risks, particularly as focusing solely on neutralizing the M23 rebel group might overlook the complex web of over 120 armed groups operating in eastern DRC. Ntanyoma argues any regional force aiming to stabilize eastern Congo should remain neutral and be aware of the Congolese army's role in fanning violence and committing atrocities against civilians. The research also noted that M23 conflict is rooted in historical and ethnic tensions, with the group claiming to fight for the rights of Congolese Tutsis and other communities in the Kivus. Scholars Dereck Goto and Francis Akili (2025) contextualize the rebellion within grievances over marginalization, land access, and regional dynamics involving Rwanda's alleged support for M23—a charge Rwanda denies.

Optimism was evident, reflecting a belief in the resilience of the Congolese people and the potential for positive change.The minister provided a comprehensive understanding of the M23 conflict and the complexities involved in achieving peace in the DRC. Her insights emphasized the need for a multifaceted approach that addresses historical grievances, governance issues, and socio-economic challenges while prioritizing inclusive dialogue and humanitarian assistance.

Her optimism was palpable, reflecting a belief in the potential for positive change through collaborative efforts. In summary, the scholar provided a comprehensive analysis of the M23 conflict and the complexities involved in achieving peace in the DRC. His insights emphasized the need for a multi-faceted approach that addresses historical grievances, governance issues, socio-economic challenges, and the importance of inclusive dialogue in the pursuit of lasting peace.

4.5. The Roles of Local Actors in the DRC Conflict

The research found out the roles that local actors play in the ongoing conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). One participant stated,

"Local actors are crucial in both exacerbating and mitigating the conflict,"

emphasizing the complexity of their influence. He elaborated that many local actors, including community leaders and armed groups, have their roots in historical grievances stemming from ethnic tensions, land disputes, and a lack of political representation. When local voices feel ignored, they may resort to violence as a means of asserting their needs. This insight highlighted the necessity of addressing these underlying issues to foster peace.

The research also noted the impact of local governance, noting,

"In many regions of the DRC, local governance structures are weak or non-existent."

He explained that this vacuum creates an environment where local actors can operate with impunity, complicating the conflict further. He pointed out that empowering local governance could help mitigate the influence of armed groups. Moreover, local actors often act as intermediaries in peace processes, as their knowledge of the local context and networks can facilitate dialogue between conflicting parties. His perspective indicated that recognizing and strengthening these roles could be vital for peacebuilding efforts. The ambassador also highlighted the role of civil society organizations, stating that local NGOs and community

groups are instrumental in advocating for peace and reconciliation. They help bridge gaps between communities and the government, providing platforms for dialogue and negotiation. His emphasis on civil society underscored its potential to foster grassroots solutions.

However, the research noted that the ambassador cautioned that not all local actors have peaceful intentions, stating that some may exploit the chaos for their gain, perpetuating cycles of violence. This acknowledgment of the dual roles of local actors illustrated the complexity of the DRC's situation.

His optimism reflected a belief in the resilience of the Congolese people and their capacity for change. In summary, the DRC Ambassador to Zimbabwe provided valuable insights into the multifaceted roles of local actors in the DRC conflict, emphasizing the importance of addressing historical grievances, strengthening local governance, and empowering civil society as essential components of any peacebuilding effort.

Different participants have different views on this issue as the focus regarded the roles of local actors in the ongoing conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). She began by stating, emphasizing their multifaceted roles. She elaborated that local actors can either exacerbate tensions or contribute to peace efforts, depending on the context. Many local actors, such as community leaders and traditional authorities, are deeply rooted in their communities and possess invaluable knowledge of local issues and grievances. When these voices are silenced or ignored, it can lead to increased frustration and conflict. Her insights highlighted the necessity of including local perspectives in any peace process.

The research also noted that the minister pointed out that effective governance is lacking in many parts of the DRC, explaining that this void allows armed groups and other factions to thrive, as local populations turn to them for security and representation. She emphasized the importance of strengthening local governance to provide alternatives to violence.

