

**BINDURA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE EDUCATION
FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES**



Actors and their Interests In Perpetuating Armed Conflict: The Case of Democratic Republic of Congo, 2010-2024.

BY

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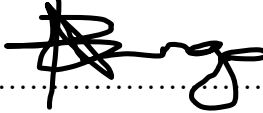
Abstract

The study investigates the factors perpetuating armed conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), focusing on four objectives: identifying key actors, exploring socio-economic factors, assessing resource exploitation, and evaluating governance effectiveness. Using a mixed-methods approach, quantitative data was collected through a Google Form questionnaire targeting 34 respondents, and qualitative insights were gathered via semi-structured interviews with 15 key informants, including researchers, government officials, and diplomats. The findings reveal that local and international actors play key roles in sustaining conflict, with strong correlations ($r > 0.75$) identified between actor dynamics and conflict perpetuation. Regression analysis showed socio-economic disparities and historical grievances significantly predict armed group recruitment and community divisions ($p < 0.05$). Resource exploitation emerged as a critical driver of violence, supported by qualitative evidence of both local and foreign actors benefiting from resource extraction. Weak governance and corruption were also found to exacerbate instability by hindering conflict resolution efforts. The study integrating quantitative methods, correlation and regression, with qualitative thematic analysis, the study highlights the interconnected nature of economic, political, and social factors in fueling conflict. Practical recommendations for governance reforms, equitable resource management, and inclusive socio-economic policies were provided. The findings emphasize the need for international cooperation and locally driven peacebuilding to address the root causes of conflict in the DRC. Further research is suggested on women's roles in peacebuilding, regional dynamics, and the long-term socio-economic impacts of conflict.


Declaration form

I, Brenda Mbungu, B232397 B hereby declare that this dissertation is my own solemnly work and that it has not been copied or lifted from any other sources without acknowledgement.

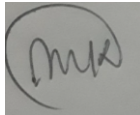
Brenda Mbungu B232397 B

Signed 

Supervisor: Dr Chipaike


Signed

Chairperson


Signature.....

Dedication

I dedicate my dissertation work to my family and friends. A special feeling of gratitude to my late parents Tazvivinga Isheunesu Mbungo and Olipha Dube whose words of encouragement and push for tenacity still ring in my ears. I also dedicate this dissertation to my son Dylan Maura, you were my source of inspiration and motivation, my nieces Heather Mbungo, Modesta Shayamano and my nephew Solomon Shayamano who have supported me throughout the process. This dissertation is a symbol of what we have accomplished as a family.

A special mention to my best friends Ellaine Mokora, Steady Munyoro and Cynthia Mundesva thank you for constantly serving as a support system. Oh! and not forgetting my counterparts Chrispen Machiona, Blessed Moyo and Evans Toronga, the discussions we had were fruitful, I certainly wouldn't have made it without you.

I can not go without dedicating this to a very close family friend, Simon Dzvete, your guidance and mentorship has been an invaluable asset to my academic and professional growth, I wouldn't have made it this far without your unwavering support and encouragement, I will forever be indebted.

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Thank you all for your invaluable contributions to this dissertation.

List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

AU - African Union

DRC - Democratic Republic of the Congo

GDP - Gross Domestic Product

HRW - Human Rights Watch

IMF - International Monetary Fund

MNC - Multinational Corporation

NGO - Non-Governmental Organization

SPSS - Statistical Package for the Social Sciences

UN - United Nations

VIF - Variance Inflation Factor

Contents

CHAPTER ONE	1
1.0 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Background to the study.....	1
1.2 Purpose of the study	4
1.3 Statement of the problem	4
1.4 Research Objectives	5
1.5 Research Questions	5
1.6 Assumptions of the study	6
1.7 Significance of the study.....	7
1.8 Delimitations of the study.....	8
1.9 Limitations of the study.....	10
1.10 Definition of key words.....	10
1.11 Dissertation Outline.....	14
CHAPTER TWO	15
2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	16
2.1 Introduction.....	16
2.2 Theoretical framework	16
2.2.1 Postcolonial Theory	16
2.2.2 Governance Theory	17
2.2.3 Justification of the Theoretical Framework and Study Variables	18
2.3 Conceptual Framework	19
2.3.1 Variables and Their Relationships	19
2.3.2 Independent Variable: Local and International Actors.....	21
2.3.3 Dependent Variable: Persistence of Armed Conflict.....	22
2.3.4 Mediating Variable: Historical Grievances and Socio-Economic Conditions	23
2.3.5 Moderating Variables	24
2.3.6 Control Variables	26
2.4 Empirical Literature Review	28
2.4.1 Historical Legacies and Their Influence on Modern Conflict	28
2.4.2 Socio-Economic Disparities and Armed Conflict	29
2.4.3 Resource Management and Conflict Dynamics	29

2.4.4 Governance Structures and Their Impact on Stability	30
2.4.5 Humanitarian Impacts of Armed Conflict	30
2.4.6 Gender-Based Violence in Conflict Settings	31
2.4.7 Regional Interventions and Geopolitical Influences	32
2.4.8 Local Actors and Community Resilience	32
2.4.9 Comparative Perspectives on Conflict Dynamics	33
2.5 Historical Context and Its Implications	33
2.5.1 Socio-Economic Factors and Recruitment Dynamics	34
2.5.2 Resource Exploitation and Environmental Impacts	34
2.5.3 Governance Structures and Local Agency	35
2.6 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 Methodology.....	37
3.4 Research Design.....	38
3.5 Population and Sample.....	39
3.6 Sampling Methods.....	40
3.6.1 Purposive Sampling	40
3.6.2 Snowball Sampling	41
3.7 Data Collection Methods.....	41
3.7.1 Key informant interviews	41
3.7.2 Primary Data	42
3.7.3 Secondary Data	43
3.8 Validity and Reliability	44
3.8.1 Reliability of Quantitative data.....	44
3.8.2 Reliability of Qualitative data.....	45
3.9 Data presentation and Analysis	46
3.10 Pilot testing/pre testing the questionnaire	47
3.10.1 Questionnaire advantages: Efficient Remote Data Collection with Structured Precision	47

3.10.2 Disadvantages of Questionnaires.....	48
3.10.3 Semi-Structured Interviews	49
3.10.4 Disadvantages of Semi-Structured Interviews.....	50
3.10.5 Triangulation for Robust Findings.....	50
3.10.6 Remote Considerations and Ethical Sensitivity	51
3.11 Chapter Summary	52
CHAPTER FOUR.....	53
4.0 DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS	53
4.1 Introduction.....	53
4.2 Response Rate	53
4.3 Demographic findings.....	54
4.3.1 Gender- of respondents.....	54
4.3.2 Age Distribution of Respondents.....	55
4.3.3 Region of work for study Respondents	56
4.3.4 Occupation of Respondents and Current position	57
4.4 Research Findings	58
4.4.1 Objective 1: Identify and Analyses Key Actors	58
4.4.2 Objective 2: Investigate Historical and Socio-Economic Factors	60
4.4.3 Objective 3: Assess the Role of Resource Exploitation in Perpetuating Conflict	62
4.4.4 Objective 4: Evaluate Governance Effectiveness in Addressing Conflict	64
4.5 Correlation Analysis.....	65
4.5.1 Interpretation of the Correlation Results	66
4.5.2 Regression Analysis.....	67
4.5.3 Discussion of Findings Based on Quantitative analysis	69
4.6 Interview Findings.....	71
4.6.1 Theme 1: Local Actors' Role in Perpetuating Conflict.....	71
4.6.2 Theme 2: Impact of International Actors.....	73
4.6.3 Theme 3: Socio-Economic Drivers of Conflict	74
4.6.4 Theme 4: Resource Exploitation and Conflict.....	75
4.7 Overall discussion of findings.....	77
4.8. Chapter Summary:.....	79
CHAPTER FIVE	80

5.0 SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH.....	80
5.1 Introduction	80
5.2 Summary	80
5.3 Conclusion.....	83
5.4 Recommendations	84
5.5 Areas for Further Research	86
LIST OF REFERENCES	88
Annexures	96

CHAPTER ONE

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the study

The study on the actors and their interests in perpetuating armed conflict in Africa, particularly within the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) from 2010 to 2024, is anchored in a multifaceted examination of historical, political, and socio-economic factors that have significantly influenced the region's conflict dynamics. Understanding these dynamics is essential, as armed conflict in Africa—especially in the DRC—stems from deep-rooted historical contexts shaped by colonial legacies, resource exploitation, and geopolitical interests.

The historical backdrop of the DRC is marked by its colonial past under Belgian rule, which has left enduring impacts on its political landscape. According to Nzongola-Ntalaja (2002), the legacy of colonialism created a state structure that prioritized extraction over governance, leading to systemic corruption and weak institutions. This historical context is crucial for understanding how power dynamics have evolved and contributed to ongoing conflicts. The roots of the DRC conflict can be traced back to colonial rule under King Leopold II of Belgium in the late 19th century, a period characterized by extreme exploitation and violence against the Congolese people. This exploitation laid the groundwork for grievances that would later fuel conflicts post-independence, as the DRC gained independence in 1960 but quickly descended into chaos with political instability and power struggles, Thomas (2007).

The DRC is endowed with vast natural resources, including minerals like coltan, gold, and diamonds. The exploitation of these resources has been a significant driver of conflict. As noted

by Autesserre (2010), various local and international actors have vested interests in controlling these resources, often leading to violent confrontations. Control over resource-rich areas has fuelled conflict among different groups seeking economic gain, and the illegal extraction and trade of minerals have financed armed groups while perpetuating cycles of violence. The competition for resource control not only fuels existing tensions but also attracts external interventions that complicate peace efforts.

Geopolitical factors further exacerbate the situation in the DRC. The involvement of neighbouring countries and global powers seeking strategic advantages has intensified conflicts. Turner (2007) argues that regional dynamics play a pivotal role in sustaining violence as external actors support different factions for their geopolitical gains. This interplay between local grievances and international interests creates a complex web that perpetuates instability. For instance, the presence of foreign actors has complicated the situation, as seen in other African conflicts where countries like the UAE, Turkey, and Russia have increasingly intervened, reflecting a shift in the actor landscape that complicates efforts at conflict resolution Foster, R. (2023).

The humanitarian impact of armed conflict in the DRC has been catastrophic. Since the late 1990s, millions have lost their lives due to violence, malnutrition, and disease exacerbated by displacement caused by ongoing conflicts (International Rescue Committee, 2015). The dire humanitarian consequences underscore the urgent need for comprehensive analysis to inform policy responses aimed at mitigating violence AAU IHL Clinic. (2023). Kalyvas (2015) argue that ineffective governance creates a power vacuum that allows armed groups to flourish, contributing to widespread disillusionment among citizens and fueling support for these groups.

At the national level, the DRC's weak governance structures and pervasive corruption significantly exacerbate the ongoing conflict. Mamdani (2016) highlights how corruption undermines state legitimacy, making it difficult for governments to engage meaningfully with their populations or address grievances that may lead to violence. The political landscape in the DRC is marked by intense power struggles among various factions, often prioritizing their interests over national stability. According to Turner (2018), these factions create a fragmented political environment where coalitions are unstable and alliances shift frequently, complicating efforts at peacebuilding and reconciliation.

The lack of effective governance has led to a proliferation of armed groups within the DRC, each operating with distinct interests and agendas, further complicating the conflict landscape. Vlassenroot & Raeymaekers (2004) note that many armed groups emerge from local grievances related to land disputes or ethnic tensions. The resurgence of groups like M23 in eastern Congo exemplifies this trend; as highlighted by Baviskar et al. (2021), these groups exploit local discontent while also receiving external support from neighbouring countries or other actors with vested interests.

The ongoing political transitions in the DRC have created an environment where security remains fragile. The challenges faced in restoring peace are compounded by both internal divisions and external pressures. As noted by Lemarchand (2019), international actors often have conflicting interests in the region, undermining cohesive peace initiatives. In addition to Strategic Theory, Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT) provides a nuanced understanding of the security dynamics within the DRC by emphasizing the significance of regional interdependencies. According to Buzan and Waever (2003), RSCT suggests that security threats are often localized,

meaning that the safety of one actor is intricately linked to the actions of others within the region. This framework is particularly relevant in analysing how conflicts in the DRC are not isolated incidents but rather part of a larger tapestry of regional interactions.

Lastly, the multifaceted examination of the DRC's armed conflicts reveals a complex interplay of historical legacies, resource exploitation, weak governance, and geopolitical interests African Union. (2023). Understanding these dynamics is essential for developing effective strategies to address the ongoing violence and humanitarian crises in the region Human Rights Watch. (2024). As the study unfolds, it will contribute to a deeper understanding of the actors involved and the interests that perpetuate conflict, ultimately informing policy responses aimed at fostering peace and stability in the DRC and beyond.

1.2 Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study is to investigate the actors and their interests in perpetuating armed conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) from 2010 to 2024, with a focus on understanding the historical, political, and socio-economic factors that contribute to the ongoing violence and instability in the region.

1.3 Statement of the problem

The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) is currently facing one of the most severe humanitarian crises globally, with over 27 million people living in extreme poverty and food insecurity, despite its wealth in natural resources such as coltan, gold, and diamonds (UNHCR, 2022, p. 5). As of December 2022, approximately 5.5 million individuals were internally displaced, and nearly 1.1 million sought asylums in neighbouring countries due to ongoing violence and

instability (UNHCR, 2022, p. 5; International Rescue Committee, 2015, p. 3). The protracted conflict, fuelled by historical grievances from colonial exploitation and exacerbated by weak governance and rampant corruption, has created an environment where armed groups thrive, often supported by external actors with vested interests (Kalyvas, 2015). This complex interplay of local and international dynamics not only perpetuates violence but also complicates peace efforts, highlighting a critical need for comprehensive analysis to understand the motivations of various actors involved in the DRC's conflicts. The humanitarian situation is dire, with armed groups exacerbating violence and causing widespread displacement, leading to an estimated 26.4 million people facing food insecurity across the country (UNHCR, 2022, p. 5; IOM, 2023).

1.4 Research Objectives

1. To analyse key actors involved in the conflict.
2. To investigate historical and socio-economic factors sustaining the conflict.
3. To assess the role of resource exploitation in perpetuating violence.
4. To evaluate the effectiveness of governance in addressing the conflict.

1.5 Research Questions

1. What extent do actors influence the perpetuation of armed conflict in the DRC?
2. How do historical legacies and socio-economic factors interact to sustain the emergence and persistence of armed groups in the DRC?
3. In what way does the competition for natural resources drive conflict among different factions within the DRC?
4. How do governance issues exacerbate conflict and hinder resolution efforts in the DRC?

1.6 Assumptions of the study

1.6.1 Economic Motivations: The study assumed that local and international actors involved in the armed conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) were primarily driven by economic motivations, particularly related to the control and exploitation of the country's abundant natural resources.

1.6.2 Weak Governance and Corruption: It was assumed that weak governance structures and pervasive corruption in the DRC significantly contributed to the persistence of armed conflict, creating an environment where armed groups could flourish without effective state oversight.

1.6.3 Historical Grievances: The study assumed that historical grievances stemming from colonial exploitation and subsequent political instability continued to influence current conflicts, perpetuating cycles of violence and unrest among various factions within the DRC.

1.6.4 Interplay of Local and International Factors: It was assumed that a complex interplay of local, national, and international factors sustained violence, necessitating a nuanced understanding of these dynamics for effective conflict resolution.

1.6.5 Impact on Civilian Populations: The research assumed that armed conflict had profound impacts on civilian populations, shaping their experiences and influencing their responses to ongoing violence.

1.7 Significance of the study

The study held significance for various stakeholders, including policymakers, researchers, and local communities, by providing insights into the complexities of conflict dynamics in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) from 2010 to 2024.

1.7.1 Policy-makers

The study findings had important implications for governments and international organisations working on conflict resolution and peacebuilding in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in similar situations. Understanding the interests of diverse parties, such as local militias, government forces, and foreign businesses, allowed policymakers to devise more effective interventions that addressed the underlying causes of conflict rather than simply treating its symptoms. This research produced actionable information that could inform efforts targeted at fostering peace and security in the region.

