



Original Research

AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO THE DOUBLE REGISTRATION OF AFRICAN NATIONALS.

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ABSTRACT

The study objective was to investigate the factors contributing to the double registration of Nationals in Africa. This study adapts constructivism theory, an international relations theory whose historical development dates back to the late 20th century to explain how the role of evolving norms and ideas in international relations, influence state behaviour and policy development on issues like refugee identification. A mixed-methods approach was adopted involving both qualitative and quantitative data for in-depth analysis. Questionnaire, interview guides and focus groups were used for data collection and participants were identified purposively. The study's scope was limited to Garissa County in Northern Kenya, specifically in Dadaab and Fafi Sub-Counties, chosen for their significant population of Kenyan Somali and its proximity to Somalia. A determined sample size of three hundred and ninety (390) respondents was used for this study. Historical and political factors, such as past conflicts and inconsistent government policies, significantly contribute to this issue, alongside socioeconomic disparities and the impact of the 1991 drought, which have driven individuals to seek multiple registrations for survival. The consequences of double registration are severe, leading to denial of opportunities, lack of access to essential services, identity confusion, and legal complications for those affected. To address these challenges, the study recommends enhancing the capacity and infrastructure of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics systems, utilizing biometric and digital identification technologies, developing stringent policies to prevent and address double registration, conducting public awareness campaigns, implementing targeted programs to alleviate socioeconomic disparities, and ensuring that humanitarian aid and social protection programs inclusively reach all individuals regardless of their registration status.

Key Words: Constructivism theory, Double registration, African Nationals, Refugee and Kenya.

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Double registration of nationals, where individuals are registered multiple times within a country's official systems, is an issue that has significant implications for governance, resource allocation, and national security across Africa. This phenomenon, often arising due to administrative inefficiencies, lack of robust identification systems, and socio-political factors, presents a multifaceted challenge to governments striving for accurate population data and effective public

service delivery. Several socio-economic factors also contribute to double registration. High levels of internal migration, driven by economic opportunities or conflict, often result in individuals registering in new locations without deregistering from their previous ones. Additionally, cultural practices and lack of awareness about the implications of multiple registrations further compound the problem. Political dynamics play a critical role in this issue as well. In some instances, double registration is deliberately pursued for electoral advantages, with political actors encouraging supporters to register in multiple constituencies to influence election outcomes. This not only undermines the democratic process but also erodes public trust in electoral systems and institutions.

The implications of double registration are profound. It distorts demographic data, which is crucial for effective planning and resource allocation, leading to inefficiencies and inequities in public service delivery. It also complicates efforts to combat fraud and corruption, particularly in social protection programs and other government initiatives that rely on accurate beneficiary data. Moreover, it poses security risks by making it easier for individuals to evade law enforcement and engage in illegal activities. Addressing the issue of double registration requires a comprehensive approach that includes improving the CRVS systems, enhancing inter-agency coordination, and leveraging technology to create interoperable and secure identification systems. Public awareness campaigns and stringent legal frameworks are also essential to mitigate the socio-economic and political factors contributing to the problem.

This study aims to investigate the underlying factors contributing to double registration of nationals in Africa, with a focus on understanding the administrative, socio-economic, and political dimensions of the issue. By identifying these factors, the study seeks to provide insights that can inform policy and practical interventions to address this challenge and enhance the integrity and efficiency of national registration systems in African countries.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK; CONSTRUCTIVISM THEORY

This study adapts constructivism theory, an international relations theory whose historical development dates back to the late 20th century. Wendt (1992) who propounded this theory in his article, "*Anarchy is What States Make of It*," provided insights that challenged other theories. (Wendt, 1992) The theory argues that states' awareness and interpretations of how they interact with different actors in the international system depend on the established norms and identities rather than solely material interests.

Onuf (2018) posits that human rights are not discovered, but socially constructed through ongoing interactions and power dynamics within international communities, historical processes, political struggles, and evolving norms. Her constructivist perspective applies to refugee rights, as the very definition and scope of who constitutes a refugee and the rights they deserve, have been historically contested and continue to evolve through international negotiations and advocacy efforts. When we consider constructivist thoughts on power dynamics, then, Wendt (2019) suggests that power plays a crucial role in the construction and recognition of human rights. In this case, dominant states and actors within the international system hold significant power in shaping the discourse surrounding refugee rights and influencing which groups are granted protection and inclusion.