"Moreover, local actors often serve as mediators in conflicts,"

Their established networks and understanding of community dynamics can facilitate dialogue between conflicting parties. This grassroots engagement is vital for any sustainable peace initiative. Her acknowledgment of local mediation efforts underscored the potential for community-led solutions to conflict. She also highlighted the role of civil society organizations, remarking that local NGOs and community groups are essential in advocating for peace and social justice. They work tirelessly to promote dialogue and reconciliation, often at great personal risk, illustrating their bravery and dedication to fostering peace.

However, the research noted out that the participant cautioned that not all local actors have peaceful intentions, noting that some may exploit the situation for personal gain, perpetuating cycles of violence and instability. Her recognition of this duality illustrated the complexity of the local landscape in the DRC.

The participant emphasized that community engagement is fundamental; when people feel included in the peace process, they are more likely to support it. Her emphasis on inclusivity highlighted the importance of building trust and fostering a sense of ownership among local populations. The minister also spoke about the need for regional cooperation, asserting that local actors do not operate in isolation, and their actions are influenced by regional dynamics.

The research noted that as the discussion drew to a close, she expressed her hope for the future. Her optimism reflected a belief in the resilience of local communities and their capacity to drive meaningful change. In summary, the minister provided valuable insights into the critical roles of local actors in the DRC conflict, emphasizing the importance of addressing governance issues, empowering civil society, and fostering inclusive dialogue as essential components of any peacebuilding effort.

4.5.1 The role of traditional governance structures

The research also noted that the pointed out the role of traditional governance structures, one of the repsondents noting that

"in many areas, local governance is weak or non-existent."

He explained that this power vacuum allows armed groups to fill the gap, as communities often turn to them for protection and representation. He stressed that strengthening local governance could provide a viable alternative to armed conflict. Furthermore, local actors often serve as mediators in peace processes, as their deep understanding of community dynamics and relationships can facilitate dialogue between conflicting parties. His emphasis on local mediation underscored the potential for community-driven solutions.

The research also noted that the contribution of civil society organizations, stating that local NGOs play a critical role in advocating for human rights, social justice, and peacebuilding. These organizations mobilize communities, raise awareness, and provide platforms for dialogue, showcasing their potential to foster grassroots engagement in peace efforts. However, he cautioned that the landscape is complex; not all local actors have peaceful intentions. Some may exploit conflicts for personal gain or power. This acknowledgment of the dual roles of local actors illustrated the intricacies of conflict dynamics in the DRC.

Other respondents noted that,

"in regions where governance is weak, armed groups often exploit the situation."

He noted that when local leaders are empowered and supported, they can offer alternatives to violence, providing security and representation for their communities. His perspective pointed to the necessity of reinforcing local governance as a stabilizing factor. Moreover, local actors can serve as vital mediators, as their familiarity with the local context

allows them to facilitate dialogue between conflicting parties. This grassroots engagement is crucial for any sustainable peace agreement.

4.6. Intervention Strategies in the DRC M23 Conflict

The research also noted that insights were sought regarding the Southern African Development Community's (SADC) intervention strategies in the DRC M23 conflict. The respondent identified SADC's role as crucial, especially given the complexity of the M23 conflict.

The ambassador said that:

"One of the primary strategies has been diplomatic engagement,"

she began, emphasizing the importance of dialogue among all stakeholders involved in the conflict. She elaborated,

"SADC has consistently advocated for peaceful negotiations over military solutions,"

highlighting the necessity for a collaborative approach.

The research also noted that while the preference is for dialogue, the minister acknowledged situations that necessitate military intervention. SADC has deployed peacekeeping forces to stabilize regions affected by the M23 conflict, ensuring that humanitarian aid can reach those in need. This recognition emphasized the balance between diplomacy and security within SADC’s approach.

This provided valuable insights into SADC's intervention strategies in the DRC M23 conflict, emphasizing the importance of diplomatic engagement, regional cooperation, local governance, humanitarian assistance, and community involvement as essential components of effective conflict management. Scholars Reagen Miviri (2025) and Yvon Muya (2025) highlight that mediation efforts in the DRC M23 conflict face significant hurdles. Qatar has

played a proactive role in brokering talks, leading to the Doha Declaration of Principles signed in July 2025. Miviri notes the need for proactive engagement to prevent escalation, especially with extremist rhetoric resurfacing on all sides. Efforts by African leaders, including Nigeria's former President Olusegun Obasanjo and Angola's President Joao Lourenço, have seen limited success.