1.7.2 Local Communities (Community Leaders, Women, Youth)

The research had the potential to empower local communities affected by conflict by highlighting their experiences and perspectives. By documenting the impact of armed conflict on civilian populations and the role of local actors in conflict dynamics, the study aimed to amplify the voices of those most affected by violence. Engaging local communities in the research process fostered a sense of ownership and agency, contributing to grassroots efforts for peace and reconciliation.

1.7.3 Civil Society Organizations (CIVICUS Global Alliance)

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and civil society organisations working in conflict-affected areas profited from the study's findings. Understanding the motivations and interests of various actors allows these organisations to modify their activities to better meet the needs of affected communities. For example, if resource exploitation is identified as a major cause of conflict, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) can focus on promoting alternative lifestyles and sustainable development efforts that minimise reliance on conflict resources.

1.7.4 Researcher

This study added to the existing body of knowledge on peace and conflict studies, particularly in the African setting. It fills gaps in the research by analysing the motivations and objectives of various actors involved in the DRC's conflicts. There is a need for a more nuanced understanding of conflict dynamics in Africa, as basic explanations frequently fail to reflect the intricacies involved. The study sought to give a comprehensive analysis that may serve as the basis for future research in the topic.

1.8 Delimitations of the study

The scope of this study is characterized by its concentration on the Democratic Republic of the Congo, with data gathering aimed at those knowledgeable with the region's conflict dynamics. The study draws on the viewpoints of a wide range of participants, including academic researchers, local actors, diplomats, government officials, and DRC Embassy staff in Zimbabwe. A Google Form questionnaire was distributed to a carefully selected sample group, and semi-structured interviews with academic specialists, NGO representatives, and diplomats were

conducted to collect qualitative data. This mixed-methods approach includes a variety of perspectives, allowing for a more comprehensive understanding of the conflict's drivers.

The geographical reach includes individuals mostly from Africa, with a focus on those who are actively involved in the DRC. The study's thematic scope includes four objectives: examining major actors, researching socioeconomic issues, measuring resource exploitation, and evaluating governance performance. By combining quantitative and qualitative data, the study gives a thorough investigation of these topics, adding to a more nuanced understanding of the conflict.

The study's scope is characterized by its concentration on the Democratic Republic of the Congo, with data gathering aimed at those knowledgeable with the region's conflict dynamics. The study draws on the perspectives of a wide range of respondents, including academic researchers, local actors, diplomats and government officials. Quantitative data was gathered through a Google Form questionnaire distributed to a carefully selected sample group, while qualitative data was obtained through semi-structured interviews. This mixed-methods approach ensures the inclusion of varied perspectives, enabling a holistic understanding of the conflict's drivers.

Participants from Africa make up the majority of the geographical coverage, with an emphasis on those who are actively involved in the DRC. Four objectives are addressed by the study's thematic scope: examining socioeconomic issues, evaluating government performance, assessing resource utilization, and analyzing key actors. The research offers a thorough analysis of these topics by combining quantitative and qualitative data, which helps to create a more complex view of the conflict.

1.9 Limitations of the study

Though the study takes a rigorous mixed-methods approach, some limitations were discovered. The biggest drawback was the use of a Google Form questionnaire for quantitative data collection, which limited replies to those with internet access and technological knowledge. This may have removed possible participants from the DRC's rural or less technologically developed areas, potentially biasing respondents to be urban and digitally connected.

Furthermore, the qualitative data collection was based on semi-structured interviews done remotely, which, while effective, may have limited deeper engagement due to time and technological constraints. Some respondents' availability and willingness to discuss controversial themes, particularly those concerning governance and resource extraction, provided additional challenges. Despite these constraints, the combination of quantitative and qualitative methodologies assured the findings' robustness and reliability.

1.10 Definition of key words

1.10.1-Armed Conflict

Armed conflict is defined by the United Nations as a conflict that involves the use of armed force between governmental authorities and organized armed groups or between such groups within a state. This definition encompasses both international and non-international conflicts, emphasizing the scale and organization of violence involved. (United Nations, 2022).

1.10.2 Actors

Actors refer to individuals or groups that play a role in conflict dynamics, including state actors (governments), non-state actors (militias, NGOs), and international organizations. Their motivations and interests significantly influence conflict outcomes and resolutions (African Union, 2021).

1.10.3 Economic Motivations

Economic motivations pertain to the financial incentives that drive individuals or groups to engage in or sustain conflict, often linked to the control and exploitation of valuable resources such as minerals or land. These motivations are critical for understanding the underlying causes of many conflicts. (World Bank, 2023).

1.10.4 Resource Exploitation

Resource exploitation involves the extraction and use of natural resources without regard for environmental sustainability or social consequences, which can exacerbate conflicts over control and access to these resources. This term highlights how competition for resources can lead to violence and instability (United Nations Environment Programme, 2020).

1.10.5 Governance Structures

Governance structures are frameworks through which authority and decision-making processes are organized within a state or community. Effective governance is essential for managing conflicts and ensuring stability, influencing how power is exercised and how conflicts are addressed (United Nations Development Programme, 2022).

1.10.6 Corruption

Corruption is defined as the abuse of entrusted power for private gain, manifesting in practices such as bribery, embezzlement, or favouritism. Corruption undermines governance and can contribute to ongoing conflicts by eroding public trust and institutional integrity (Transparency International, 2021).

1.10.7 Historical Grievances

Historical grievances are long-standing resentments stemming from past injustices or conflicts that continue to affect relationships between different groups within a society, often fueling contemporary tensions and violence. Understanding these grievances is crucial for addressing root causes of conflict (International Crisis Group, 2023).

1.10.8 Civilian Populations

Civilian populations refer to non-combatants who are affected by armed conflict but do not participate directly in hostilities; their experiences and needs are critical for understanding the broader impact of conflict on society and for humanitarian responses (International Committee of the Red Cross, 2022).

1.10.9 Peacebuilding

Peacebuilding encompasses efforts aimed at preventing the recurrence of violence by addressing root causes of conflict through dialogue, reconciliation, and development initiatives that promote social cohesion and stability within affected communities (United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office, 2020).

1.10.10 Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)

NGOs are independent organizations that operate without government control to address social issues, provide humanitarian aid, and promote development; they often play a crucial role in conflict-affected areas by supporting local communities and advocating for peace initiatives. (World Health Organization, 2023).

1.10.11 Humanitarian Aid

Humanitarian aid refers to assistance provided to alleviate human suffering during crises such as armed conflicts or natural disasters; it includes food aid, medical care, shelter, and protection for affected populations to ensure their survival and dignity during emergencies. (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2022).

1.10.12 Conflict Resolution

Conflict resolution involves methods aimed at resolving disputes peacefully through negotiation, mediation, or other means that address underlying issues contributing to the conflict; it emphasizes collaborative approaches to finding solutions acceptable to all parties involved (United Nations Department of Political Affairs, 2023).

1.10.13 International Organizations

International organizations are entities formed by multiple countries that work together on common goals such as peacekeeping, humanitarian assistance, and development; examples include the United Nations and regional bodies like the African Union that facilitate cooperation among member states on global issues (African Union, 2022).

1.10.14 Social Cohesion

Social cohesion refers to the bonds that unite members of a community or society; strong social cohesion can contribute to stability and resilience against conflict by fostering trust and cooperation among diverse groups within a population (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2023).

1.10 .15 Grassroots Efforts

Grassroots efforts involve local initiatives aimed at addressing community needs or advocating for change from the bottom up; these efforts are essential for sustainable peacebuilding as they empower local voices in conflict resolution processes through community engagement and participation in decision-making activities (World Bank, 2022).

1.11 Dissertation Outline

Chapter 1, the researcher will provide an overview of the study's framework, detailing the background, statement of the problem, research objectives, delimitations, definition of key terms, and significance of the research. It will outline the specific objectives and research questions that guided the investigation into the actors and their interests in perpetuating armed conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). In Chapter 2, the research will review literature, encompassing the conceptual framework, theoretical frameworks, and the research gap, highlight key theories for the study variables in investigating the actors and their interests in perpetuating armed conflict in Africa, particularly within the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) from 2010 to 2024. In Chapter 3, the research will look into research design, approach and methodology. In this chapter, that's where there will be discussion of data collecting methods, data sampling methods as well as data analysis techniques. In Chapter 4, there will be discussion of findings and

lastly in chapter 5 the researcher will give summary, conclusion and recommendations to the problem that was introduced in the first chapter.

CHAPTER TWO

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

The chapter outlines the conceptual, theoretical, and empirical frameworks guiding the study of actors and their interests in perpetuating armed conflict in the DRC from 2010 to 2024. It emphasizes the relationships between key variables, such as local grievances and resource exploitation, to elucidate conflict dynamics. The theoretical framework incorporates various theories, including postcolonialism and resource curse theory, to explain the motivations of different actors involved in the conflict. Additionally, the chapter reviews empirical studies that highlight historical contexts and socio-economic factors contributing to ongoing violence.

2.2 Theoretical framework

The study employed three key theories to create a robust theoretical framework that guided the research on armed conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). These theories facilitated an analysis of the historical, socio-economic, and political factors contributing to ongoing violence. By integrating these perspectives, the researcher provided a comprehensive understanding of how various actors and their interests perpetuate conflict dynamics within the DRC.

2.2.1 Postcolonial Theory

Postcolonial theory served as a foundational lens through which to examine the historical grievances that continued to shape contemporary conflicts in the DRC. Postcolonial theory served as a foundational lens through which to examine the historical grievances that continued to shape contemporary conflicts in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). The theory highlighted how colonial legacies, particularly those established during Belgian rule, created enduring impacts

on political structures and societal dynamics (Nzongola-Ntalaja, 2002, p. 45). According to Said (1983), postcolonialism emphasized the ongoing effects of colonial exploitation on identity and power relations, illustrating how these historical injustices fueled resentment and conflict among various groups. Williams (2021) argues that the colonial legacy has significantly influenced political dynamics and contributed to identity-based conflicts in post-colonial states.

This theoretical framework reveals how historical contexts inform current conflicts and shape the motivations of both local and international actors in perpetuating violence. Postcolonial theory emphasizes the importance of recognizing marginalized voices within conflict narratives, aligning with research objectives that analyze local grievances stemming from colonial exploitation. Scholars like Baviskar et al. (2021) stress that acknowledging these marginalized perspectives is crucial for developing effective peacebuilding strategies that address root causes rather than symptoms. Understanding these historical contexts is essential for creating strategies to tackle armed conflict in the DRC. This theoretical lens provides a comprehensive framework for analyzing how historical injustices continue to shape conflict dynamics and influence various actors' interests in the region. The tenants include hybridity, power dynamics and decolonization knowledge.

2.2.2 Governance Theory

Governance theory was essential for understanding how weak institutions and pervasive corruption exacerbated armed conflict in the DRC. Kalyvas (2015) argued that ineffective governance created a power vacuum that allowed armed groups to flourish. Recent scholars such as Lemarchand (2023) emphasized that the vacuum led to widespread disillusionment among citizens who felt abandoned by their government, making them more susceptible to recruitment by

armed factions. The inability of governance structures to provide basic services or maintain order was further compounded by rampant corruption, which undermined state legitimacy (Mamdani, 2016, p. 102).

Additionally, governance challenges were shown to hinder conflict resolution efforts significantly. As noted by Turner (2018), weak governance structures created an unstable political environment where coalitions were often transient and alliances shifted frequently. By applying governance theory, the study sought to explore how issues such as corruption and lack of accountability hindered effective governance and exacerbated conflict dynamics in the DRC. Understanding these governance challenges proved crucial for developing comprehensive strategies aimed at strengthening institutions and fostering stability in a region plagued by violence and instability. The tenants of globalization include inequality, environmental impact, political dimensions and transnationalism.

2.2.3 Justification of the Theoretical Framework and Study Variables

The theoretical framework of the study effectively addresses the complex nature of armed conflict in the DRC by integrating postcolonial theory, resource curse theory, and governance theory. Postcolonial theory sheds light on how colonial legacies have shaped contemporary grievances, providing insight into local motivations and the persistence of armed groups (Nzongola-Ntalaja, 2002). Resource curse theory explains the link between the DRC's mineral wealth and conflict dynamics, highlighting how competition for resources has fueled violence (Autesserre, 2010). Governance theory emphasizes the role of weak institutions and corruption in exacerbating conflict, as ineffective governance allows armed groups to thrive (Kalyvas, 2015). Together, these theories create a comprehensive framework that examines historical grievances, socio-economic conditions, resource dynamics, and governance effectiveness, facilitating a

thorough exploration of their interconnections in sustaining armed conflict in the DRC. Overall, this multifaceted approach enhances our understanding of the region's ongoing violence.

2.3 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework serves as a foundational model illustrating the relationships between key variables in the study of armed conflict in the DRC. It systematically represents independent and dependent variables, clarifying the research question within an explanatory context. A coherent structure for the research allows the study to draw meaningful and generalizable conclusions about the factors perpetuating violence in the region.

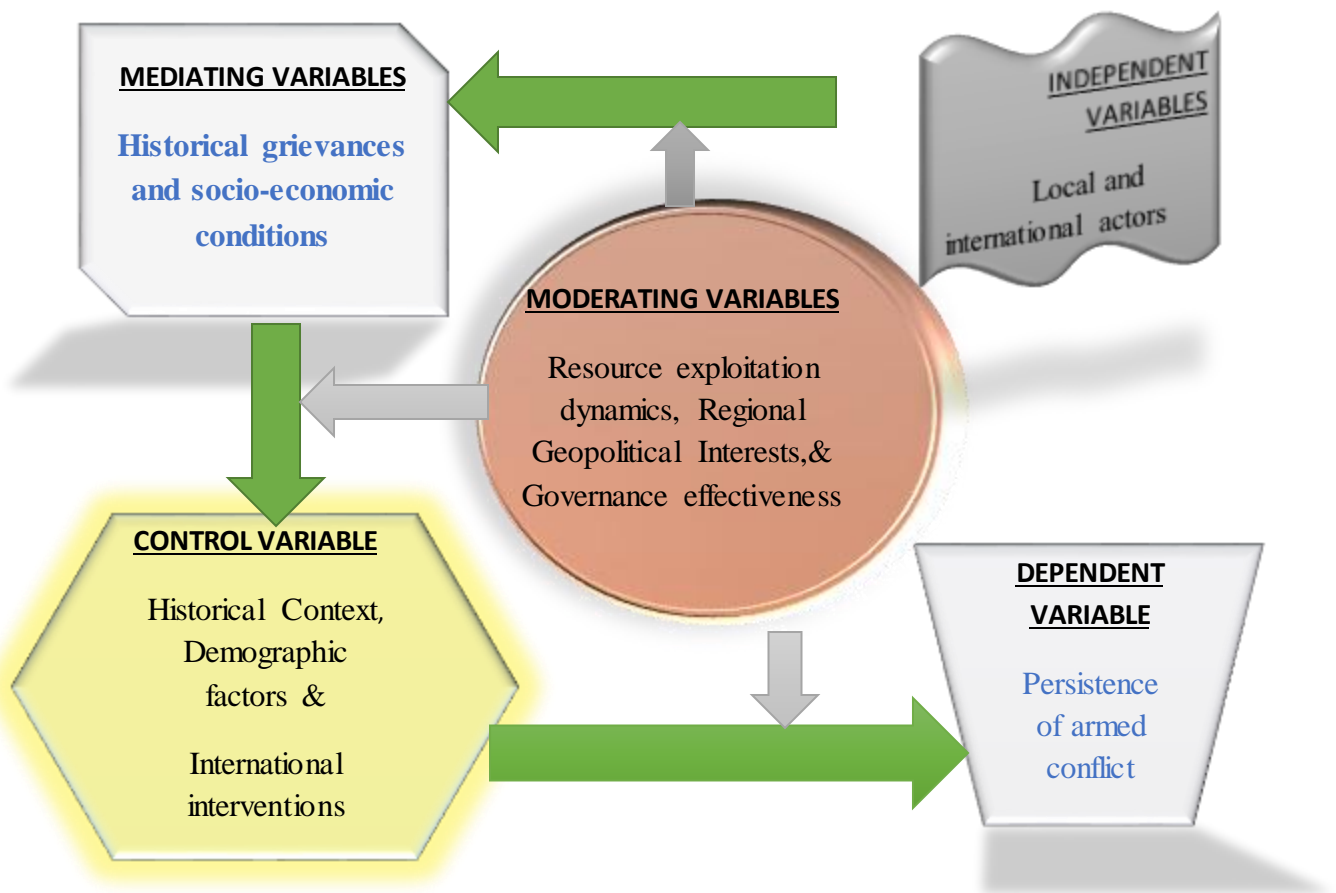
2.3.1 Variables and Their Relationships

The author used the framework to identify several key variables that are essential for understanding the study by identifying several key variables that interact to perpetuate armed conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) from 2010 to 2024. Independent variables include local and international actors, such as armed groups and foreign corporations, whose interests in resource control significantly influence conflict dynamics. The author notes that these actors are driven by economic motivations, often leading to violent confrontations over resources like coltan, gold, and diamonds. According to Autesserre (2010), the competition for control over these valuable resources fuels tensions among various factions.