Nicholas (2022) contends that international norms, which have shared expectations about appropriate behaviour, play a significant role in influencing how states interact. As norms evolve, they have the power to shape state actions and contribute to their diffusion and acceptance within

various institutions. Further, he argues that constructivism gives details on how international norms, such as human rights can influence state behaviour by either advocating for or giving a path to other institutions for lobbying (Onuf, 2018).

This theory is important to this study, as it provides valuable insights into the dynamics of collaboration between states and civil society organizations in addressing issues like refugee identification, human and refugees' rights and double registration. It highlights the process of socialization and learning that government officials undergo as they interact with organizations like Haki na Sheria. This collaborative process fosters receptiveness to normative changes that favour refugee and Kenyans identification, verification, and deregistration.

In the case of collaboration between the Kenyan government and UNHCR, constructivism emphasizes the significance of evolving norms related to the harmonization of identities in shaping the government's willingness to address double registration challenges in Northern Kenya. It highlights the role of ideas and norms in international relations and policymaking, providing a perspective that extends beyond material interests and power considerations.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Cresswell (2014) considers research methodology as a plan of action, strategy, or approach that guides the researcher in achieving the research objectives. From his definition, it suggests that research methodology is not a set of rigid rules or procedures, but rather a flexible framework that can be tailored to the specific research question and context. Further, Cresswell (2014) outlines different research approaches in his work including quantitative research that utilizes numerical data and statistical analysis to examine patterns, relationships, and correlations. Qualitative research that explores non-numerical data, such as interviews, observations, perspectives, and documents. The last approach that he outlines is mixed method research which combines both qualitative and quantitative approaches to gain a more comprehensive understanding of a complex phenomenon.

Research Design

Creswell (2014) defines research design as the systematic framework outlining the structure, approach, and strategies to conduct a research study. He suggests that it encompasses the overall blueprint that guides researchers in collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data to address specific research questions or objectives. This study used a mixed methods research design, which entailed both qualitative and quantitative approaches. This offered reliability in terms of operational approach to gain a more comprehensive understanding of a complex phenomenon. A research design addresses issues on the location of the study thus this study also adopted a descriptive design to establish individuals with double registration specifically in Garissa County in Northern Kenya.

Target Population

According to Trochim (2008), the target population refers to a section of the entire group of individuals, objects, or events that a researcher aims to investigate or draw conclusions about in their study. This includes all the elements that share specific characteristics or traits relevant to the research inquiry. The primary target population of this study were the Kenyan Somali nationals in Garissa County in Northern Kenya living in Dadaab and Fafi Sub-Counties. Others targeted key informants included Governor, Senator, Members of Parliament, Members of County Assembly, Women Representatives, Chiefs, Local Administrators, Directors of Human and Civil Rights Organizations.

Sample Population

A sample population is a segment of a larger group that is chosen to represent the entire identified group (Creswell, 2014). Further, Creswell suggests that the subgroup is chosen to reflect the characteristics and demographics of a population. The response rate is expected to be at least 60% of the sampled population. Fincham (2008) argues that a researcher's goal regarding response rate should be approximately sixty per cent (60%) of the assisted population (15,000). This will offer greater insights into analyzing and concluding the study; therefore, the sample size was derived by using Slovin's Formula:

$$n = N / (1 + N * e^2)$$

Where:

Entire population = **74,000**

n is the sample size/ population

N is the population size = **15,000** (Assisted population)

e is the margin of error = **± 5%**

$$n = 15,000 / (1 + 15,000 * 0.05^2)$$

$$n = 390$$

Therefore, the study adopted a sample size of three hundred and ninety (390) respondents as derived from the above calculation.

Construction of Research Instruments

According to Trochim (2006), research instruments are tools that are used by a researcher to gather information from the identified sample of the population. Research instruments encompass the entire process, including the survey questionnaire, structured interview, observational checklist, document review, or database, that a researcher uses to collect data (Creswell, 2014). These instruments can be used to collect both quantitative and qualitative data.

Data Collection Methods and Procedures

The data collection methods that were used in this study were influenced by the research objectives, the type of data required and the characteristics of the targeted group. Therefore, both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods were used to achieve the purpose of the study (Creswell, 2014). The study used secondary data analysis from different documentation including books, journal articles, internet web pages, official government documents, reports, and documentaries. This provided vast information for the qualitative method. The quantitative data collection method included the use of interview schedules, focus group discussions and questionnaires that enabled the collection of reliable information for the study (Krueger, 2009).