Zachée Muhamiriza (2025) points to Rwanda's alleged military support for M23, with reports indicating around 4,000 Rwandan soldiers fighting alongside rebels. Sanctions have been imposed on Rwandan officials and entities, including James Kabarebe, Rwanda's government liaison to M23. The US and EU have played roles in pressuring Rwanda amid allegations of backing M23, while Rwanda denies these claims. M23 controls strategic economic hubs in North and South Kivu, taxing mineral activities reportedly generating nearly $1 million monthly. Scholars warn that framing M23's actions solely as acquisitive crime oversimplifies the complex conflict dynamics and governance issues. The conflict has resulted in thousands killed, over 1.2 million displaced, and severe human rights abuses, with civilians bearing the brunt. Regional actors' economic interests, including control of minerals like cobalt and coltan critical for global supply chains, intertwine with conflict escalation.

The research also noted that in summary, SADC officials provided valuable insights into the organization's intervention strategies in the DRC M23 conflict, emphasizing the importance of diplomatic engagement, military support, regional cooperation, local governance, humanitarian assistance, and community involvement as essential components of effective conflict management.

The research found out that in a discussion SADC's intervention strategies in the DRC M23 conflict, as the repsondent highlighted the organization's commitment to a balanced and comprehensive approach.

The research also noted that reflecting on the challenges ahead; she acknowledged the complexities of the DRC conflict, stating that navigating these dynamics requires patience and resilience. In her conclusion, she expressed optimism for the future, believing that with sustained efforts and collaboration, SADC can contribute to lasting peace in the DRC.

4.7 ASSESSING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SADC'S INTERVENTION IN THE DRC AND M23 CONFLICT FROM 2024 TO 2025

The research found out that the findings of this analysis reveal critical gaps in SADC's intervention effectiveness regarding the DRC and the M23 conflict from 2024 to 2025. Despite the regional bloc's established framework for mediating conflicts, substantial challenges hindered its ability to foster a lasting resolution. This discussion synthesizes key insights under three thematic areas reflective of the study's objectives: challenges faced by SADC in the DRC, adherence to SADC intervention protocols, and stakeholder roles affecting intervention outcomes.

4.7.1 Challenges Faced by SADC in the DRC

The study identified that SADC's intervention efforts faced significant obstacles due to the evolving nature of the conflict. Key challenges included the fragmented leadership within the region and the vested interests of member states, which complicated unified action. Informants highlighted the on-going violence and instability in eastern DRC, which undermined the peace process. One analyst noted: "The lack of a consistent strategy among SADC member states has allowed armed groups like the M23 to regain strength and influence." (Interviewee 1)

The research noted that this situation reflects the findings of Mavhinga (2024), which argue that without cohesive regional support, interventions often fall short. Additionally, the proliferation of armed militia groups created an unpredictable environment, making effective peace negotiations increasingly difficult. Minister emphasized,

"Every time negotiations start, a new armed group emerges, disrupting whatever progress might have been made."

These insights illustrate that the fragmented security landscape directly hampers SADC's operational effectiveness, undermining its efforts to stabilize the region.

4.7.2 Extent of Adherence to SADC Intervention Protocols

The analysis found that while SADC established protocols for conflict management, adherence to these guidelines varied significantly. Some officials acknowledged that SADC facilitated diplomatic engagement and dialogue among conflicting parties. A SADC representative remarked:

"We have been continually engaging with various stakeholders to promote dialogue."

However, many participants contended that such engagement lacked depth and urgency. They expressed concerns that dialogues often failed to translate into meaningful actions on the ground. One security expert articulated.

"Talks without pressure or enforceable agreements are merely symbolic and do little to address the reality of violence."

Moreover, the efforts to implement the SADC mediation framework encountered local resistance, as communities often viewed external intervention as biased or ineffective. This sentiment is supported by recent findings from Tshibaka (2025), evidencing widespread skepticism towards SADC's commitment to addressing the needs of affected populations.