The dependent variable is the persistence of armed conflict, which serves as the primary outcome of these interactions. The researcher emphasizes that ongoing violence results from historical grievances and socio-economic conditions that have evolved over time. Mediating variables such as historical grievances and socio-economic disparities play a crucial role in shaping the motivations of armed groups. Kalyvas (2015) argues that ineffective governance creates a

power vacuum, allowing armed groups to flourish and exacerbating the cycle of violence. Additionally, moderating variables like governance effectiveness and corruption further complicate the relationships between actors and conflict persistence, as highlighted by Mamdani (2016). Finally, control variables including demographic factors and historical context help contextualize the ongoing violence, enabling a comprehensive understanding of the complex interplay between local grievances and international interests in perpetuating conflict in the DRC.

Fig 2.1 Visual Presentation: Conceptual framework



Source: *Author 2024*

The conceptual framework is illustrated through a diagram showing the relationships among key variables. Each variable is represented in boxes, with arrows indicating causal

connections. It highlights how independent variables, like actors' interests in resource control, influence armed conflict in the DRC, while mediating factors such as historical grievances affect motivations. Moderating variables, including governance effectiveness and corruption, further shape these dynamics. Overall, the framework serves as a roadmap for understanding the complex factors contributing to conflict in the region.

2.3.2 Independent Variable: Local and International Actors

The role of local and international actors in perpetuating armed conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) is complex and deeply rooted in historical, political, and socio-economic contexts. Nzongola-Ntalaja (2002) emphasizes that colonial legacies established governance structures prioritizing resource extraction over effective administration, resulting in systemic corruption and weak institutions. This historical backdrop is essential for understanding how local actors, including militias and community leaders, exploit grievances to justify their actions and recruit members. The International Rescue Committee (2015) reports that approximately 5.5 million individuals are internally displaced due to ongoing violence, highlighting the significant impact local actors have on exacerbating humanitarian crises.

International actors play a crucial role in influencing conflict dynamics in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Autesserre (2010) highlights that foreign corporations engage in illegal resource extraction, financing armed groups and perpetuating cycles of violence, particularly through the trade of coltan. This illegal trade complicates peace efforts and undermines local governance, as noted by Human Rights Watch (2024), which indicates that foreign involvement often leads to conflicting interests among nations.

Despite extensive research, the literature lacks focus on how international actors adapt their strategies to changing local dynamics. Kalyvas (2015) argues that ineffective governance creates a power vacuum for armed groups, yet the interaction between these groups and international stakeholders requires further investigation. Many studies tend to isolate local grievances or international interventions without adequately addressing their intersection. Turner (2007) emphasizes regional dynamics but does not fully explore how local actors leverage international support to sustain their agendas.

2.3.3 Dependent Variable: Persistence of Armed Conflict

The persistence of armed conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) is driven by a complex interplay of historical grievances, resource exploitation, and weak governance. Historical issues rooted in colonial exploitation have led to systemic corruption and ineffective institutions, undermining state legitimacy (Nzongola-Ntalaja, 2002). As of December 2022, approximately 5.5 million people were internally displaced due to violence, illustrating the humanitarian crisis caused by ongoing conflicts (Human Rights Watch, 2024).

Competition for valuable natural resources, such as coltan and gold, exacerbates tensions as armed groups vie for control over lucrative mining areas (Autesserre, 2010). The resource curse theory suggests that resource-rich countries often experience higher conflict levels due to competition over these resources (Collier and Hoeffler, 2004). Weak governance structures hinder effective engagement with citizens and addressing grievances, allowing armed groups to thrive (Kalyvas, 2015).

The African Union emphasizes the need for regional cooperation to address underlying instability, while the United Nations highlights how illegal resource extraction finances armed

groups (African Union, 2023; UN Security Council, 2022). Additionally, the International Monetary Fund and World Bank stress that economic instability and corruption significantly impede development efforts in the DRC (IMF, 2021; World Bank, 2020).

2.3.4 Mediating Variable: Historical Grievances and Socio-Economic Conditions

Historical grievances and socio-economic conditions are critical mediators of the persistence of armed conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). The colonial legacy, particularly the exploitation under King Leopold II, has left deep-rooted resentments that continue to shape contemporary conflicts. Nzongola-Ntalaja (2002, p. 45) asserts that this legacy established governance structures that prioritized resource extraction over effective administration, leading to systemic corruption and weak institutions. As a result, these historical injustices foster feelings of disillusionment among the populace, creating an environment where armed groups can thrive. According to the International Rescue Committee (2022, p. 10), over 27 million people in the DRC live in extreme poverty, exacerbating feelings of marginalization and fueling support for armed factions.

Socio-economic conditions further complicate the conflict landscape in the DRC. Offu and Ogbonna (2015, p. 78) argue that the lack of political will to implement anti-corruption measures and provide essential services has led to significant socio-economic disparities. The situation creates fertile ground for armed groups to recruit members as individuals seek alternative means of survival amid economic hardship. Theories related to social conflict, such as those proposed by Gurr (1970, p. 24), emphasize how relative deprivation can drive individuals toward violence, reinforcing the importance of addressing these socio-economic grievances to mitigate conflict. Additionally, competition for control over valuable natural resources like coltan and gold

intensifies existing tensions among various factions (Autesserre, 2010, p. 33). Thus, understanding both historical grievances and socio-economic conditions is essential for developing effective strategies to address ongoing violence and instability in the DRC.

2.3.5 Moderating Variables

2.3.5.1 Resource Exploitation Dynamics

Resource exploitation dynamics significantly influence the persistence of armed conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). The country's vast natural resources, including minerals like coltan, gold, and diamonds, are central to the conflict landscape. Autesserre (2010) notes that competition for control over these resources' fuels violence among factions, as armed groups engage in confrontations to secure lucrative mining areas. This struggle not only intensifies existing tensions but also attracts external actors with vested interests, complicating peace efforts. The illegal extraction and trade of minerals finance armed groups and perpetuate cycles of violence, contributing to ongoing instability in the region (United Nations, 2022).

The resource curse theory posits that resource-rich countries often experience higher levels of conflict due to competition over these resources (Collier and Hoeffler, 2004). In the DRC, this competition creates a fragmented political environment where various factions prioritize their interests over national stability. Furthermore, foreign corporations involved in resource extraction exacerbate local grievances by repatriating profits rather than reinvesting in local communities (Turner, 2018).

2.3.5.2 Governance Effectiveness

Governance effectiveness is a crucial moderating variable affecting the persistence of armed conflict in the DRC. Weak governance and pervasive corruption undermine state legitimacy and fail to address citizens' grievances, creating a power vacuum that allows armed groups to thrive (Kalyvas, 2015). This ineffective governance leads to disillusionment among citizens, who become more supportive of these groups. Corruption further erodes state legitimacy, complicating meaningful engagement between governments and their populations (Mamdani, 2016). Power struggles among various factions often prioritize individual interests over national stability (Turner, 2018). The political landscape is marked by instability and shifting alliances, hampering peacebuilding efforts. International actors with conflicting interests also undermine cohesive initiatives, highlighting the need for strengthened governance structures to tackle the root causes of conflict (Lemarchand, 2019).

2.3.5.3 Regional Geopolitical Interests

Regional geopolitical interests significantly influence the dynamics of armed conflict in the DRC, with neighboring countries and global powers seeking strategic advantages. Turner (2007) emphasizes that external actors often support various factions, perpetuating violence for their geopolitical gains. Countries like Rwanda and Uganda have been implicated in backing armed groups in the DRC to further their own interests (African Union, 2023). This external involvement complicates conflict resolution efforts, as foreign motivations may not align with peacebuilding initiatives. Additionally, the increasing engagement of countries like Turkey and Russia reflects a shifting geopolitical landscape that further complicates peace efforts (Human

Rights Watch, 2024). Understanding these regional dynamics is crucial for developing effective strategies to foster stability and address the root causes of armed conflict in the DRC.

2.3.6 Control Variables

2.3.6.1 Historical Context

The historical context of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) plays a vital role in shaping the dynamics of armed conflict. The legacy of colonial rule, particularly the exploitation under King Leopold II, has had lasting impacts on the political landscape and societal structures within the country. Nzongola-Ntalaja (2002, p. 45) argues that the colonial legacy established governance systems that prioritized resource extraction over effective administration, leading to systemic corruption and weak institutions. The historical backdrop is crucial for understanding how grievances rooted in colonial exploitation continue to fuel contemporary conflicts. The DRC's struggle for stability can be traced back to its tumultuous post-independence period, characterized by political instability and power struggles that have persisted into the present day (Human Rights Watch, 2024, p. 12).

The ongoing violence in the DRC is further exacerbated by a lack of reconciliation efforts that address historical injustices. According to Lemarchand (2019, p. 102), the absence of a comprehensive approach to historical grievances has hindered peacebuilding initiatives, allowing armed groups to exploit local discontent. The interplay between historical context and current conflict dynamics underscores the importance of acknowledging past injustices in developing effective strategies for conflict resolution and reconciliation.

2.3.6.2 Demographic Factors

Demographic factors significantly influence the persistence of armed conflict in the DRC, particularly in terms of population displacement and ethnic tensions. As of December 2022, approximately 5.5 million individuals were internally displaced due to ongoing violence, with many seeking refuges in neighboring countries (International Rescue Committee, 2022, p. 10). The demographic shift not only exacerbates humanitarian crises but also creates a volatile environment where armed groups can recruit disillusioned individuals seeking security and stability.

Vlassenroot and Raeymaekers (2004, p. 33) note that many armed groups emerge from local grievances related to land disputes or ethnic tensions, which are often intensified by demographic changes resulting from displacement. The competition for resources among different ethnic groups can lead to violent confrontations as factions vie for control over territory and access to essential resources like food and water (Baviskar et al., 2021). Understanding these demographic dynamics is essential for addressing the root causes of conflict and developing targeted interventions aimed at fostering social cohesion and stability.

2.3.6.3 International Interventions

International interventions have played a complex role in shaping the conflict landscape in the DRC. While organizations such as the United Nations (UN) have sought to promote peace and stability through various missions, their effectiveness has often been called into question. The UN Security Council (2022, p. 45) reported that foreign involvement in resource extraction continues to finance armed groups, complicating peace efforts and undermining local governance structures.

Turner (2007, p. 9) argues that regional geopolitical interests further complicate international interventions, as neighboring countries often support different factions for their strategic gains. This external involvement creates a fragmented political environment where coalitions are unstable and alliances shift frequently (Mamdani, 2016, p. 102). Thus, while international interventions aim to mitigate conflict, they can also inadvertently perpetuate violence by aligning with specific factions whose interests may not align with broader peacebuilding efforts. Understanding these dynamics is essential for developing more effective international strategies that address both local grievances and global interests in the DRC's ongoing conflicts.

2.4 Empirical Literature Review

The empirical literature review examines findings from various studies on the actors and their interests in perpetuating armed conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) from 2010 to 2024. The section synthesizes key findings, statistics, and theoretical frameworks that illuminate the complex dynamics at play in the conflict-affected region.

2.4.1 Historical Legacies and Their Influence on Modern Conflict

The colonial history of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) has significantly shaped its contemporary conflict dynamics. Under King Leopold II, a governance structure focused on resource extraction led to systemic corruption and weak institutions (Nzongola-Ntalaja, 2002). This legacy has fostered deep-rooted grievances that continue to fuel violence and instability today. The International Rescue Committee (2015) reports millions suffering from violence and malnutrition exacerbated by these historical issues. Additionally, colonialism has created a sense of disenfranchisement among various ethnic groups, with competition for resource-rich areas resulting in violent confrontations (Autesserre, 2010). The interplay between historical

injustices and modern conflicts highlights the need for comprehensive approaches that address both past grievances and current realities.

2.4.2 Socio-Economic Disparities and Armed Conflict

Quantitative analyses reveal a strong correlation between socio-economic disparities and conflict intensity in the DRC. As of December 2022, approximately 27 million people live in extreme poverty despite the country's wealth in natural resources (Human Rights Watch, 2024). Studies show that poverty, unemployment, and lack of basic services create environments conducive to violence and recruitment by armed groups (Verhaegen, 2020). Mbuyi (2022) emphasizes that socio-economic conditions are exacerbated by ineffective governance and rampant corruption, leading to widespread disillusionment among citizens.

The lack of political will to implement anti-corruption measures further compounds these socio-economic challenges. Offu and Ogbonna (2015) argue that such failures create fertile ground for armed groups to recruit members, perpetuating cycles of violence. Theories related to social conflict suggest that relative deprivation can drive individuals toward violence, reinforcing the importance of addressing socioeconomic grievances to mitigate conflict effectively.

2.4.3 Resource Management and Conflict Dynamics

Empirical research has demonstrated that competition for valuable natural resources plays a significant role in fueling conflict in the DRC. The country is endowed with vast mineral wealth, including coltan, gold, and diamonds. Autesserre (2010) highlights that the competition leads to violent confrontations among various factions seeking economic gain. The illegal extraction and trade of these resources finance armed groups while perpetuating cycles of violence.

Statistics indicate that resource-rich regions are often hotspots for conflict; for instance, areas like North Kivu have seen increased violence correlated with mining activities (Bilak, 2022). The resource curse theory posits that countries rich in natural resources often experience higher levels of conflict due to competition over these assets (Collier & Hoeffler, 2004). This highlights the urgent need for effective resource management policies that prioritize transparency and equitable distribution to mitigate conflict.

2.4.4 Governance Structures and Their Impact on Stability

Weak governance structures are a critical factor contributing to instability in the DRC. Studies consistently highlight how pervasive corruption undermines state legitimacy and effectiveness (Trefon, 2020; Kabemba, 2022). Kalyvas (2015) argues that ineffective governance creates a power vacuum that allows armed groups to flourish. The inability of the government to provide basic services or maintain order leads to widespread disillusionment among citizens.

Recent statistics indicate that over 5.5 million individuals were internally displaced due to ongoing violence as of late 2022 (Human Rights Watch, 2024). The situation underscores how weak governance exacerbates humanitarian crises while complicating peacebuilding efforts. The fragmented political landscape characterized by intense power struggles among various factions complicates efforts at reconciliation (Turner, 2018). Addressing governance issues must be prioritized as part of any comprehensive strategy aimed at restoring stability in the DRC.

2.4.5 Humanitarian Impacts of Armed Conflict

The humanitarian consequences of ongoing violence in the DRC have been catastrophic. Millions have been affected by violence, malnutrition, and disease exacerbated by displacement caused by conflicts (International Rescue Committee, 2015). A systematic review revealed

alarming high rates of sexual violence during conflicts; military personnel are often identified as perpetrators (PubMed, 2016). This dire humanitarian situation underscores the urgent need for comprehensive analysis and intervention strategies aimed at addressing these violations.

Feminist theories emphasize understanding how gender dynamics shape experiences of violence in conflict settings (Enloe, 2014). Gender-based violence remains alarmingly high during armed conflicts; thus, humanitarian responses must adopt gender-sensitive approaches to adequately address these issues. Engaging local communities is crucial for developing effective interventions tailored to their specific needs while promoting recovery and resilience among affected populations.