The researcher obtained relevant documents before the commencement of the study from the institution that entailed the introductory letter, further, the researcher obtained the required permits from different institutions and organizations that offered clearance.

FINDINGS

Response Rate

A determined sample size of three hundred and ninety (390) respondents was used for this study. The researcher had a chance to collect and analyse two hundred and fifty-four (254) questionnaires, which were filled. The responses from five (5) key informants and twelve (12) participants from the focus group discussion raised the total number of respondents to two hundred and seventy-one (271) respondents for the study. This represented sixty-three percent (69%) of the determined sample size-390. Various respondents failed to take part in the study as they suggested to have been occupied while others forgot the agreed date, day, and time for different scheduled sessions. It was unfortunate as some respondents were afraid to speak of their experience because of the fear to be stigmatized from the attributions of their identity. Different discourses have been established based on the best response rate that a researcher should use in any given study. According to Fincham (2008), an approximate of sixty percent (60%) of the total sample size should be the ultimate goal of researchers to draw reliable conclusions from the findings. Therefore, the researcher regarded that the 69% response rate was satisfactory as it was above the suggested 60%.

Factors Contributing to the Double Registration of Nationals

The researcher considered that the demographic information of the respondents was more likely to influence their level of participation and sharing their opinions about the double registration on Kenyan Somali national from the location of the study. The information covered in this study were: Gender, age, marital status, and level of education of the respondents. The information in this section was obtained through quantitative method, specifically from the questionnaires.

Familiarity with the Concept of Double Registration

The researcher asked a question to the respondents if they were familiar with the concept of double registration among Kenyan Somali Nationals in Garissa County. It was not surprising that all respondents from both Fafi and Dadaab sub-counties reported being familiar with the concept of double registration among Kenyan Somali Nationals as indicated in Table 1. This unanimous familiarity indicated that double registration is a pervasive and well-recognized issue within these communities. A respondent during a focus group discussion from Fafi Sub- County of Garissa County pointed out that:

“The case of double registration among Kenyan Somali nationals is not a new thing here in Fafi. Most of the people are either double registered or have had interactions with the double registered individuals. The challenges faced by this people, became a community thing, where we had to offer support to them regardless of their identity nature, because they are our own” (F.G.D, 2024).

The avowal by the key informant from Fafi Sub- County was dependable to a study by Gervais (2018) who revealed that double registration was a prevalent problem in a society given that, the community might be victims of civil wars, and the majority of those who fled the country faced challenges upon their return. According to him, a good percentage of them find themselves registered in multiple camps database. From Gervais argument, we can contend that after a return of a given group to their ancestral land after an existing calamity, either natural or artificial, the threat of double registration poses especially if they crossed the borders. Therefore, they air

grievances to the societal leaders to seek help and when it is pronounced to be very exponential, thus the spread of their condition about identity.

Table 1: The Respondents’ Familiarity with the Concept of Double Registration among Kenyan Somali Nationals

Opinion	Fafi	(%)	Dadaab	(%)	Total Percent
Yes	127	100.0	127	100.0	100.0
No	0	0.0	0	0.0	0.0
Total	127	100.0	127	100.0	100.0

Source, Author, 2024

Agreement on Historical and Political Factors

The researcher sought to know if the respondents either agreed to the statement that historical and political factors influenced the occurrence of double registration among Kenyan Somali nationals in Garissa County. All respondents from both Fafi and Dadaab sub-counties consistently agreed that historical and political factors influence the occurrence of double registration in Northern Kenya as represented in Table 2. Their rate of response indicated a shared recognition of the significant role these factors play in the phenomenon of double registration. The response from the sampled population was similar to sentiments of an individual in a Haki na Sheria Documentary on double registration of Kenyan citizens in Northeastern region. He noted that:

“The mess of drought of the 1990s sent many people of the Northeastern region into refugee camps in Dadaab in search for survival and better life. Their details were biometrically captured and stored in the UNHCR database,” (Sheria, 2022).

From a political perspective, a key informant noted that:

“Government policies and administrative practices play a critical role in the political influence of this issue. Policies aimed at managing migration, refugee status, and citizenship have sometimes been inconsistent or discriminatory, exacerbating the problem of double registration,” (K.I, 2024).