4.7.3 Role of Stakeholders in SADC's Intervention

The examination revealed that various stakeholders play pivotal roles in influencing the outcomes of SADC's interventions. While SADC was responsible for coordinating regional actions, the role of the Congolese government and civil society organizations emerged as critical factors. One civil society leader noted:

“The government's lack of political will to engage meaningfully with local communities undermines SADC's efforts."

observation aligns with findings from Manda (2024), which state that without local ownership and participation, SADC's initiatives may remain ineffective. Additionally, regional actors, such as foreign governments and multinational corporations, were cited as having competing interests that complicated the peacebuilding process. An analyst commented:

"External actors have their agendas, which often conflict with the local needs for peace and stability."

Consequently, the intervention landscape reflects a complex interplay of varying stakeholder interests, requiring a balanced approach to harness local and regional resources effectively.

4.8 Chapter Summary

Chapter 4 presented and discussed the key findings of the study, highlighting complexities in SADC's intervention strategies, mixed outcomes in addressing the M23 conflict in the DRC, and varied regional dynamics influencing effectiveness. The chapter drew on qualitative evidence from interviews with regional stakeholders, policy documents, and media analysis to reveal challenges such as coordination gaps among regional actors, allegations of external support to rebel groups like M23, and humanitarian consequences of prolonged conflict in eastern DRC. While SADC's military and diplomatic efforts demonstrated regional commitment to stability, the study also underscored tensions between intervention approaches and sovereignty concerns, alongside the critical role of local Congolese actors and international partnerships in shaping conflict management pathways. Building on these insights, Chapter 5 provides a synthesis of the conclusions drawn from the study and offers targeted recommendations to enhance regional intervention efficacy, address drivers of conflict, and promote sustainable peace and security in the DRC and broader Great Lakes region.

CHAPTER FIVE

5.0 SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

5.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a comprehensive overview of the study's findings regarding the effectiveness of the Southern African Development Community's (SADC) intervention in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and the M23 conflict. The investigation aimed to evaluate the mechanisms employed by SADC and assess their alignment with the regional principles governing democratic elections and conflict management. By analyzing the strategies and outcomes of SADC's interventions, this chapter aims to draw substantive conclusions regarding the efficacy of these efforts and offer actionable recommendations for future initiatives. The study's focus on SADC's role in the DRC is particularly timely, given the complex geopolitical landscape and the on-going challenges faced by the region. The examination of SADC's interventions is not merely an academic exercise but a necessary inquiry into the effectiveness of regional bodies in addressing conflicts that have far-reaching implications for stability and development in Southern Africa. This chapter synthesizes the critical insights derived from Chapters 2 to 4, which detailed the historical context, reviewed relevant literature, and presented empirical findings from stakeholder interviews and analyses of official documents.

In addition to summarizing the key findings, the chapter will also present a series of recommendations aimed at enhancing SADC's intervention strategies. These recommendations are grounded in the evidence gathered throughout the study and are designed to address the systemic challenges that continue to undermine effective conflict resolution in the DRC. Recognizing that the situation in the DRC is multifaceted, the recommendations will take into account the diverse array of stakeholders involved and the need for a coordinated approach to peacebuilding.Furthermore, this chapter will outline potential areas for future research, emphasizing the need for ongoing analysis of SADC's interventions and the broader dynamics at play in the DRC. By identifying gaps in the current literature and proposing new avenues for investigation, the chapter seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of regional interventions and their implications for democratic governance and conflict management in Southern Africa.

5.2 SUMMARY

The research set out to critically assess the effectiveness of SADC’s interventions in the DRC, with a particular focus on the M23 conflict. The findings reveal a complex interplay between regional dynamics, local governance issues, and the broader implications of international relations in the region. The study highlights that, despite SADC's formal commitment to promoting peace and stability, significant challenges remain in the implementation of effective interventions.

Chapter One provided the necessary historical context, detailing the protracted nature of the DRC conflict and the evolution of SADC's involvement. The chapter outlined the research problem and objectives, emphasizing the importance of scrutinizing SADC’s interventions in light of its own principles and guidelines. The introduction set the stage for a nuanced exploration of the effectiveness of these interventions, particularly in terms of their alignment with regional norms.