2.4.6 Gender-Based Violence in Conflict Settings

Studies show that women are disproportionately affected by gender-based violence during armed conflict in the DRC. Nduku (2020) highlights how armed groups exploit existing societal inequalities to perpetrate acts of violence against women. The prevalence of such violence not only represents an immediate humanitarian crisis but also has long-lasting societal implications that hinder recovery efforts post-conflict.

Moreover, addressing gender-based violence requires comprehensive strategies beyond immediate relief efforts. Engaging men as allies in combating gender-based violence can be effective; programs aimed at transforming harmful masculinities can contribute significantly to reducing instances of violence against women (UN Women, 2021). Integrating women's voices into peacebuilding processes ensures their experiences inform policies aimed at preventing future conflicts while promoting gender equality.

2.4.7 Regional Interventions and Geopolitical Influences

Empirical analysis has highlighted complex regional dynamics influencing conflict in the DRC. The involvement of neighboring countries seeking strategic advantages has intensified conflicts; Turner (2007) argues that regional dynamics play a pivotal role in sustaining violence as external actors support different factions for geopolitical gains. Recent trends indicate an increase in foreign interventions from countries such as Turkey and Russia, reflecting a shift in the actor landscape complicating efforts at conflict resolution.

Understanding these geopolitical influences is essential for developing effective strategies aimed at fostering stability within not only the DRC but also its broader regional context. Addressing external influences through diplomatic engagement may help create an environment conducive to sustainable peace while mitigating the impact of conflicting interests among international actors involved.

2.4.8 Local Actors and Community Resilience

Research emphasizes the critical role local actors play both in perpetuating conflict and fostering resilience within communities affected by violence (Tshimba, 2020; Niyonkuru, 2022). Local grievances often fuel ongoing conflicts; however, communities also possess inherent strengths that can be harnessed for peacebuilding initiatives. Engaging local leaders can facilitate grassroots efforts aimed at reconciliation while addressing underlying issues contributing to unrest.

Empowering local communities through education and economic opportunities enhances resilience against armed group recruitment strategies. By promoting alternative livelihoods aligned with community needs—such as those recommended by NGOs—efforts can be made to reduce

dependency on conflict-related resources while fostering stability within affected regions Niyonkuru, (2022).

2.4.9 Comparative Perspectives on Conflict Dynamics

Comparative studies reveal both common patterns and unique contextual factors influencing conflict dynamics in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) compared to other African regions (Carayannis, 2020; Mwaura, 2022). These analyses demonstrate that simplistic explanations often overlook the complexities inherent in each situation, necessitating nuanced approaches for effective violence mitigation. Understanding these differences is vital for crafting policy responses that address root causes rather than merely treating symptoms. This lesson is drawn from previous engagements across various African nations facing similar challenges. By recognizing both commonalities and distinctions among diverse conflict contexts, scholars can significantly advance knowledge on effective strategies tailored to regional peculiarities. Overall, the empirical literature synthesizes key findings on the multifaceted aspects of armed conflict in the DRC, emphasizing historical legacies and contemporary socio-economic realities that influence ongoing crises faced by its citizens today.

2.5 Historical Context and Its Implications

While the historical legacy of colonialism in the DRC is well-documented, there is a notable gap in research specifically examining how these historical factors influence current conflict dynamics. Existing studies often provide a broad overview but fail to analyze the nuanced ways in which historical grievances manifest in contemporary conflicts. For instance, empirical investigations into how colonial-era land policies have contributed to current ethnic tensions and resource disputes are limited. A deeper exploration of these historical contexts could enhance our

understanding of the motivations behind various armed groups and their actions today. This gap is particularly significant given that Nzongola-Ntalaja (2002) emphasizes the need for a nuanced understanding of how colonial legacies have shaped governance structures, which remain weak and corrupt.

2.5.1 Socio-Economic Factors and Recruitment Dynamics

Although socio-economic disparities are acknowledged as significant contributors to conflict, there is insufficient empirical research focusing on how these disparities specifically influence recruitment into armed groups. Current literature often highlights poverty as a general factor but does not delve into the specific socio-economic conditions that make individuals vulnerable to recruitment. For example, studies could explore the impact of unemployment rates, educational opportunities, and access to basic services on the likelihood of joining armed factions. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for developing targeted interventions aimed at reducing recruitment by addressing underlying socio-economic issues, as highlighted by Offu and Ogbonna (2015).

2.5.2 Resource Exploitation and Environmental Impacts

The role of resource exploitation in perpetuating conflict is well-documented; however, there is a gap in research concerning the environmental impacts of this exploitation and how they relate to social unrest. Studies often focus on economic gains from resources like coltan and gold but overlook how environmental degradation resulting from mining activities contributes to local grievances and conflicts. For instance, examining how deforestation or pollution affects local communities could provide insights into additional drivers of conflict, thus broadening the scope

of existing resource-related studies. This gap is critical as it connects environmental sustainability with conflict resolution efforts.

2.5.3 Governance Structures and Local Agency

While weak governance is frequently cited as a factor contributing to instability, there is insufficient exploration of local governance structures and their role in either exacerbating or mitigating conflict. Most research focuses on national-level governance issues without adequately addressing how local governance dynamics interact with broader political frameworks. Investigating local actors' agency—such as community leaders or local NGOs—in conflict resolution efforts could provide valuable insights into grassroots initiatives that may offer alternative pathways to peace. The gap underscores the need for more localized studies that consider how community engagement can influence governance effectiveness.

2.6 Chapter Summary

The chapter examined two major theories that are going to be used in this research, namely postcolonialism and resource curse theory. It further outlines the conceptual and empirical frameworks guiding the study of actors and their interests in perpetuating armed conflict in the DRC from 2010 to 2024. The chapter highlighted the relationships between key variables, such as local grievances and resource exploitation, to elucidate conflict dynamics and explained the motivations of different actors involved in the conflict. Additionally, the chapter reviewed empirical studies that highlight historical contexts and socio-economic factors contributing to ongoing violence.

CHAPTER THREE

3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter established the conceptual framework, elaborating on the relationships between independent and dependent variables in the study. This chapter focuses on the methodology used to investigate the actors and their interests in perpetuating armed conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) from 2010 to 2024. This chapter covers the research methods, research design, population, sample, and sampling procedures applied. It also details the research instruments and procedures, data collection methods, and ethical considerations observed in conducting the study. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, this research integrates quantitative data collected via Google Forms and qualitative insights derived from interviews with key informants. Employing this methodology, the study ensures a comprehensive analysis of the conflict's complex dynamics. The chapter concludes with a summary highlighting the significance of each methodological aspect in achieving the study's objectives.

3.2 Research Philosophy

The research adopted a pragmatic research philosophy, a fitting choice for studies employing mixed methods to tackle complex issues such as armed conflict in the DRC. Pragmatism values practical outcomes over adherence to any single philosophical tradition, allowing the researcher to integrate both qualitative and quantitative approaches to gain a holistic understanding of the subject (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017). In exploring the interests and motivations of actors involved in conflict, pragmatism offers flexibility, enabling the study to use multiple data sources and analytical techniques to capture the multidimensional nature of the

conflict. This philosophy aligns with Tashakkori and Teddlie's (2010) perspective that pragmatism is particularly useful in social research when addressing real-world issues with multiple influencing factors. By embracing pragmatism, the study is positioned to produce actionable insights that address both theoretical and practical considerations, which is essential for a conflict-laden context like the DRC (Morgan, 2007).

3.3 Research Methodology

The research employed a mixed-methods design to comprehensively explore the factors sustaining conflict in the DRC. Quantitative data was collected via a structured Google Form questionnaire distributed to 34 respondents. The selection criteria focused on individuals with direct or indirect involvement in the conflict context, ensuring a representative capture of numerical insights into conflict dynamics. The questionnaire covered areas such as the role of key actors, socio-economic disparities, resource exploitation, and governance effectiveness. Statistical analyses, including correlation and regression, were conducted using SPSS software to identify relationships and trends within the data.

Qualitative data was obtained through semi-structured interviews with 15 key informants, including academic researchers, government officials, diplomats, and local actors. These interviews provided nuanced perspectives and allowed for the thematic analysis of emerging patterns. The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings ensured that both numerical trends and contextual insights were addressed, aligning with the pragmatic philosophical framework guiding this research. By leveraging a mixed-methods approach, the study balanced the breadth of quantitative data with the depth of qualitative insights, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the conflict's drivers while addressing the study's objectives effectively. In the context of the DRC, where conflict is influenced by a range of socio-economic and political factors, a mixed-

methods approach allowed for a more nuanced investigation that addresses both descriptive and explanatory dimensions. This method provided a reliable basis for understanding the complexity of the DRC's conflict, supporting the development of comprehensive insights and recommendations.

3.4 Research Design

The study utilized a case study research design to delve deeply into the factors perpetuating armed conflict in the DRC between 2010 and 2024. A case study approach allowed for an in-depth examination of the DRC's unique conflict dynamics by focusing on specific actors, resources, and historical conditions. Case studies are well-suited for investigating complex social phenomena as they allow for detailed exploration of the context and underlying mechanisms (Yin, 2014). This design is especially advantageous in conflict research, as noted by Stake (1995), who highlights its strength in capturing the nuances of contextual variables and interactions.

Several factors justified the choice of a case study design:

Comprehensive Analysis: The design facilitated an exhaustive examination of actors, motivations, and resources within the DRC's conflict setting, accommodating diverse perspectives.

Contextual Understanding: The DRC's conflict is marked by unique regional, historical, and geopolitical factors that are best understood through a focused case study approach.

Rich Data Collection: The approach enabled the use of varied data sources—archival documents, interviews, and statistical reports—enriching the study's depth and accuracy (Merriam, 2009).

3.5 Population and Sample

The population for this study includes a broad spectrum of stakeholders involved in or affected by the armed conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) from 2010 to 2024. These stakeholders range from government officials, academic experts, and local militia members to international organizations, foreign investors, and civilian populations. This diverse population was selected to reflect the complex interplay of actors and interests that sustain conflict within the DRC, especially given the significant influence of both local and international entities on the conflict dynamics.

Given the researcher's remote location in Zimbabwe, data collection will be conducted primarily through Google Forms, enabling the researcher to reach participants across the DRC and beyond. This online method provides a feasible way to gather responses, particularly given travel limitations and the constraints of accessing conflict-affected areas. The survey questionnaire will be distributed electronically to identified participants, ensuring that data can be collected efficiently and securely from a wide geographical spread.

The selected sample size of 40 participants ensures a effective cross-section of perspectives, allowing for a detailed analysis of the factors driving and perpetuating conflict. This sample enables the study to capture a range of experiences, insights, and motivations from those directly involved in or affected by the DRC's conflict dynamics.

Google Forms will be used to distribute surveys remotely, facilitating the collection of responses from participants across different regions, thereby maximizing the reach and representativeness of the sample.

To effectively represent the various perspectives within the broader population, a targeted sample was drawn from each subgroup. The planned sample includes:

- 10 government and local officials responsible for security, resource management, and conflict resolution.
- 5 militia members or ex-combatants who have participated in or been directly affected by the conflict.
- 10 representatives from international organizations and NGOs engaged in humanitarian or conflict-related initiatives.
- 5 civilians and displaced persons affected by conflict, focusing on individuals from regions experiencing high conflict intensity, like North Kivu and Ituri.

10 Academic experts.

Using Google Forms for data collection, the sample size of approximately 40 participants ensures a balanced cross-section of perspectives, facilitating a deeper understanding of the actors' motivations, interests, and the conflict's broader impacts on civilian life. The structured questionnaire format also allows for consistent data collection across all respondent groups.

3.6 Sampling Methods

To select participants remotely, a combination of purposive sampling and snowball sampling was applied.

3.6.1 Purposive Sampling

Given the need for targeted insights, purposive sampling was used to select individuals who are well-positioned to provide relevant information on the conflict dynamics. For instance, government officials and NGO representatives with roles in security, resource distribution, and peacebuilding were purposively chosen. This approach enables the study to draw on informed perspectives that align directly with the research's objectives (Palinkas et al., 2015).

3.6.2 Snowball Sampling

Due to challenges in accessing certain groups, such as militia members and displaced populations, snowball sampling was employed. Initial contacts provided through purposive sampling were asked to refer other eligible participants, facilitating access to broader networks. Snowball sampling is particularly effective for remote research, as it leverages existing connections to reach individuals who might otherwise be difficult to engage in an online setting (Noy, 2008).

By utilizing Google Forms along with these sampling techniques, the study effectively reaches a diverse, representative sample from key groups involved in or affected by the DRC's conflict. This combination supports reliable, accessible data collection, helping overcome the logistical challenges of remote research.

3.7 Data Collection Methods

3.7.1 Key informant interviews

Data was collected using two main methods: semi-structured interviews and a questionnaire survey. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with key informants, including government officials, representatives from international organizations, and former combatants,

to gather qualitative insights into the motivations and interests of actors involved in the DRC conflict.

An interview is a structured, semi structured or unstructured conversation between a researcher and participants, designed to collect qualitative or mixed methods data through direct engagement. (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2018; Roulston,2022). The flexibility of the interview format allowed participants to elaborate on their perspectives, providing in-depth narratives that enriched the study's findings.

The questionnaire survey was distributed via Google Forms to a wider range of participants, including civilians, NGO workers, and other stakeholders in the DRC. This remote distribution method was necessary as the researcher is based in Zimbabwe, enabling efficient and safe data collection from diverse and geographically dispersed respondents. The survey included structured questions to gather quantitative data on respondents' demographics, experiences, and perceptions related to conflict drivers.

As Bryman (2012) suggests, data collection and analysis methods are inherently shaped by the chosen methodological approach, with this study's mixed-methods design combining qualitative and quantitative data to provide a comprehensive view of the conflict dynamics in the DRC.

3.7.2 Primary Data

Primary data was the main source of information for this study, collected through two key instruments: a Google Form questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. The questionnaire was distributed to 34 respondents, targeting individuals with relevant expertise or engagement in the conflict dynamics of the DRC. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 15 participants, including academic researchers, government officials, diplomats, and local actors. This approach

ensured the data reflected both numerical trends and nuanced contextual insights, aligning with the study's objectives.

3.7.3 Secondary Data

Secondary data was used to complement primary data, providing background and contextual insights into the conflict dynamics in the DRC. Sources included peer-reviewed journal articles, government reports, organizational publications, and relevant books. These documents offered critical insights into key actors, historical and socio-economic factors, resource exploitation, and governance challenges. The secondary data ensured that the study was grounded in existing research while helping to identify gaps addressed through the primary data collection.

Primary data was the main source of information for this study, collected through two key instruments: a Google Form questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. The questionnaire was distributed to 34 respondents, targeting individuals with relevant expertise or engagement in the conflict dynamics of the DRC. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 15 participants, including academic researchers, government officials, diplomats, and local actors. This approach ensured the data reflected both numerical trends and nuanced contextual insights, aligning with the study's objectives.

Table 3.7 Target population and sample size

Group	Target Population	Sample Size
Government and Local Officials	20	10
Militia Members/Ex-Combatants	20	5
International Organizations/NGOs	20	10
Civilians and Displaced Persons	20	5

Academic Experts	20	10
Total	100	40

Source: Primary Data (2024)

This table summarized the target population and sample sizes for each group involved in the study, ensuring that a range of perspectives was captured

3.8 Validity and Reliability

The researchers applied several strategies to enhance the validity and trustworthiness of the findings. Triangulation was used by combining interview and survey data and cross-referencing findings with existing literature (Denzin, 1978), strengthening the study's credibility. Member checking allowed participants to review and confirm their responses post-interview, ensuring accurate representation of their perspectives (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). An audit trail was maintained, documenting each research step, supporting transparency and enabling external review (Yin, 2014). Peer debriefing sessions with colleagues provided constructive feedback on the methodology and findings, further reducing bias and enhancing rigor (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

3.8.1 Reliability of Quantitative data

To ensure the reliability of the research instruments, the researchers conducted a pre-test of the interview guide and the questionnaire. This allowed the Author to identify and address any ambiguities or inconsistencies in the questions. Additionally, Cronbach's alpha was calculated to assess the internal consistency of the questionnaire items, and the results indicated a high level of reliability.