Therefore, from the two statements, the study revealed that the pervasive issue of double registration in Garissa County, is resulting phenomena from both historical and political events. A study by Adjami (2016) suggested that this concept was coupled with political maneuvering and economic instability leading to the enactment of discriminatory nationality that excluded certain ethnic groups, particularly those with mixed ancestry. Though it was an approach to inclusive citizenship it shifted to a more restrictive one causing double registration. Consenting to argument, Korir (2019) explored the prevalence of double registration among the Luo community in Kenya, she highlighted that the role of historical factors, political manipulation and socioeconomic marginalization contributed to the factor under study. Further, she argued that the forced assimilation policies during the colonial era and subsequent marginalization of the community led to identification confusion and inconsistencies in registration. Furthermore, a report from the UNHCR revealed that the origins of double registration was traced back to the incursion of Somali refugees into Kenya during the 1991 civil war in Somalia (UNHCR, 2023). In response to the humanitarian crisis, the Kenyan Government, and the United Nations High Commissioner for

Refugees (UNHCR) established refugee camps in Northern Kenya including Dadaab. In these camps, access to food and other essential services was provided to the refugees (Leander, 2003). Therein, revealing the role of political factor in exacerbating the underlying phenomena.

Table 2: Respondents’ Agreement on Whether Historical and Political Factors Influence the Occurrence of Double Registration in Northern Kenya

Opinion	Fafi	(%)	Dadaab	(%)	Total Percent
Agree	127	100.0	127	100.0	100.0
Disagree	0	0.0	0	0.0	0.0
Total	127	100.0	127	100.0	100.0

Source, Author, 2024

Extent of Socioeconomic Disparities Contribution

The researcher pursued the views of the respondents on the extent to which socioeconomic disparities contribute to the prevalence of double registration among Kenyan Somali nationals in Northern Kenya. The data represented in Table 3 from Fafi and Dadaab concerning the extent of opinion across different categories showed a marked trend towards a significant majority expressing their views to a large extent. In Fafi, out of 127 respondents, 102 individuals (80.3%) indicated that they held their opinion to a large extent, while 25 individuals (19.7%) expressed their opinion to a moderate extent, with none reporting “no extent” or “do not know”. Similarly, in Dadaab, 107 out of 127 respondents (84.3%) expressed their opinion to a large extent, and 20 respondents (15.7%) to a moderate extent, again with no respondents indicating “no extent” or “do not know”. When considering the total percentages for both locations combined, 82.3% of the respondents articulated their opinion to a large extent, and 17.7% to a moderate extent, with no reports of indifference or uncertainty.

The analysed data related to the argument by Korir (2019), who suggested that the role of socioeconomic marginalization contributed to the issue of double registration of citizens. Therefore, the researcher contended that socioeconomic disparities contributed to the prevalence of double registration among Kenyan Somali nationals in Northern Kenya.

Table 3: Respondents’ Views on The Extent to which Socioeconomic Disparities Contribute to the Prevalence of Double Registration among Kenyan Somali Nationals in Northern Kenya

Opinion	Fafi	(%)	Dadaab	(%)	Total Percent
Moderate extent	25	19.7	20	15.7	17.7
Large extent	102	80.3	107	84.3	82.3
No extent	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Do not know	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Total	127	100.0	127	100.0	100.0

Source, Author, 2024

Impact of the 1991 Drought

The researcher sought to establish whether it was true or false that the 1991 drought in Garissa County led many individuals to opt for refugee status due to harsh conditions, resulting in vulnerability and subsequent cases of double registration among Kenyan Somali Nationals in Garissa County. Absolutely, all respondents from both Fafi and Dadaab sub-counties unanimously agreed that the 1991 drought in Northern Kenya led to increased vulnerability and subsequent cases of double registration due to individuals opting for refugee status as indicated in Table . Following a commentary by an individual in a documentary by Haki na Sheria, the respondent suggested that:

“Watoto wakiona chakula na kukimbia, hata mimi bado kuingia kidole yangu bado kuingiza huko. Ukavu siku hyo. Iko ukavu mingi sana. UN ndo inaleta hapo, kwa mahali sisi tunakaa, wanaleta chakula. Watu wanaingia, hata huwezi itishwa kipande. Wanaandika jina yao, ndo waliingia namna hyo. Kama mimi naweza jua, Watoto yangu wanaweza kufungika hapo, siwezi kubali. Lakini hata Watoto hawajui. Na mimi sijui, niliona chakula, kwa faida ya chakula,” (Sheria, 2022).