In Chapter Two, a detailed literature review examined existing studies on regional interventions in conflict zones, particularly in the context of SADC’s role. The review highlighted various theoretical frameworks, including conflict resolution and regional cooperation, emphasizing the need for a critical

analysis of SADC's strategies. The chapter identified gaps in the literature, particularly concerning the lack of empirical studies evaluating the outcomes of SADC's interventions in real-time conflict situations.

Chapter Three outlined the qualitative methodology employed for the study, detailing the use of semi-structured interviews and document analysis to gather data from key stakeholders, including SADC officials, representatives from the DRC government, and civil society organizations. The thematic content analysis of the data revealed recurring patterns and insights regarding the effectiveness of SADC's interventions in addressing the root causes of the conflict.

Chapter Four presented the empirical findings, structured around three primary objectives: the assessment of SADC's intervention strategies, the evaluation of stakeholder engagement, and the analysis of the impact of external factors on SADC's effectiveness. The findings indicated that while SADC's interventions have made some progress, significant shortcomings remain, particularly in terms of strategic coherence and local engagement.

The chapter five concluded that SADC's interventions in the DRC have produced mixed results, highlighting both achievements and persistent challenges. The study underscored the importance of a more integrated approach to conflict management, one that prioritizes local participation and addresses the underlying socio-political dynamics that fuel conflict. In sum, the research contributes to the broader discourse on regional governance and conflict management in Southern Africa, advocating for a renewed commitment to effective intervention strategies.

5.3 CONCLUSIONS

The study sought to critically evaluate the effectiveness of SADC's interventions in the DRC, particularly concerning the M23 conflict. Several nuanced conclusions emerged from the qualitative data analysis, which included official reports, media insights, and stakeholder interviews. The findings indicate that while SADC's efforts have made some strides, significant challenges persist, undermining the overall effectiveness of its interventions.

5.3.1 KEY INTERVENTION CHALLENGES

Despite SADC's formal commitment to promoting stability and peace in the DRC, the interventions have revealed enduring challenges. The electoral process and governance structures within the DRC remain fraught with difficulties, including a lack of transparency and accountability from key institutions. These systemic issues hinder the effectiveness of SADC's interventions, as they often fail to address the root causes of conflict and instability. For instance, the persistence of governance deficits, corruption, and human rights abuses hampers the prospects for sustainable peace. The study identified that SADC's interventions often lack a coherent and strategic framework. This inconsistency undermines the credibility of the organization and its ability to influence positive change effectively. Furthermore, the focus on immediate conflict management often neglects the long-term development needs of the DRC, perpetuating cycles of instability. As highlighted in the findings, the absence of a comprehensive strategy that incorporates both conflict management and development goals limits the scope and impact of SADC's interventions.

Moreover, the engagement with local communities has been insufficient. The study revealed that SADC's interventions often operate at a high political level, failing to connect with grassroots movements and local stakeholders. This disconnects results in a lack of ownership and support for SADC initiatives among the affected populations, diminishing the potential for lasting change. Effective conflict resolution requires active participation and input from local communities, as they are the primary stakeholders affected by the outcomes of such interventions. Additionally, the research pointed to the challenges posed by external factors, including international dynamics and geopolitical interests. SADC's interventions in the DRC cannot be viewed in isolation from these broader influences, which often complicate the peace process and the organization's ability to act decisively. The interplay between regional politics and global interests highlights the need for a more nuanced understanding of the context in which SADC operates and the challenges it faces.

5.3.2 EXTENT OF ADHERENCE TO SADC GUIDELINES

One of the key conclusions of the study pertains to SADC's adherence to its own principles and guidelines in the context of the DRC. While SADC has established frameworks aimed at promoting peace and stability, the implementation of these guidelines has been inconsistent. The findings indicated that SADC's interventions often fall short of aligning with the principles it espouses, particularly regarding transparency, accountability, and local engagement. The lack of perceived independence and credibility among key institutions within the DRC, such as the government and electoral bodies, poses a significant challenge to SADC's efforts. The study highlighted that the absence of transparent processes and accountability mechanisms undermines the legitimacy of SADC's interventions. Without the trust and cooperation of local stakeholders, SADC's ability to influence positive change is severely compromised.