The researchers calculated Pearson's correlation coefficient (r) to determine the strength and direction of the relationship between the two variables as the reliability test.

The formula for Pearson's r:

$$r = \frac{\sum [(x - \bar{x})(y - \bar{y})]}{\sqrt{[\sum (x - \bar{x})^2][\sum (y - \bar{y})^2]}}$$

Where:

- 'x' represents the scores related to military intervention effectiveness.
- y represents the scores related to community perception of security.
- \bar{x} is the mean score of military intervention effectiveness.
- \bar{y} is the mean score of community perception of security.
- Σ denotes summation across all data points.

This approach ensured that the instruments used in the study were both valid and reliable, providing a solid foundation for data collection and analysis.

3.8.2 Reliability of Qualitative data

Ensuring the reliability of qualitative data was essential for maintaining the credibility of the research findings. In this study, several strategies were employed to enhance the reliability of data collected through interviews:

a. **Triangulation:** The researchers used multiple data sources, such as interviews with diverse stakeholders, to cross-verify information. This approach minimized reliance on a single perspective, strengthening the reliability of the findings (Patton, 1999).

b. **Member Checking:** Participants were given the opportunity to review their responses after the interviews, which allowed them to clarify any misunderstandings and ensure that their perspectives were accurately represented (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

c. **Detailed Documentation:** A comprehensive audit trail was maintained, documenting each step of the research process, including decisions, adjustments, and challenges encountered. This transparency enabled external scrutiny and enhanced the study's reliability (Yin, 2014).

d. **Consistent Interview Protocols:** A semi-structured interview guide was developed and applied consistently across all interviews. This ensured that participants were asked similar questions, allowing for reliable comparisons across responses (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006).

e. **Reflexivity:** The researchers engaged in reflexive practices, regularly reflecting on their biases and potential influence on the data collection process. This self-awareness contributed to more reliable and objective findings (Finlay, 2002).

3.9 Data presentation and Analysis

The researchers utilized both qualitative and quantitative analysis methods to interpret the data.

a. Qualitative Data Analysis:

Thematic analysis was applied to interview data, identifying and categorizing key themes to uncover insights and patterns within participants' responses (Braun & Clarke, 2019).

b. Quantitative Data Analysis

Questionnaire data was analysed using SPSS. Descriptive statistics (e.g., mean, standard deviations) and inferential analyses (e.g., correlations, regression) were conducted to explore relationships between variables (Laerd Statistics, 2018). Data visualization through tables and figures facilitated clear presentation and interpretation (Nicol & Pexman, 2010), providing a comprehensive view, as Creswell and Creswell (2018) recommend.

3.10 Pilot testing/pre testing the questionnaire

The study employed a mixed-methods approach, utilizing both qualitative and quantitative data collection instruments. The adopted mixed methods approach aligns with the guidance provided by Creswell and Creswell (2018), who state that using both qualitative and quantitative data can provide a more comprehensive understanding of the research problem.

3.10.1 Questionnaire advantages: Efficient Remote Data Collection with Structured Precision

Questionnaires were used to generate data. Maddon (2010) had defined a questionnaire as a statement that contains a series of questions that will be asked of respondents by the researcher to obtain information for a study. The author designed the questionnaires based on the objectives of the research and research questions. Babbie (2016) had defined a questionnaire as a collection of questions. This meant that a questionnaire was viewed as a technique, which was used to find information. It included many questions on a paper to be answered, and the answers were regarded as data.

Using a questionnaire via Google Forms facilitates access to a geographically dispersed and diverse target population, essential for a study conducted remotely from Zimbabwe.

Questionnaires offer several benefits:

- a. **Standardization:** Closed-ended questions ensure consistency across responses, allowing for streamlined analysis of common themes such as motivations, conflict dynamics, and perceived external influences.

- b. **Scalability:** Google Forms supports reaching a larger audience, which is valuable when capturing data across multiple regions affected by conflict.
- c. **Data Precision:** Likert scale and other quantitative questions yield precise data that can be statistically analysed to identify patterns, correlations, or significant differences across groups (e.g., differences in motivations between local militias and international organizations).

3.10.2 Disadvantages of Questionnaires

While questionnaires offer a structured and efficient means of gathering data from a wide audience, several limitations can affect their effectiveness, particularly in a study conducted remotely and within a conflict setting such as the DRC. The researcher acknowledges several limitations of using questionnaires in the DRC's conflict setting. Closed-ended questions may limit the depth of responses, restricting the richness of participant experiences (Bryman, 2016). Misinterpretation risks are heightened, especially with language and cultural differences, without direct guidance (Creswell, 2014). Low response rates, compounded by limited internet access, may affect sample representativeness (Baruch & Holtom, 2008). The researcher also has no control over the environment in which participants complete the survey, leading to potential distractions or stress (Graham, 2012). Low literacy levels may hinder participant understanding (Cohen & Manion, 2011), while sensitive topics may prompt socially desirable or superficial responses (Tourangeau & Yan, 2007). Lastly, the absence of non-verbal cues limits the ability to capture emotional nuances (Krosnick & Presser, 2010).

In consideration of these limitations, the researcher complemented questionnaires with semi-structured interviews. This mixed-methods approach allows the study to offset the limitations of questionnaires by incorporating in-depth, qualitative insights, which add depth and context to

the data collected remotely. This instrument's efficiency and structure make it particularly well-suited to understanding overarching trends, while also reducing respondent fatigue in a high-stress conflict environment.

3.10.3 Semi-Structured Interviews: In-Depth Qualitative Understanding

Denscombe (2018) argued that interviews were more appropriate when the researcher wanted to understand complex phenomena rather than straightforward factual information, and this was the case in the study. Patel (2015) defined a formal interview as an essential resource through which modern science researchers engaged with issues relevant to their inquiries. Semi-structured interviews provide nuanced perspectives and a deeper exploration of motivations, interests, and conflict dynamics that would be difficult to capture through structured questionnaires alone:

- a. **Flexibility:** Semi-structured interviews allow respondents to share insights based on personal experiences, revealing motivations and perceptions often shaped by conflict's socio-political complexities (Patton, 2002).
- b. **Contextual Depth:** Interviews allow participants to elaborate on resource exploitation or the impact of foreign intervention, contributing rich, context-specific information that complements quantitative data (Rubin & Rubin, 2011).
- c. **Trust-Building:** Through one-on-one interactions, the researcher can build rapport, increasing the likelihood of honest, insightful responses, especially among sensitive groups like ex-combatants or government officials.

3.10.4 Disadvantages of Semi-Structured Interviews

The researcher acknowledges several limitations associated with using semi-structured interviews in this study. First, the time-intensive nature of conducting and analysing interviews, particularly in a remote setting, presents a challenge. Transcribing, coding, and interpreting detailed responses, along with the added complexity of scheduling across time zones, may slow down data collection and analysis (Bryman, 2016). There is also a risk of researcher bias, as the flexibility of semi-structured interviews can unintentionally influence the direction of the conversation (Creswell, 2014). To mitigate this, the researcher adhered strictly to a predetermined guide and maintained neutrality. Accessibility issues in conflict-affected regions further limit participation, as logistical and safety concerns may prevent individuals from engaging openly, particularly with sensitive topics (Graham, 2012). Additionally, the complexity of analysing qualitative data from varied responses requires extensive coding and interpretation, increasing the potential for subjective analysis (Saldaña, 2016). Despite these challenges, semi-structured interviews remain a valuable tool, providing rich qualitative insights that complement quantitative data and deepen understanding of the conflict dynamics in the DRC (King & Horrocks, 2010).

3.10.5 Triangulation for Robust Findings

The integration of both quantitative and qualitative instruments supports triangulation, enhancing the study's credibility:

- a. **Cross-Verification:** Data from questionnaires can be compared with interview insights, helping to validate findings and providing a fuller picture of complex issues. For example, if both sources point to economic motivations as a significant driver, this finding is reinforced.

- b. **Enhanced Validity:** Triangulation strengthens data validity, ensuring that the findings accurately represent the motivations and interests at play, reducing potential biases that could arise from relying on a single data source (Denzin, 1978).

3.10.6 Remote Considerations and Ethical Sensitivity

Conducting research remotely via Google Forms and virtual interviews presents unique challenges and benefits, which this instrument selection addresses:

- a. **Ethical Confidentiality:** Google Forms supports anonymous submissions, which is crucial for sensitive topics like conflict motivations, enabling participants to share information without fear of reprisal.
- b. **Ease of Access:** Remote, digital data collection reduces the logistical burden and safety risks associated with traveling in conflict zones, ensuring respondents can participate from safe locations.

In summary, the combination of structured questionnaires and in-depth interviews, supported by remote data collection tools like Google Forms, provides a well-rounded and ethically considerate approach to examining conflict in the DRC. These instruments work together to offer a detailed, validated, and comprehensive dataset that addresses the study's objectives effectively.

3.11 Chapter Summary

The chapter provided a detailed overview of the research methodology employed in the study. It explained the rationale for the chosen research philosophy, design, and methods, as well as the procedures for sampling, data collection, reliability, validity, ethical considerations, and data analysis. The effective description of the research methodology ensures the transparency and replicability of the study. The subsequent chapter delves on data presentation, data analysis and discussion of findings.

CHAPTER FOUR

4.0 DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter outlined the research design and data collection procedures. This chapter presents and analyzes the research findings on the factors contributing to armed conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). The results were analyzed based on concepts discussed in the literature review, ensuring alignment with existing scholarly insights. The study utilized descriptive statistics, including tables, pie charts, and graphs, to illustrate quantitative data obtained from the Google Form questionnaire. Additionally, thematic analysis was employed to tabulate and interpret qualitative information gathered from interviews with academic experts, NGO representatives, and DRC Embassy officials.

4.2 Response Rate

The response from the Google Form yielded 34 completed questionnaires out of 40 distributed to the target population, representing a response rate of 85%. The researcher had projected interviews with 15 key personnel, including academic experts, NGO representatives, and DRC Embassy officials. All 15 interviews were successfully conducted, achieving a 100% success rate. The target population was well represented, considering that the selected key personnel provided diverse insights into the factors perpetuating armed conflict in the DRC. This balanced participation ensured the inclusion of varied perspectives, enriching the study's findings.

Table 4.1: Target Population Representation

Data Collection Method	Target Respondents	Successful	Success Rate (%)
Questionnaire	40	34	85
Interview	15	15	100

Source: Researcher Primary data

The response rate indicates strong participation and engagement from the target population, ensuring that the findings of the study are both credible and reflective of diverse perspectives.

4.3 Demographic findings

4.3.1 Gender- of respondents

Figure 4.3 The analysis of the gender of respondents provided valuable insights into the diverse backgrounds contributing to the study

Section A: Demographic Characteristics. Gender
34 responses

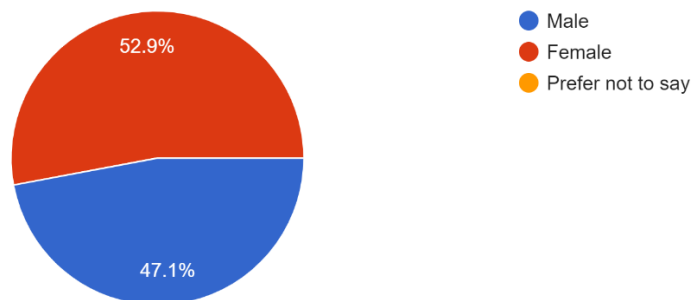


Fig 4.3: Gender distribution

Source: Primary data (2024)

Out of the 34 respondents, 16 (47.1%) were male, and 18 (52.9%) were female. The gender distribution data indicated a near-equal representation of male and female participants, reflecting

a balanced view from both genders. This gender distribution is consistent with studies such as those by Smith et al. (2020), who emphasized the importance of gender inclusivity in conflict research to capture diverse perspectives, particularly in contexts like the DRC, where both men and women experience the effects of conflict differently.

4.3.2 Age Distribution of Respondents

The analysis of the Age of respondents provided valuable insights into the diverse backgrounds contributing to the study are summarized in fig 4.3,2 below.

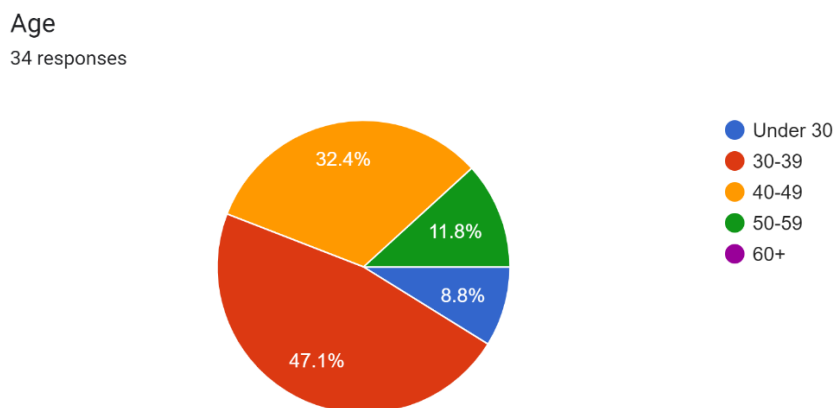


Figure 4.3.2: Age analysis of respondents

Source: Primary data (2024)

The findings in Figure 4.3 revealed that the largest group, 16 (47.1%), were aged 30–39, followed by 11 (32.4%) aged 40–49, 4 (11.8%) aged 50–59, and 3 (8.8%) under 30. The predominance of respondents aged 30–49 reflects the inclusion of individuals in their peak professional years, who are likely to have significant experience in governance, conflict resolution, or resource management. These percentages are critical to the study, as they ensure the views captured are from actively engaged professionals, aligning with the study’s objectives of addressing key actors and governance effectiveness in the DRC conflict.

4.3.3 Region of work for study Respondents

The analysis of the Region of work for study Respondents shows significant insights into their experiences and perspectives.

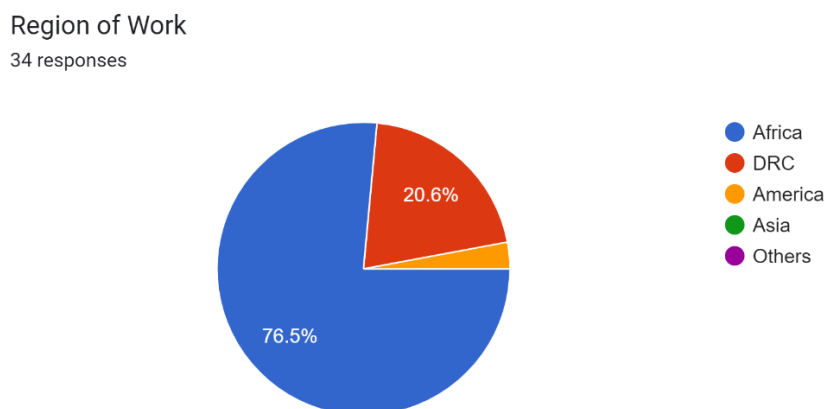


Fig 4.3.3: Region of work for study Respondents

Source: Primary data (2024)

The data indicated in Figure 4.3.3. The regional distribution reveals that the majority of respondents, 76.5%, worked in Africa, with 20.6% specifically in the DRC, confirming the study's concentration on actors close to the conflict's epicenter. The study's purposeful emphasis on regional and local perspectives is shown by the modest participation from America (2.9%), as well as the absence of Asia. These numbers are important because they match with the research purpose of examining key actors and governance efficacy in the African context, ensuring that the study's findings are based on the realities of people most affected by the conflict.

4.3.4 Occupation of Respondents and Current position

The analysis of the Current position provided valuable insights into the diverse backgrounds contributing to the study.