The translation of the above sentiments was as follows after a further analysis:

“My children went to the refugee camp because of food rations being given. Personally, my fingerprints are not in the UNHCR database. The drought was intense during that time. The UN brought food to our homes and many people registered, they did not ask for identification, they distributed food, and registered beneficiaries’ names and that is how they became refugees. If I knew my children would be registered as refugees, I would not have allowed it. We did not know, we just needed the food because of hunger,”

From the further analysis, it was noted that indeed hunger contributed to the registration of Kenyan Somali in Northern Kenya. Majority of them (minors) did not know why they were registered and the consequences they would bare in future. They leave in regrets over the need of food, even though it was their right to receive humanitarian aid. The analysed data was consistent with the report by the Haki na Sheria (2021). According to the report, the integrated UNHCR database with the Kenyan government register of persons containing fingerprints and other information was a key factor leading to the existence of double registration in Northern Kenya. The report, consequently, related the drought condition of 1991, which made a lot of individuals opt for refugee status and the harsh conditions in the camps made them renounce their status hence the vulnerable were exposed as victims of double registration. To build on the report’s findings, the empirical study conducted by Ibrahim (2012) pointed out that the registration process for individuals was often fraught with challenges including language barriers, cultural differences, and logistical difficulties that led to inaccuracies in registration records resulting in some Kenyan citizens being mistakenly registered as refugees. Further, he argued that the existing prolonged drought conditions, and lack of essential infrastructures including educational, and healthcare facilities within the region, made some Kenyan Somali deliberately register themselves as refugees to access the benefits and services provided to refugees.

Table 4: Respondents’ Views on Whether the 1991 Drought in Northern Kenya Led to Increased Vulnerability and Subsequent Cases of Double Registration among Kenyan Somali National

Opinion	Fafi	(%)	Dadaab	(%)	Total Percent
Yes	127	100.0	127	100.0	100.0
No	0	0.0	0	0.0	0.0
Total	127	100.0	127	100.0	100.0

Source, Author, 2024

Effects of Double Registration on Individuals

Through an open-ended question, the researcher obtained the view from the respondent on how double registration of Kenyan Somali Nationals in Garissa County affected individuals in Fafi and Daadab sub-counties. Through thematic analysis, common themes from respondents included denial of opportunities, lack of access to education, jobs, and services, identity dilemma, and legal problems. They highlighted several effects of double registration, including denial of opportunities, lack of access to essential services, identity confusion, and legal complications. A key informant pointed out that:

“The majority of the people who are double registered are surrounded by different problems within the society. From legal, access to employment and even basic services, name them. The Kenyan system you will notice that it requires a lot of formalities when it comes to accessing services as the registration process requires documentation like birth certificates and identification cards. Most of these victims, do not have them,” (K.I, 2024).

The comments from the key informant were similar to those in an empirical study by Nyamwasa (2022) who argued that the inability to obtain a Kenyan national identity card, a prerequisite for many aspects of the country, further compounds the difficulties faced by double registrants. He noted that without an ID card, they cannot travel, open bank accounts, or subscribe to a communications service provider.

CONCLUSION

The study reveals that the phenomenon of double registration among Kenyan Somali nationals in Garissa County is pervasive and well-recognized within the community, with all respondents from both Fafi and Dadaab sub-counties reporting familiarity with the concept. Historical and political factors, such as past conflicts and inconsistent government policies, play a significant role in the prevalence of double registration, as highlighted by respondents and corroborated by previous studies. Socioeconomic disparities and the impact of the 1991 drought have further exacerbated this issue, driving individuals to seek refugee status for survival, thus leading to multiple registrations. The consequences of double registration are profound, resulting in denial of opportunities, lack of access to essential services, identity confusion, and legal complications for affected individuals. The study underscores the need for comprehensive policy interventions to address the root causes and mitigate the adverse effects of double registration in Northern Kenya.

RECOMMENDATION

- The capacity and infrastructure of CRVS systems should be enhanced to ensure accurate and comprehensive data collection.
- Biometric technology and digital identification systems should be utilized to create secure, interoperable national databases that reduce the risk of duplicate registrations.
- Stringent policies to prevent and address double registration should be developed and implemented, including clear guidelines for deregistration and legal frameworks to penalize deliberate double registration.
- Public awareness campaigns should be conducted to educate communities about the implications of double registration and the importance of maintaining accurate identity records.
- Targeted programs to alleviate socioeconomic disparities that drive individuals towards double registration should be developed, including poverty alleviation, employment opportunities, and access to basic services.
- Humanitarian aid and social protection programs should be inclusive and effectively reach all individuals, regardless of their registration status.

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