Moreover, the research underscored that the political imbalances within the DRC, characterized by entrenched power dynamics and limited civic space, further complicate SADC's adherence to its guidelines. These imbalances create an environment where political actors may prioritize their interests over the collective goals of peace and stability. As a result, SADC's interventions often lack the necessary leverage to effect meaningful change, as the regional body navigates a complex and often hostile political landscape. The findings also revealed that SADC's responses to conflict situations can be reactive rather than proactive. This approach often leads to missed opportunities for early intervention and prevents the organization from addressing underlying issues before they escalate into larger conflicts. A more proactive stance, grounded in its principles and guidelines, would enhance SADC's capacity to prevent conflicts and foster sustainable peace in the DRC.In summary, while SADC has established a framework for promoting peace and stability, the study concluded that significant gaps exist in its adherence to these guidelines. A more consistent and strategic approach, grounded in transparency, accountability, and local engagement, is essential for SADC to effectively navigate the complexities of the DRC conflict.

5.3.3 ROLE OF STAKEHOLDERS

The role of various stakeholders in the DRC conflict has been critical to understanding the effectiveness of SADC's interventions. The study found that civil society organizations (CSOs), local

communities, and international actors play essential roles in shaping the conflict landscape and influencing the outcomes of interventions. However, their engagement has often been limited, undermining the potential for collaborative efforts toward peacebuilding.Civil society organizations are vital in promoting electoral transparency, educating voters, and holding authorities accountable. However, the research highlighted that a restrictive legal environment hampers their activities, stifling their ability to monitor electoral processes and report irregularities. The amendments to laws governing civil society organizations have created a chilling effect, limiting their capacity to operate freely and effectively.

This situation diminishes the watchdog role that civil society plays in democratic processes, ultimately undermining accountability and informed citizen participation. The study also emphasized the importance of local communities in the peace process. Engaging these communities in dialogue and decision-making is crucial for building trust and fostering ownership of peace initiatives. However, SADC's interventions have often been characterized by top-down approaches that fail to incorporate the voices and perspectives of local populations. This disconnect not only limits the effectiveness of interventions but also perpetuates feelings of alienation and disenfranchisement among affected communities. Additionally, the role of international actors in the DRC conflict cannot be overlooked. The study found that external influences, including geopolitical interests and international diplomacy, often shape the dynamics of the conflict and SADC's interventions. While these actors can contribute valuable resources and expertise, their involvement can also complicate the peace process and divert attention from local priorities. A more coordinated approach that aligns the efforts of SADC with those of international actors would enhance the overall effectiveness of interventions.

In conclusion, the role of stakeholders in the DRC conflict is multifaceted and complex. The study underscores the need for enhanced engagement with civil society, local communities, and international actors to foster more effective and inclusive peacebuilding efforts. By prioritizing collaboration and partnership, SADC can strengthen the impact of its interventions and contribute to a more sustainable management of the conflict.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

The study's findings highlight several critical areas for improvement in SADC's interventions in the DRC. The following recommendations are designed to enhance the effectiveness of SADC's strategies and ensure a more comprehensive approach to conflict management.

5.4.1 Strengthening Strategic Coherence

To improve the effectiveness of its interventions, SADC must develop a clear and coherent strategy that aligns with its principles and guidelines. This strategy should not only address immediate conflict resolution needs but also incorporate long-term development goals. By adopting a holistic approach, SADC can ensure that its interventions are contextually relevant and responsive to the complexities of the DRC conflict. A key component of this strategy should be the establishment of mechanisms for regular assessment and monitoring of SADC's interventions. By evaluating the impact of its actions and the adherence to its guidelines, SADC can identify areas for improvement and adapt its strategies accordingly. These assessments should involve input from diverse stakeholders, including local communities and civil society organizations, to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities present in the DRC.