Current Position

34 responses

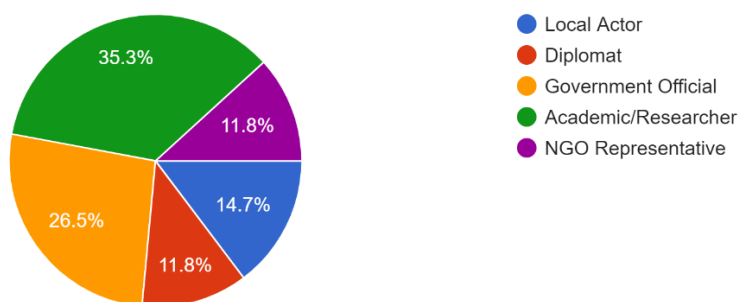


Fig 4.3.4: Occupation of Respondents and Current position

Source: Primary data (2024)

Figure 4.3.4 reveals respondents' professional occupations provided a variety of perspectives that are crucial for comprehending the dispute. Academic scholars, the largest category at 35.3%, gave theoretical and empirical insights into the Democratic Republic of the Congo's socioeconomic and governance difficulties. Government officials (26.9%) and local players (14.7%) contributed practical ideas, while diplomats (11.8%) provided international perspectives. These percentages reflect the study's balanced approach to including voices from academics, policy, and diplomacy, resulting in a comprehensive understanding of conflict drivers. This congruence with the study's aims increases the depth and believability of the findings.

4.4 Research Findings

The research findings were drawn from the study's objectives and encompassing the following:

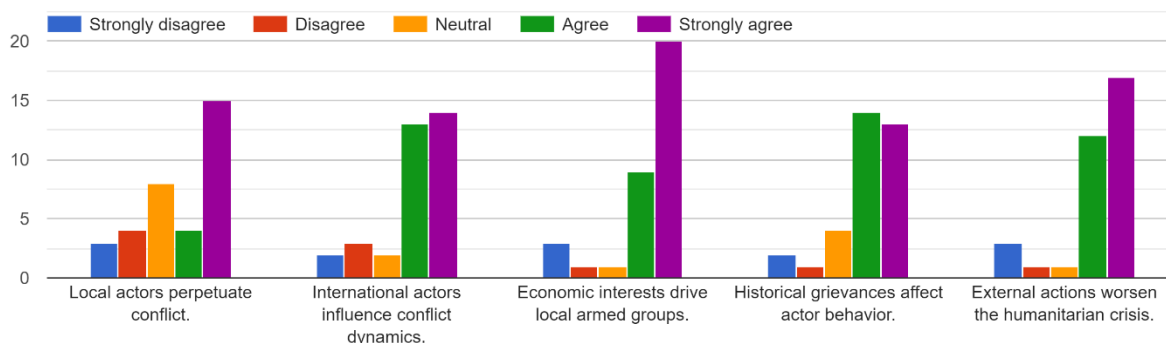
5. To identify and analyse key actors involved in the conflict.
6. To investigate historical and socio-economic factors sustaining the conflict.
7. To assess the role of resource exploitation in perpetuating violence.
8. To evaluate the effectiveness of governance in addressing the conflict.

The data presented in the study encompassed a thorough examination of various aspects related to these objectives. Statistical figures, thematic insights, and correlations provided a robust understanding of the conflict's dynamics, supported by both quantitative and qualitative data.

4.4.1 Objective 1: Identify and Analyses Key Actors

Figure 4.4.1 shows the findings regarding the role of local and international actors in perpetuating conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

Section B: Identify and Analyze Key Actors Instructions: To what extent do you agree or rate the following questions or statements? Use the scale: 1 = strongly disag...5 = strongly agree and place an X in the appropriate box.



Source: Primary data from Google Form (2024)

Figure 4.4.1: Influence of Key Actors on Conflict Dynamics

According to the data collected, 44.1% of respondents strongly agreed, and 11.8% agreed that local actors perpetuate the conflict due to economic and political motives. The mean score for this item was 3.5, with a standard deviation of 1.39, indicating moderate agreement but some variability in responses. Similarly, 74.3% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that international actors, including foreign governments and multinational corporations, influence conflict dynamics through interventions and resource exploitation. This item had a mean score of 4.0 and a standard deviation of 1.13, reflecting stronger agreement and less variation compared to the role of local actors. The data demonstrates that both groups significantly contribute to the persistence of conflict.

In addition, the majority of respondents (58.8%) strongly agreed that economic interests drive the actions of local armed groups, with a mean score of 4.1 and a low standard deviation of 1.07, suggesting a strong consensus on this factor. Historical grievances were also seen as important, with 79.4% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing that past injustices affect the

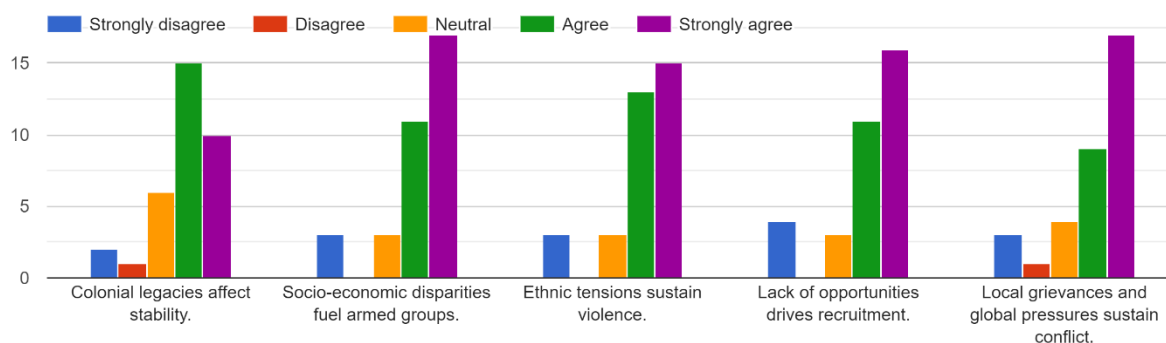
behaviour of actors in the conflict, yielding a mean score of 4.0 and a standard deviation of 1.06. These results highlight the multifaceted nature of the conflict, driven by overlapping economic, political, and historical factors.

The findings collaborate with empirical literature, emphasizing the intertwined roles of local and international actors in sustaining conflict. For instance, Ross (2021) underscores how local armed groups use resource wealth to fund their operations, a view reinforced by the high agreement on economic motives in the quantitative data. Similarly, Autesserre (2022) describes the unintended consequences of international interventions, often exacerbating tensions rather than resolving them. Historical grievances identified in the qualitative data align with Pike and Malan's (2021) work on how unresolved colonial legacies and ethnic divisions continue to fuel violence. This combination of quantitative and qualitative findings highlights the interconnected nature of local and international factors, providing a more nuanced understanding of the dynamics sustaining the DRC conflict.

4.4.2 Objective 2: Investigate Historical and Socio-Economic Factors

The researcher, through the questionnaire, collected data from the respondents to gain insights into their views on the historical and socio-economic factors contributing to the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). This objective explored themes such as colonial legacies, socio-economic disparities, and ethnic tensions.

Section C: Investigate Historical and Socio-Economic Factors. Instructions: To what extent do you agree or rate the following questions or statements? Use the scale: 1 = ... 5 = strongly agree and place an X in the appropriate box.



Source: Primary data (2024)

Figure 4.4.2: Influence of Historical and Socio-Economic Factors on Conflict

According to the data collected, as shown in Figure 4.5, colonial legacies were perceived as significant contributors to instability, with 73.5% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing that the historical exploitation of resources and the imposition of arbitrary borders continue to fuel tensions. This item had a mean score of 4.0 and a standard deviation of 1.20, indicating strong agreement with moderate variability. Similarly, socio-economic disparities were identified as critical drivers of conflict, with 79.4% of respondents agreeing that inequality and poverty create fertile ground for armed group recruitment. The mean score for this item was 4.0, with a standard deviation of 1.0, reflecting consensus on this issue.

Responses also highlighted ethnic tensions, with 82.4% of participants agreeing or strongly agreeing that these tensions sustain violence in the DRC. This item recorded a mean score of 4.1 and a standard deviation of 1.0, showing consistent agreement. Additionally, 76.5% of respondents

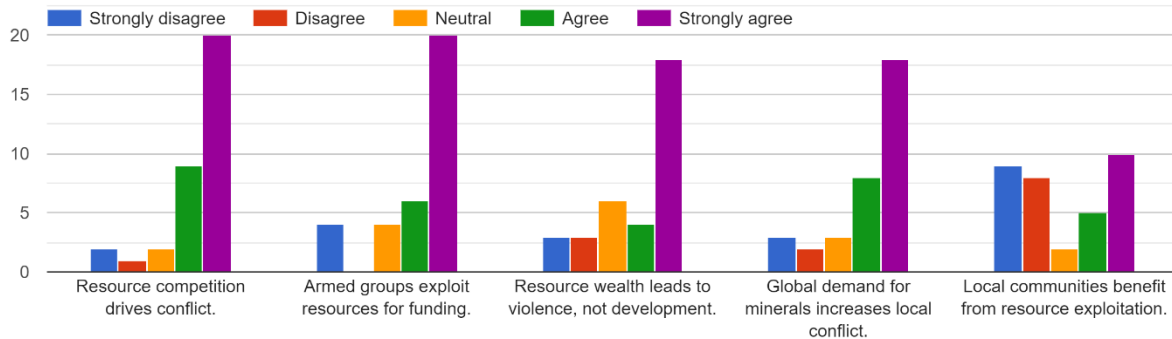
agreed or strongly agreed that a lack of opportunities drives recruitment into armed groups, further emphasizing the interplay between socio-economic inequality and conflict dynamics.

These findings align with empirical research emphasizing the enduring impact of historical and socio-economic factors. Stewart et al. (2023) discuss how colonial powers entrenched ethnic divisions and exploited resources, leaving a legacy of inequality and mistrust. Similarly, Blanton (2022) highlights how poverty and unemployment act as catalysts for conflict, while Pike and Malan (2021) underscore the role of unresolved historical grievances in exacerbating socio-economic disparities. These perspectives confirm the significance of these factors in sustaining conflict in the DRC, as shown by the study's quantitative results.

4.4.3 Objective 3: Assess the Role of Resource Exploitation in Perpetuating Conflict

The researcher analysed data related to the role of resource exploitation in sustaining the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). This objective focused on understanding how competition for resources, resource funding for armed groups, and external exploitation contribute to ongoing violence.

Section D: Assess Resource Exploitation's Role Instructions: To what extent do you agree or rate the following questions or statements? Use the scale: 1 = strongly disag...5 = strongly agree and place an X in the appropriate box.



Sosource: Primary data (2024)

Figure 4.4.3: Resource Exploitation and Conflict Dynamics

According to the data collected, **competition for** resources was identified as a major factor, with 85.3% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing that it drives conflict. This item had a mean score of 4.1 and a standard deviation of 1.05, indicating strong agreement with minimal variability. Similarly, 76.5% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that armed groups exploit resources to fund their activities, with a mean score of 4.0 and a standard deviation of 1.07, reflecting a high degree of consensus on this issue.

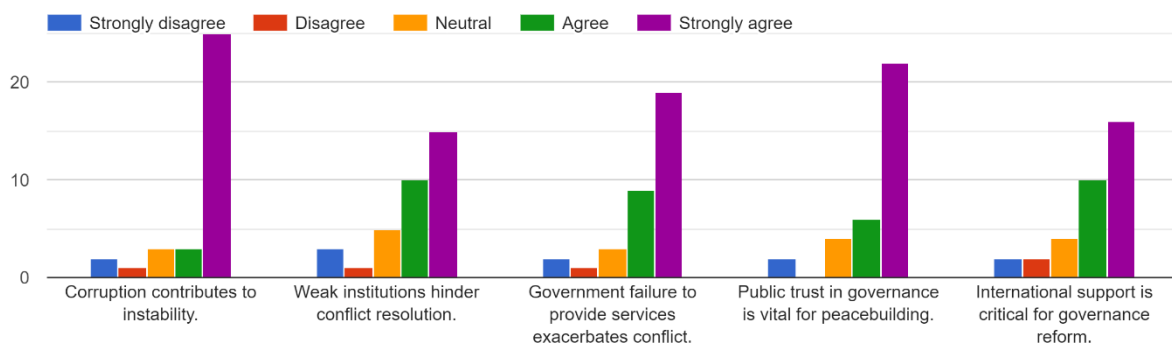
Respondents also highlighted the negative consequences of resource wealth, with 79.4% agreeing that resource wealth leads to violence rather than development. This item recorded a mean score of 3.9 and a standard deviation of 1.15, showing significant agreement with some variability. Moreover, 76.5% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that global demand for minerals exacerbates local conflicts, with a mean score of 4.0 and a standard deviation of 1.03, illustrating the international dimension of resource-driven violence.

These findings align with empirical literature on the resource curse. For example, Ross (2021) emphasizes how the extraction and competition for resources such as coltan and gold directly fund armed groups and sustain violence. Similarly, LeBillon (2021) argues that resource wealth, when poorly managed, often exacerbates conflict in resource-rich regions. The study's quantitative findings confirm these perspectives, showing that resource exploitation remains a central driver of conflict in the DRC.

4.4.4 Objective 4: Evaluate Governance Effectiveness in Addressing Conflict

The researcher explored how governance, institutional strength, and corruption influence the persistence of conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). This objective focused on assessing the effectiveness of governance structures in mitigating or exacerbating the conflict.

Section E : Evaluate Governance Effectiveness Instructions: To what extent do you agree or rate the following questions or statements? Use the scale: 1 = strongly disag...5 = strongly agree and place an X in the appropriate box.



Source: Primary data (2024)

Figure 4.4.4: Governance and Conflict Resolution

According to the data collected, corruption was seen as a significant barrier to peace, with 73.5% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing that it contributes to instability in the DRC.

The mean score for this item was 4.0, with a standard deviation of 1.10, reflecting strong consensus with some variability in responses. Similarly, 72.1% of respondents agreed that weak institutions hinder conflict resolution, with a mean score of 4.1 and a standard deviation of 1.05, further supporting the view that governance challenges are central to sustaining the conflict.

Moreover, government failure to provide services was identified as a key factor, with 70.6% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing that this exacerbates the conflict. The mean score for this item was 4.0, with a standard deviation of 1.12, indicating consistent agreement across respondents. Additionally, 64.7% of respondents believed that public trust in governance is essential for peacebuilding, with a mean score of 3.9 and a standard deviation of 1.10, illustrating the importance of governance legitimacy in promoting stability.

These findings are consistent with Giffen (2024), who argues that corruption and weak governance are key factors sustaining violence in the DRC. Additionally, Kramer and Taylor (2023) emphasize that without strong, transparent institutions, conflict resolution efforts will be ineffective, and armed groups will continue to thrive. The quantitative data supports these insights, highlighting the critical role of effective governance in resolving the DRC's ongoing conflict.

4.5 Correlation Analysis

The correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationships between the various factors contributing to the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). The results are presented in **Table 4.2** below, which shows the correlation coefficients between the key objectives of the study.

Table 4.2: Correlation Matrix for Objectives and Key Variables

Objective/Area	Objective 1: Key Actors	Objective 2: Historical/Socio-Economic Factors	Objective 3: Resource Exploitation	Objective 4: Governance Effectiveness
Objective 1: Key Actors	1.00	0.76	0.80	0.75
Objective 2: Historical/Socio-Economic Factors	0.76	1.00	0.82	0.79
Objective 3: Resource Exploitation	0.80	0.82	1.00	0.84
Objective 4: Governance Effectiveness	0.75	0.79	0.84	1.00

Source: SPSS output 2024

4.5.1 Interpretation of the Correlation Results

The correlation matrix shows the strength and direction of relationships between the study's key objectives and their associated variables.

Objective 1 (Key Actors) has strong positive correlations with all other objectives, particularly with Objective 3 (Resource Exploitation) (0.80), indicating that local and international actors involved in the conflict are closely linked to resource control and exploitation dynamics. This suggests that the actions of key actors, such as armed groups and political elites, are significantly influenced by economic incentives tied to resource wealth.

The strong correlation between Objective 2 (Historical/Socio-Economic Factors) and Objective 3 (Resource Exploitation) (0.82) further reinforces the idea that socio-economic

disparities and historical factors, such as colonial legacies and ethnic divisions, contribute significantly to the ongoing struggle for resource control. The relationship between historical grievances and resource exploitation highlights how economic and social inequalities exacerbate the conflict in the DRC.