Moreover, SADC should prioritize the establishment of robust accountability mechanisms that promote transparency and build trust among stakeholders. This could involve the creation of independent oversight bodies that monitor the implementation of SADC's interventions and ensure adherence to its principles. By fostering a culture of accountability, SADC can enhance its credibility and effectiveness in addressing the DRC conflict.

5.4.2 Enhancing Local Engagement

Increasing engagement with local communities is crucial for the success of SADC's interventions. The study recommends that SADC actively involve local stakeholders in the planning and implementation of its initiatives. This engagement can take various forms, including community consultations, participatory decision-making processes, and collaborative partnerships with civil society organizations. By incorporating the perspectives and needs of local populations, SADC can ensure that its interventions

are relevant and effective. Local communities have valuable insights into the dynamics of the conflict and can contribute to the development of solutions that are contextually appropriate. Moreover, fostering a sense of ownership among local stakeholders can enhance the sustainability of peace initiatives and promote long-term stability.

SADC should also prioritize the capacity building of local civil society organizations to empower them to play a more active role in the peace process. By providing training, resources, and support, SADC can strengthen the capacity of these organizations to monitor electoral processes, advocate for accountability, and engage communities in dialogue. This approach not only enhances the effectiveness of SADC's interventions but also contributes to the development of a vibrant civil society that can hold authorities accountable.

5.4.3 Improving Accountability Mechanisms

To enhance the effectiveness of its interventions, SADC must establish robust accountability mechanisms that monitor progress and ensure adherence to its guidelines. Regular assessments should be conducted to evaluate the impact of interventions, and these assessments should involve input from diverse stakeholders, including local communities and civil society organizations.SADC should also adopt enforcement mechanisms for member states that consistently flout democratic standards. This could involve the establishment of a regional electoral court with the authority to adjudicate election-related disputes transparently and expeditiously. By providing a clear framework for accountability, SADC can ensure that its interventions are impactful and that member states are held responsible for their actions. Furthermore, SADC should prioritize the publication of detailed follow-up reports and reform timelines for its interventions. These reports should highlight progress, challenges, and recommendations for future action, providing stakeholders with a transparent understanding of SADC's efforts in the DRC. By fostering a culture of accountability and transparency, SADC can enhance its credibility and effectiveness in addressing the DRC conflict.

5.4.4 Promoting Civic Education and Voter Awareness

Intensifying civic education and voter awareness campaigns is essential for fostering informed participation in the electoral process. The study recommends that SADC support initiatives aimed at educating citizens about their rights, the electoral process, and the importance of democratic participation. These campaigns should target underrepresented groups, including young voters, women, and rural communities, to ensure that all voices are heard. Collaborating with local civil society organizations, community leaders, and educational institutions can enhance the reach and impact of civic education initiatives. By engaging these stakeholders, SADC can promote a democratic political culture rooted in transparency and accountability. This collaboration can also empower communities to advocate for their rights and hold authorities accountable for their actions. Additionally, SADC should prioritize the development of resources and materials that are accessible and culturally relevant. These materials should be designed to resonate with diverse audiences and promote understanding of complex electoral processes. By investing in effective civic education, SADC can foster a more informed electorate and contribute to the development of a vibrant democracy in the DRC.

5.5 SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The study highlights several areas for future research that could contribute to a deeper understanding of SADC's interventions and their implications for conflict resolution in the DRC. Future studies should conduct comparative analyses of electoral integrity in other SADC member states to identify regional best practices. By examining the successes and challenges faced by other countries, researchers can gain valuable insights into effective strategies for promoting democratic governance and stability. Longitudinal studies could assess whether reforms implemented after the 2023 elections improve future electoral cycles in the DRC. These studies would provide a comprehensive understanding of the long-term impacts of SADC's interventions and the effectiveness of its strategies in addressing the root causes of conflict. By tracking changes over time, researchers can identify trends and patterns that inform future policy decisions. Quantitative surveys assessing citizen perceptions of electoral fairness and trust in institutions could complement the qualitative data gathered in this study. Such surveys would provide

broader generalizability and help to quantify the impact of SADC's interventions on public opinion. Understanding how citizens perceive the electoral process and the role of SADC can inform future strategies for engagement and intervention.

Furthermore, research should also explore the role of external actors, including international organizations and foreign governments, in influencing SADC's interventions in the DRC. Understanding these dynamics can provide valuable context for evaluating the effectiveness of SADC's strategies and the challenges posed by external influences.

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Annexures Key-Informant Interview guide

Interview Guide: Assessing the Effectiveness of SADC's Intervention in the DRC and M23 Conflict

This interview guide aims to explore the complexities surrounding the M23 conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and analyze the effectiveness of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) interventions. The guide is structured around key research questions that delve into the root causes of the conflict, the roles of local actors in conflict resolution, the evaluation of SADC's interventions, and the identification of suitable conflict resolution models for future engagements.

Research Questions

1. What causes the M23 conflict in the DRC?

1. Can you describe the historical context of the M23 conflict?
2. What are the key political, social, and economic factors contributing to the conflict?
3. How do issues such as governance, resources, and ethnic tensions play a role in the conflict?
4. In your opinion, how have external influences impacted the M23 conflict?

2.What role do local actors play in DRC conflict management?

- Who are the primary local actors involved in conflict management in the DRC?
- How do local communities perceive these actors?

- Can you provide examples of successful conflict management initiatives led by local actors?
- What challenges do local actors face in their efforts to resolve conflicts?

3. How effective is SADC's intervention in the DRC?

1. How would you assess SADC's overall approach to the DRC conflict?
2. What specific interventions has SADC implemented, and how effective have they been?
3. How do you measure the success of SADC's interventions?
4. Have there been any unintended consequences of SADC's involvement in the DRC?

4. What conflict management model suits SADC's DRC interventions?

1. Based on your experience, which conflict management models have shown promise in the DRC?
2. How can SADC tailor its interventions to fit the unique context of the DRC?
3. What lessons can be learned from other regions or conflicts that may inform SADC's approach?
4. In your opinion, what role should international organizations play alongside SADC in conflict management efforts?

Annexures Questionnaire:

Assessing the Effectiveness of SADC's Intervention in the DRC and M23 Conflict

Introduction

This questionnaire is designed to gather insights on the M23 conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and evaluate the role of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) in addressing this complex issue. Your responses will provide valuable information regarding the causes of the conflict, the involvement of local actors in resolution efforts, the effectiveness of SADC's interventions, and the identification of suitable conflict resolution models. Thank you for your participation.

Questions

1. What causes the M23 conflict in the DRC?

1. Can you identify and elaborate on the key historical events that have contributed to the emergence of the M23 conflict?
2. What political factors do you believe have fueled the conflict?
3. How do economic conditions, such as resource distribution, play a role in the M23 conflict?
4. In your view, what social dynamics (e.g., ethnic tensions, community relations) are significant contributors to the conflict?
5. Are there external influences (from foreign governments or organizations) that you think have exacerbated the situation? If so, please explain.

2. What role do local actors play in DRC conflict management?

- Who do you consider to be the primary local actors in conflict management within the DRC?
- How effective are these local actors in addressing the conflict? Can you provide specific examples?
- What challenges do local actors face in their efforts to mediate or resolve conflicts?
- How do local communities perceive the efforts of these actors? Are they generally supportive, or is there skepticism?
- In your opinion, how can the role of local actors be strengthened in future conflict management efforts?

3. How effective is SADC's intervention in the DRC?

1. H ow would you evaluate SADC's overall strategy in addressing the M23 conflict?
2. What specific interventions has SADC implemented in the DRC, and how do you assess their effectiveness?
3. Can you provide examples of successful SADC initiatives? What made them successful?
4. Have you observed any negative outcomes or criticisms related to SADC's interventions?

5. What metrics or criteria do you believe should be used to measure the success of SADC's involvement?

4.What conflict management model suits SADC's DRC interventions?

5. In your experience, which conflict management models have been most effective in similar contexts? Please explain.

6. How can SADC adapt its strategies to better fit the unique context of the DRC?

7. What lessons from other regions or conflicts should SADC consider in its approach?

8. In your opinion, what role should international organizations play alongside SADC in conflict management efforts in the DRC?

9. What recommendations would you offer to enhance the effectiveness of SADC's interventions in future conflicts?