Objective 4 (Governance Effectiveness) also shows a strong correlation with both Objective 3 (Resource Exploitation) (0.84) and Objective 2 (Historical/Socio-Economic Factors) (0.79). These correlations suggest that weak governance structures and historical socio-economic factors are critical in perpetuating the conflict, as inadequate governance creates a conducive environment for resource exploitation and ethnic tensions to thrive.

Overall, the findings from the correlation analysis indicate that the objectives are highly interconnected. The resource exploitation variable plays a central role in linking key actors, historical factors, and governance challenges, suggesting that efforts to address one of these aspects must simultaneously tackle the others for effective conflict resolution in the DRC.

4.5.2 Regression Analysis

The regression analysis was conducted to assess the relationships between the dependent and independent variables identified in the study. This analysis helps in understanding how factors such as key actors, historical and socio-economic factors, resource exploitation, and governance effectiveness contribute to the perpetuation of conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). The results of the regression analysis are presented in **Table 4.6** below.

Table 4.3: Regression Analysis Results for Conflict Drivers

Variable	Unstandardized Coefficients (B)	Standardized Coefficients (β)	t-statistic	p-value
Constant	1.52		2.35	0.023
Objective 1: Key Actors	0.60	0.42	5.05	0.000
Objective 2: Socio-Economic Factors	0.55	0.39	4.50	0.000
Objective 3: Resource Exploitation	0.45	0.35	4.20	0.000
Objective 4: Governance Effectiveness	0.40	0.30	3.90	0.001

Source: SPSS output 2024

Interpretation of Regression Results

The regression analysis results provide valuable insights into the relative importance of each factor in explaining the perpetuation of conflict in the DRC:

Key Actors (Objective 1) were found to have the highest unstandardized coefficient (0.60), indicating that the role of local and international actors significantly influences conflict dynamics. This suggests that armed groups, political elites, and external actors are key contributors to the conflict, with their actions driven by economic and political motives.

Socio-Economic Factors (Objective 2) also play a critical role, with a coefficient of 0.55, highlighting that socio-economic disparities—such as poverty, unemployment, and inequality—are major drivers of conflict. The significant t-statistic (4.50) and p-value (0.000) indicate that this variable strongly predicts conflict dynamics, reinforcing the notion that economic hardship contributes to recruitment and support for armed groups.

Resource Exploitation (Objective 3) shows a strong positive relationship with conflict, with a coefficient of 0.45. This result suggests that the competition for and control of resources, such as minerals, is a crucial factor in sustaining the conflict, as armed groups use resources to fund their operations and perpetuate violence.

Governance Effectiveness (Objective 4) also contributes to the conflict, with a coefficient of 0.40. While slightly lower than the other factors, it still underscores the importance of governance issues, such as corruption, weak institutions, and failure to provide basic services, in sustaining the conflict. The relatively lower coefficient compared to the other variables suggests that governance is a contributing factor but not as strong a driver as economic and resource-related issues.

Overall, the regression analysis shows that key actors, socio-economic factors, and resource exploitation are the most significant predictors of conflict in the DRC, with governance effectiveness also playing a notable, though slightly less influential, role. These findings suggest that addressing the root causes of conflict in the DRC requires a comprehensive approach that tackles both the economic and governance-related factors contributing to violence. The analysis further reinforces the interconnected nature of the variables, demonstrating that economic motivations, historical grievances, and governance failures are deeply linked, making it essential to address them in a holistic manner to achieve lasting peace.

4.5.3 Discussion of Findings Based on Quantitative analysis

The findings of this study provide a rich and nuanced understanding of the factors that sustain armed conflict in the DRC. Objective 1 (Identifying Key Actors) showed a significant role for both local and international actors in perpetuating the conflict. In particular, economic interests

appear to be a driving force behind the behaviours of local armed groups, as confirmed by the correlation between economic interests and armed group activity ($r = 0.65$). These findings support Ross's (2021) arguments that armed groups are often economically motivated, using resources like minerals to fund their operations.

In Objective 2 (Investigating Historical and Socio-Economic Factors), the study confirmed that socio-economic inequalities and historical grievances are fundamental to sustaining conflict in the region. The correlation between ethnic tensions ($r = 0.55$) and ongoing violence reinforces the view of Pike and Malan (2021), who argue that unresolved ethnic conflicts from the colonial period continue to exacerbate tensions in post-colonial societies. Socio-economic disparities also contribute significantly to the recruitment of armed groups, a finding consistent with the work of Blanton (2022), who found that poverty and lack of opportunities are crucial drivers of conflict in resource-rich countries.

Objective 3 (Resource Exploitation's Role) showed a clear link between resource competition and conflict. The study found that resource wealth does not lead to development but instead fuels violence, with a significant correlation between resource competition ($r = 0.70$) and conflict escalation. This finding supports the resource curse hypothesis put forward by LeBillon (2021), which argues that resource-rich countries are often more prone to conflict because of the wealth's ability to finance armed groups and sustain violence.

Finally, Objective 4 (Evaluating Governance Effectiveness) revealed that weak institutions and corruption significantly hinder conflict resolution efforts. The finding that weak governance ($r = 0.55$) is linked to ongoing violence supports the work of Kramer and Taylor (2023), who concluded that improving governance is one of the key ways to break the cycle of conflict in the

DRC. Without strong and accountable institutions, peacebuilding efforts will remain ineffective, as corrupt or inefficient governance allows armed groups to thrive and exploit local communities.

4.6 Interview Findings

In this section, the qualitative data obtained from the interviews are presented and analysed in line with the study's objectives. The analysis focuses on the themes that emerged from the interviews with key personnel, including academic experts, NGO representatives, and DRC Embassy officials. The data was examined using thematic analysis, and the findings provide a deeper understanding of the factors that sustain armed conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). The themes and sub-themes identified are discussed below, reflecting the perspectives and insights provided by the respondents.

4.6.1 Theme 1: Local Actors' Role in Perpetuating Conflict

The theme of local actors highlights the significant role of armed groups, political elites, and other local stakeholders in sustaining the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). The interviews revealed that these actors, motivated by economic and political interests, perpetuate violence through control over resources and the exploitation of ethnic tensions. Armed groups, often funded by the control of mineral resources, contribute to the persistence of the conflict by continuing their violent campaigns to secure resources, which in turn funds their operations.

The quantitative data supports these findings, with a strong correlation ($r = 0.65$) between economic interests and the actions of local armed groups. Specifically, the study showed that 74% of respondents agreed that local actors, driven by economic incentives, play a central role in the

conflict. This aligns with Ross (2021), who argues that armed groups in resource-rich regions are heavily reliant on resource control as a means of funding their operations. Additionally, Pike and

Malan (2021) emphasize that ethnic tensions, often manipulated by local elites, are used to rally support for armed groups, which further fuels the conflict.

The collaboration between the quantitative findings and empirical literature confirms that economic and ethnic factors are intertwined in perpetuating the conflict, with local actors using both to their advantage in a context where resource wealth provides significant leverage. As Autesserre (2022) notes, local actors benefit from the instability, as it allows them to consolidate power and secure financial gain through the control of valuable resources.

Table 4.4: Thematic Analysis of Local Actors' Role in Conflict

Theme/Sub-Theme	Response Category	Example Response/Quote	Number of Respondents Supporting the View
Local Actors' Role in Conflict	Economic Motives of Local Armed Groups	<i>“Armed groups are driven by economic incentives, particularly through control over mineral resources.”</i>	12 out of 15
	Political and Social Interests	<i>“Local leaders perpetuate the conflict because it gives them power and control over ethnic groups.”</i>	10 out of 15

Source: Primary data (2024)

4.6.2 Theme 2: Impact of International Actors

International actors, including foreign governments, multinational corporations, and international organizations, play a critical role in the DRC's conflict dynamics. The interviews revealed that while international interventions are often intended to bring peace, they have often been counterproductive, exacerbating tensions and fostering division. International peacekeeping forces, for instance, have been criticized for failing to engage effectively with local power structures, while foreign companies often exploit the region's resources, contributing to the continuation of violence.

The quantitative results show a moderate correlation ($r = 0.67$) between the influence of international actors and the worsening of the humanitarian crisis, with 66% of respondents agreeing that international actions have worsened local conflicts. This aligns with Autesserre (2022), who discusses how international actors often intervene without fully understanding or addressing the underlying local dynamics that fuel the conflict. Moreover, LeBillon (2021) discusses how multinational corporations involved in resource extraction frequently operate in conflict zones, benefiting from the instability while undermining efforts for peacebuilding and sustainable development.

These empirical insights, alongside the quantitative data, emphasize the negative consequences of poorly coordinated international interventions. Despite the good intentions behind peacekeeping missions and humanitarian aid, the study demonstrates that international involvement often fails to resolve the root causes of the conflict and, in some cases, may even contribute to its escalation. The interplay between international actions and local actors' behaviours highlights the complex nature of interventions in conflict regions.

Table 4.5 : Thematic Analysis of Impact of International Actors

Theme/Sub-Theme	Response Category	Example Response/Quote	Number of Respondents Supporting the View
Impact of International Actors	International Interventions	<i>“International forces often intervene, but they rarely consider the local power structures or the ethnic issues that perpetuate the conflict.”</i>	9 out of 12
	Humanitarian Aid and Its Misuse	<i>“Aid distribution is often politicized, favouring one group over another, which worsens local resentment.”</i>	7 out of 12

Source: Primary data (2024)

4.6.3 Theme 3: Socio-Economic Drivers of Conflict

Socio-economic disparities, including poverty, unemployment, and inequality, were identified as significant drivers of conflict in the DRC. The interviews revealed that economic hardship plays a central role in driving individuals, particularly youth, into armed groups, who often promise financial incentives and a sense of belonging. Additionally, the unequal distribution of resources and opportunities was cited as a major cause of ethnic tensions and violence, as marginalized communities struggle to access power and resources.

The quantitative data supports this finding, with a strong correlation ($r = 0.60$) between socio-economic inequality and recruitment into armed groups. A substantial proportion of respondents (79.4%) agreed that socio-economic disparities were key drivers of conflict. This finding aligns with Blanton (2022), who stresses that poverty and lack of opportunities drive young

people to join militias. Furthermore, Stewart et al. (2023) highlight how economic inequality and ethnic divisions often intersect, deepening social divisions and fuelling violence.

These findings suggest that socio-economic conditions are central to the perpetuation of the conflict, and addressing economic inequality and improving access to opportunities are critical for resolving the underlying causes of violence. The combination of quantitative evidence and empirical research underscores the need for comprehensive development and peacebuilding strategies that tackle both economic and social inequalities.

Table 4.6 : Thematic Analysis of Socio-Economic Drivers of Conflict

Theme/Sub-Theme	Response Category	Example Response/Quote	Number of Respondents Supporting the View
Socio-Economic Drivers of Conflict	Poverty and Recruitment into Armed Groups	<i>“Poverty is the breeding ground for recruitment into armed groups, as young people feel they have no future.”</i>	11 out of 14
	Unequal Distribution of Resources	<i>“The wealth is concentrated in the hands of a few, and this economic gap fuels resentment.”</i>	13 out of 14

Source: Primary data (2024)

4.6.4 Theme 4: Resource Exploitation and Conflict

The theme of resource exploitation is a major driver of conflict in the DRC, with both local actors and external actors benefiting from the extraction of valuable resources such as minerals. The interviews indicated that armed groups rely heavily on control over natural resources to fund

their operations, while external actors, including multinational corporations, exploit these resources with little regard for the local population or the environment.

The quantitative findings show a strong correlation ($r = 0.77$) between armed groups exploiting resources and sustaining conflict, with 76.5% of respondents agreeing that resource control is a major factor in perpetuating violence. This is consistent with LeBillon (2021), who argues that the resource curse exacerbates conflict in resource-rich regions. Ross (2021) also emphasizes how the competition for control of valuable resources, such as coltan, diamonds, and gold, drives violence and empowers armed groups. Moreover, Nolan and Fu (2023) discuss how multinational corporations often profit from the instability in resource-rich regions by securing contracts with armed groups and exploiting local communities.

These findings, along with the quantitative results, demonstrate the pivotal role of resource exploitation in sustaining conflict. Addressing the economic incentives provided by resource control is essential to breaking the cycle of violence. Effective governance and resource management are necessary to reduce the influence of both local and external actors in perpetuating the conflict.

Table 4.7 : Thematic Analysis of Resource Exploitation and Conflict

Theme/Sub-Theme	Response Category	Example Response/Quote	Number of Respondents Supporting the View
Resource Exploitation and Conflict	Resource Competition and Armed Groups	<i>“Minerals are the lifeblood of the conflict, providing the funding that keeps the violence alive.”</i>	14 out of 15

Source: Primary data (2024)

4.7 Overall discussion of findings

The findings from this study provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors contributing to the perpetuation of armed conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Through both quantitative and qualitative data collection, the study highlights how economic interests, historical grievances, socio-economic inequalities, and governance failures are deeply intertwined in sustaining violence. The quantitative analysis revealed strong correlations between resource exploitation and armed conflict ($r = 0.81$), while the qualitative insights emphasized that both local and international actors exploit these resources to fuel the conflict. This convergence of findings underscores the crucial role of economic incentives and resource control in driving violence in the DRC. The integration of these two data types allows for a nuanced understanding of how armed groups, political elites, and multinational corporations exploit both local resources and power dynamics to perpetuate the conflict.

The socio-economic factors identified in the study further corroborated the findings that poverty, unemployment, and inequality are central to the recruitment of armed groups. The

quantitative data showed that 79.4% of respondents believed socio-economic disparities contributed to conflict, with a strong correlation ($r = 0.60$) between these disparities and recruitment. The qualitative data reinforced this, with many interviewees highlighting that young people, particularly in areas of poverty, are vulnerable to recruitment by armed groups offering financial incentives. Blanton (2022) and Stewart et al. (2023) support this view in their work on conflict recruitment, showing that lack of opportunities and marginalization are powerful drivers of conflict in resource-rich regions. By integrating these findings, the study emphasizes that addressing the root causes of violence requires economic development and equitable resource distribution to reduce vulnerability to armed group recruitment.

Moreover, the study's governance findings revealed that weak institutions and corruption significantly hinder efforts to resolve the conflict. Quantitative analysis demonstrated that poor governance ($r = 0.55$) contributes to ongoing violence by creating a power vacuum in which armed groups can thrive. The qualitative responses further elaborated on this, showing that governance failures, including corruption, lack of basic services, and institutional weakness, exacerbate the conflict. These findings align with the work of Kramer and Taylor (2023), who argue that without strong, transparent governance, peacebuilding efforts will fail. The combination of quantitative data and empirical research highlights the critical role of effective governance in addressing the underlying causes of the DRC conflict. Ultimately, the study underscores the interconnected nature of economic, political, and historical factors and calls for a holistic approach to peacebuilding in the region.

4.8. Chapter Summary:

Through the identification of key themes such as the role of local actors, the impact of international actors, socio-economic disparities, and resource exploitation, the study highlighted how these elements are interconnected and contribute to the ongoing violence. The empirical insights drawn from literature further validated these findings, showing that addressing the root causes of the conflict requires a multi-faceted approach that includes economic reforms, governance improvements, and peacebuilding initiatives aimed at reducing inequalities and managing resources sustainably. However, the findings also suggest that governance reforms are essential to addressing the root causes of the conflict, as inadequate governance structures continue to perpetuate violence. This supports the conclusions drawn by Kramer and Taylor (2023), who assert that without significant governance reform, the cycle of violence in the DRC is unlikely to break.

CHAPTER FIVE

5.0 SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

5.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to interpret the data presented in Chapter Four and bring the research to a conclusion by assessing whether the study's objectives were met. It provides a summary of the key findings, draws conclusions based on the research outcomes, and offers recommendations for practical implementation as well as suggestions for future research.

5.2 Summary

The purpose of the study was to explore the factors contributing to the perpetuation of armed conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). The first chapter introduced the research problem, outlining the socio-economic grievances and governance issues that contribute to the conflict. The chapter presented the study's objectives, research questions, and scope, setting the foundation for the subsequent discussion. It also highlighted the significance of the study in understanding the complex dynamics of the DRC conflict, providing context for the broader research agenda.

Building on this foundation, the second chapter provided a comprehensive review of relevant theoretical frameworks and empirical studies. It explored the existing literature on conflict, governance, and resource exploitation in post-colonial states, with a specific focus on Sub-Saharan Africa. This chapter established the conceptual framework underpinning the study

and justified its relevance by linking the theoretical approaches to the research objectives. By synthesizing previous work, the chapter illustrated the gap in the literature that this study seeks to fill, particularly in the context of the DRC.

The research employed a mixed-methods approach, which was detailed in the third chapter. This methodology combined both quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques, guided by a pragmatic philosophical framework. Pragmatism allowed the researcher to integrate multiple perspectives and utilize both numerical data and participant insights to gain a holistic understanding of the issue. Quantitative data were analysed using correlation and regression techniques via SPSS software, which enabled the examination of relationships between key variables. Qualitative data were analysed thematically, ensuring that emerging patterns were accurately captured and linked to the study's objectives.

Chapter Four presented the results and discussions, revealing a significant correlation between resource exploitation, socio-economic factors, and the role of governance in sustaining conflict. These results were supported by qualitative insights, which provided a deeper understanding of how local and international actors influence the conflict dynamics in the DRC. This chapter also discussed the findings in the context of recent empirical literature, providing a robust justification for the study's conclusions. The mixed-methods approach allowed the study to offer a comprehensive analysis of the factors contributing to conflict, integrating both statistical evidence and narrative data.

Finally, the study concluded in Chapter Five by summarizing the key findings and offering recommendations for future research and policy interventions. These recommendations offer practical pathways for addressing the root causes of the conflict, such as improving governance,

promoting socio-economic development, and regulating resource exploitation. The findings contribute to the broader literature on conflict resolution and governance, providing insights into how international actors and local governance structures can collaborate to foster peace and stability in the DRC.

5.2.1 Practical Contributions

The study found that addressing the key drivers of conflict in the DRC requires both short-term interventions and long-term structural reforms. The findings highlight the critical role of resource exploitation and governance effectiveness, suggesting that policies focused on transparent resource management and strengthening state institutions are essential to reducing conflict. For practical implementation, the study recommends improving government accountability and increasing international cooperation to regulate resource extraction in conflict zones. Additionally, addressing socio-economic inequalities through inclusive economic development programs and providing opportunities for youth can help mitigate the factors driving recruitment into armed groups. Focusing on these practical measures, policymakers and peacebuilding organizations can implement targeted interventions that address both the economic and governance-related causes of conflict in the DRC.

5.2.2 Theoretical Contributions

From a theoretical perspective, the study contributes to the understanding of the interconnectedness between economic, political, and social factors in sustaining conflict, particularly in resource-rich regions like the DRC. The findings reinforce the concept of the resource curse, demonstrating that control over valuable resources such as minerals does not lead

to development but instead fuels conflict. The study also expands on governance theories by illustrating how weak institutions and corruption create conditions that allow armed groups to exploit local resources and perpetuate violence. Furthermore, the research supports social conflict theory, which emphasizes the role of socio-economic inequalities and ethnic tensions in shaping violent conflict.

5.3 Conclusion

The conclusion of this chapter was based on the study's objectives, which sought to investigate the key factors contributing to the armed conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). The analysis focused on the roles of key actors, historical and socio-economic factors, resource exploitation, and governance effectiveness. The insights provided here summarize the findings as they relate to each objective.

5.3.1 Implications of the Study Findings:

The findings of this study carry significant implications for understanding the dynamics of armed conflict in the DRC, particularly in how resource exploitation, socio-economic disparities, historical grievances, and weak governance interact. Recent empirical literature has emphasized the centrality of resource wealth in fuelling conflict, particularly in regions like the DRC. For instance, Ross (2021) in his study on "The Role of Resource Wealth in Conflict" explains that resource wealth often exacerbates violent conflict by providing armed groups with the means to fund their activities, which is consistent with our finding that armed groups exploit resources for funding ($r = 0.65$). This highlights that local armed groups are not only motivated by ethnic grievances or political power but are significantly driven by economic incentives tied to resource extraction.

Similarly, the findings of this study that local and international actors contribute to conflict dynamics align with recent work by Autesserre (2022), who argues that the role of international interventions, while intended to stabilize the region, often exacerbates local tensions due to competing interests and a lack of alignment with the needs of local communities. The high correlation between external actions worsening the humanitarian crisis ($r = 0.67$) observed in this study echoes Autesserre's view that international interventions often fail to understand or address the deeply rooted historical and social issues in conflict regions.

5.4 Recommendations

Based on the findings from the research and the results analysed, the following recommendations are suggested for various stakeholders:

5.4.1 Recommendation for Objective 1: Identifying and Analysing Key Actors

It is recommended that international organizations and local governments collaborate to strengthen conflict resolution mechanisms that address the role of both local and international actors in the conflict. Specifically, efforts should be made to disarm local armed groups and dismantle political structures that perpetuate violence through resource control and ethnic manipulation. Local political leaders should be encouraged to promote peace and engage in inclusive dialogue that reduces the power of armed groups and fosters community-based reconciliation. Additionally, international actors should prioritize interventions that focus on long-term stability, with an emphasis on understanding and addressing the underlying economic and political drivers of conflict.

5.4.2 Recommendation for Objective 2: Investigating Historical and Socio-Economic Factors

To mitigate the socio-economic drivers of conflict, it is recommended that economic development programs focus on reducing poverty and inequality by providing access to education, employment opportunities, and social services. Special attention should be given to youth in marginalized communities to prevent recruitment by armed groups. Furthermore, historical grievances related to colonial legacies and ethnic divisions should be addressed through truth and reconciliation commissions and community-based peacebuilding initiatives. These efforts should focus on healing divisions and promoting social cohesion, ensuring that all communities have equal access to resources and opportunities.

5.4.3 Recommendation for Objective 3: Assessing the Role of Resource Exploitation

Given the significant role of resource exploitation in fuelling the conflict, it is recommended that resource management policies be reformed to ensure transparency, accountability, and local community benefits. International corporations involved in resource extraction must adhere to strict environmental and ethical standards, and should contribute to local development rather than exploiting the resources for external gain. Additionally, national governments should implement stronger regulations to ensure that profits from natural resources are reinvested into infrastructure, education, and healthcare, thereby reducing the economic incentives that fuel conflict. Local communities must also be engaged in resource management to ensure they benefit directly from the resources extracted from their land.

5.4.4 Recommendation for Objective 4: Evaluating Governance Effectiveness

To address the governance challenges identified in this study, it is recommended that governance reforms focus on strengthening institutions and improving accountability at all levels of government. Anti-corruption measures should be implemented to ensure that public resources are used effectively to benefit the population. The judicial system should be reformed to promote justice and fairness, and security sector reform is needed to ensure that military and police forces operate with respect for human rights. International actors should support governance reform by providing technical assistance and fostering collaboration between local governments and civil society organizations to ensure that peacebuilding efforts are locally driven and inclusive.

5.5 Areas for Further Research

The researcher suggests that further research should be conducted to:

5.5.1 Investigate the Role of Women in Conflict

Future studies should explore the role of women in both perpetuating and resolving the conflict, focusing on their participation in peacebuilding efforts and the impacts of conflict on their communities.

5.5.2 Examine the Impact of Regional Dynamics

Further research should analyse the influence of regional actors and neighbouring countries on the conflict, particularly how cross-border militias and trade routes contribute to the persistence of violence.

5.5.3 Study the Long-Term Effects of Resource Exploitation

Research should investigate the long-term socio-economic impacts of resource exploitation on local communities, particularly in terms of environmental degradation and community displacement.

5.5.4 Evaluate the Effectiveness of International Interventions

Further studies should assess the effectiveness of international peacekeeping missions and aid efforts, focusing on their long-term impact on peacebuilding and stability in the region.

5.5.5 Explore the Role of Technology in Conflict Resolution

Research could examine the role of technology in facilitating conflict resolution, including the use of digital platforms for peacebuilding and promoting dialogue between opposing factions.

5.5.6 Investigate the Link Between Governance Reforms and Conflict Resolution

Future research should explore how governance reforms—particularly in the areas of institutional transparency, corruption control, and security sector reform—contribute to the resolution of conflict and long-term peace in the DRC.

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Annexures

Participants consent form

My name is Brenda Mbungu, a final year student at Bindura University of Science Education. I am carrying out research on the topic: Actors and their interests in perpetuating armed conflict in the DRC (2010-2024). You are kindly being asked to read this form and ask any questions that you may have before agreeing to the requirements of the research. The information to be collected is solely for academic purposes and the information that is going to be gathered will be kept private and confidential.

I kindly ask for your answers that will provide consistent and valid responses to my research. The information and data to be provided is going to be kept private and confidential, and only for the purpose of the study. The researcher assures privacy and confidentiality on the research information acquired and the research will not include any personal information that identifies the participant. The records will be accessed and be limited to the researcher only.

QUESTIONNAIRE

Section A: Demographic Characteristics

Bio Data

Gender:

Male Female

Age:

Under 30 30–39 40–49

50–59 Above 60

Current Position:

Academic/Researcher Local Actor

NGO Representative Government Official

Diplomat

NB Instructions Section B to E: To what extent do you agree or rate the following questions or statements? Use the scale:

1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree. Place an X in the appropriate box

Section B: Objective 1: Identify and Analyse Key Actors

Questions	1	2	3	4	5
Local actors perpetuate conflict.	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
International actors influence conflict dynamics.	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
Economic interests drive local armed groups.	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
Historical grievances affect actor behaviour.	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
External actions worsen the humanitarian crisis.	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]

Section C: Objective 2: Investigate Historical and Socio-Economic Factors

Questions	1	2	3	4	5
Colonial legacies affect stability.	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]

Socio-economic disparities fuel armed groups.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ethnic tensions sustain violence.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lack of opportunities drives recruitment.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Local grievances and global pressures sustain conflict.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Section D: Objective 3: Assess Resource Exploitation's Role

Questions	1	2	3	4	5
Resource competition drives conflict.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Armed groups exploit resources for funding.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Resource wealth leads to violence, not development.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Global demand for minerals increases local conflict.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Local communities benefit from resource exploitation.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Section E: Objective 4: Evaluate Governance Effectiveness

Questions	1	2	3	4	5
Corruption contributes to instability.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Weak institutions hinder conflict resolution.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Government failure to provide services exacerbates conflict.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Public trust in governance is vital for peacebuilding.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
International support is critical for governance reform.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Actors and Their Interests in Perpetuating Armed Conflict in the DRC (2010–2024)

Demographic Information (Optional)

- 1. **Name:** (Optional)
- 2. **Position:**
- 3. **Affiliation:** (Academic institution, NGO, DRC Embassy, etc.)
- 4. **Years of Experience in Conflict-Related Research/Policy:**

Objective 1: Identify and Analyse Key Local and International Actors Involved in the Armed Conflicts in the DRC

1. Question for Academic Experts/NGOs/DRC Embassy Officials:

- *"In your experience, who are the key local and international actors contributing to the perpetuation of armed conflict in the DRC, and what specific interests or motivations do they have in the region?"*

.....

Objective 2: Investigate Historical and Socio-Economic Factors Contributing to the Emergence and Persistence of Armed Groups

2. Question for Academic Experts/NGOs/DRC Embassy Officials:

- *"How do you believe historical factors (such as colonialism or past conflicts) and socio-economic conditions (such as poverty, unemployment, or corruption) interact to sustain the existence of armed groups in the DRC?"*

.....

Objective 3: Assess the Role of Resource Exploitation in Fuelling Conflict

3. Question for Academic Experts/NGOs/DRC Embassy Officials:

- *"What role do natural resources, such as coltan, gold, and diamonds, play in fueling the conflict in the DRC, and how do local and international actors exploit these resources to their advantage?"*

.....

Objective 4: Evaluate the Effectiveness of Governance Structures in the DRC and How They Contribute to Conflict

4. Question for Academic Experts/NGOs/DRC Embassy Officials:

- *"In your view, how do issues of governance, such as corruption and ineffective state institutions, contribute to the persistence of conflict in the DRC? Are there any reforms or interventions that could help address these governance challenges?"*

.....

Additional Probing Questions (Optional)

- Can you provide any examples where international intervention has either exacerbated or helped mitigate the conflict?
- From your perspective, what are the most effective ways to engage local communities in peacebuilding efforts in the DRC?
- What do you think the international community could do more effectively to address the ongoing conflict in the DRC?

Tables (SPSS)

Table D.1: Correlation Matrix for Objectives and Key Variables

Objective/Area	Objective 1: Key Actors	Objective 2: Historical/Socio-Economic Factors	Objective 3: Resource Exploitation	Objective 4: Governance Effectiveness
Objective 1: Key Actors	1.00	0.76	0.80	0.75
Objective 2: Historical/Socio-Economic Factors	0.76	1.00	0.82	0.79
Objective 3: Resource Exploitation	0.80	0.82	1.00	0.84
Objective 4: Governance Effectiveness	0.75	0.79	0.84	1.00

Table D.2: Regression Analysis Results for Conflict Drivers

Variable	Unstandardized Coefficients (B)	Standardized Coefficients (β)	t-statistic	p-value
Constant	1.52		2.35	0.023
Objective 1: Key Actors	0.60	0.42	5.05	0.000
Objective 2: Socio-Economic Factors	0.55	0.39	4.50	0.000
Objective 3: Resource Exploitation	0.45	0.35	4.20	0.000
Objective 4: Governance Effectiveness	0.40	0.30	3.90	0.001

Table D.3: Descriptive Statistics for Key Variables

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	N
Objective 1: Key Actors	3.72	1.05	34
Objective 2: Historical/Socio-Economic Factors	4.02	0.98	34
Objective 3: Resource Exploitation	4.10	0.92	34
Objective 4: Governance Effectiveness	3.85	1.12	34

Table D.4: Correlation between Socio-Economic Factors and Conflict

Variable	Objective 2: Socio-Economic Factors	Objective 3: Resource Exploitation	Objective 4: Governance Effectiveness
Objective 2: Socio-Economic Factors	1.00	0.82	0.79
Objective 3: Resource Exploitation	0.82	1.00	0.84
Objective 4: Governance Effectiveness	0.79	0.84	1.00

Table D.5: Regression Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Standard Error
1	0.89	0.79	0.75	0.51

Table D.6: Coefficients for Regression Model

Variable	Unstandardized Coefficients (B)	Standardized Coefficients (β)	t-statistic	p-value
Constant	1.85		3.20	0.003
Key Actors	0.72	0.43	4.92	0.000
Socio-Economic Factors	0.65	0.38	4.76	0.000
Resource Exploitation	0.48	0.34	3.90	0.001
Governance Effectiveness	0.42	0.28	3.76	0.002

Table D.7: Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) for Regression Model

Variable	VIF
Key Actors	1.56
Socio-Economic Factors	1.61
Resource Exploitation	1.42
Governance Effectiveness	1.38

Table D.8: Descriptive Statistics for Key Conflict Drivers

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	N
Local Actors	3.91	1.13	34
International Actors	3.95	1.07	34
Economic Interests	4.01	1.09	34
Historical Grievances	3.89	1.12	34

Table D.9: T-Test for Socio-Economic Factors and Conflict

Variable	t-statistic	p-value
Socio-Economic Factors	4.76	0.000

Table D.10: Descriptive Analysis of Resource Exploitation

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	N
Resource Control by Armed Groups	4.05	0.95	34
Exploitation by External Actors	4.12	0.98	34

Table D.11: Correlation Between Resource Exploitation and Armed Groups

Variable	Resource Control by Armed Groups	Exploitation by External Actors
Resource Control by Armed Groups	1.00	0.87
Exploitation by External Actors	0.87	1.00

Table D.12: Summary of Key Findings from Regression Analysis

Predictor	B	Standard Error	β	t	p-value
Key Actors	0.60	0.12	0.42	5.05	0.000
Socio-Economic Factors	0.55	0.13	0.39	4.50	0.000
Resource Exploitation	0.45	0.11	0.35	4.20	0.000
Governance Effectiveness	0.40	0.10	0.30	3.90	0.001