Sociology of Gender, Social Cohesion and Cultural Diversity Struggles of Susu-Guinean Emigrants in Kambia District, Northern Sierra Leone

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Abstract:
Following the dawning of democracy in Guinea-Conakry, wide-ranging transformations have occurred in many sectors of the Guinean society. While many positive transformations have occurred in the current dispensation; however, the assurance of democracy has not been positively engaged. The aspiration for cultural collectivity and confidence in the government method seems to be abstract to which many are still endeavoring. The historic devastation in the Guinean economy and the turbulent nature of the country’s politics since the year 2020-2021 triggered a massive exodus that swelled the Kambia District population, particularly in Northern Sierra Leone. The influx of Susu-Guineans in the Kambia District, Northern Sierra Leone, triggered cultural diversity challenges. These involved social cohesion and assimilation. Though some academics have scanned the impact of immigration on social cohesion and assimilation in the current society, little is known about how Susu-Guineans established in many sectors of the Kambia District, Northern Sierra Leone. Neither is there an obvious, scientifically composed acknowledgement of the character of affinity with relatives and acquaintances who endured in Guinea-Conakry. This paper explores to bond the gap in scholarship in Kambia District, Northern Sierra Leone. Semi-structured interview models were utilized in an exploratory path to facilitate conversations with a judgmental sample of thirty-six folks who left Guinea for Sierra Leone. Thematic content analysis was utilized to analyze the data. Cultural diversity brought about lofty thresholds of uncertainty or skepticism with their neighbors, verbal and physical xenophobic aggressions, identity crisis, general family disorientation and disintegration were convened as some of the repercussions of the compulsory migration into Kambia District, Northern Sierra Leone. Most of the respondents delivered a stout ambition to return home once the political and economic conditions revised.

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constitutes both “ourselves” and “them” mindset. Kandeh (2014) argues that there is something positive in cultural diversity, whilst at the same time acknowledges that some Sierra Leonean folks get discriminated or marginalized because they belong to a diverse group, essentially on ethnic or political grounds.

Established on this postulate, ethnicity fetches complicated cultural diversity challenges. This is so because it would not stand alone as a variable, but it is made more complicated when mingled with politics, social, cultural, and economic affairs. Jacoubek et al. (2021) argue that ethnicity is the result of the formulation of social limitations as a boundary marker that separates one group of folks from another. Holistically speaking, ethnicity is linked to a cultural population subgroup with a common national or cultural tradition. Many examples are used in this research to buttress and affirm this position utilising the Kambia District case. In other words, ethnic thinking and mobilisation holistically emerge from inequitable access to power and resources and not from an intrinsic hatred (Sikor and Lund, 2010). This envelope all community circles, be it economic or employment. Competition for scarce resources, political persuasion, and employment, commit to cultural diversity being perceived as a curse.

Bangura (2019) argues that conflicts are fuelled by a number of potent identity-based factors and wider perceptions of economic and social injustice. In particular is the distribution and means of sharing economic, social and political resources within the state (Bangura, 2019).

Whilst this is the case, Minbaeva (2020), notes some positive aspects of cultural diversity. This is in the form of cultural diversity. It posits that beyond the existence of cultural diversity, are aesthetic, moral and instrumental value. For Gocłowska et al. (2020), within cultural diversity is the expression of human creativity, the embodiment of human strivings and the sum of humanity’s collective experience.

In recent years, cultural diversity is attributed to space-time compression connected to the speed of current communications and transportation technologies, as well as the proliferating complexity of social interactions and the multiplying overlay of individual and collective social identities (Santos & Azevedo, 2019).

Literature Review

This research examined the challenges Susu-Guinean emigrants faced in Kambia District, from the period around the late 2020. This was done by tracking and linking the areas of emigrants origin to the receiving country. Cultural diversity affairs were explored. This research was carried out in Kambia district targeting folks, who have been in the Kambia District, Susu-Guineans on holiday or visit, their spouses, children, relatives, and acquaintances. The aim was to pinpoint gender, social cohesion and cultural diversity struggles experienced by Susu-Guinean emigrants in Kambia District, Northern Sierra Leone as well as to authorise the character of their relationships and acquaintances with those who remain behind. This is so because when folks separate, and when folks meet new folks, gender, social amity and cultural diversity automatically comes in as an outcome of cultural diversity in emigrant lives. This deforms the threshold of gender, social cohesion and cultural diversity. Scholars such as Kofman et al. (2020) and Khattab et al. (2020) among many explored the impact of immigration on gender, social cohesion and integration in new societies, especially in women family status and political experience or upskilled agenda.

However, little is documented on Susu-Guineans who settled in many parts of the Kambia District. Nor is there an obvious, scientifically constructed understanding of the nature of relationships with relatives and acquaintances who remained in Guinea, Conakry. Oral tradition and story books inform us that many men of Susu, Fula, Mandingo, Forestair origin voluntarily migrated to Kambia District to do business and work in the farms. This was triggered by fancy stories told by those who returned from Bami (land of trade) with huge bags and tables stashed with goods. The Kambian way of life was narrated as beds of roses by returning immigrants as a cover-up of
their real experiences. Some literature narratives (For instance, short stories by Bolten (2012) in ‘I did it to save my life: Love and Survival in Sierra Leone’), portrayed hellish experiences of Susu-Guineans working in Kambian District, and other domestic spheres in the north and how they survived such experiences through love. However, since the era of time around the year 2020, the decline and disastrous collapse in the Guinean economy as well as the turbulent character of the country’s politics triggered a mass exodus that swelled the Kambia District population absolutely in Bamoi.

Migration refers to movement from one place to another. This can be within or across national boundaries of states. Literature on migration is awash with Eurocentric studies mainly the United Kingdom and the United States of America, but is very scanty on Kambia District, Northern Sierra Leone. This is despite the fact that migration has been common from time immemorial in Kambia, Northern Sierra Leone. History books documented one of the great Kambian conflict that forced people to migrate. This was known as Haidara Konthofili anti-colonialism. Konthofili tore apart and rebuilt Kambia district. Bangura (2022) mentioned Haidara (Islamist reformer) as ‘a source of northern indigenous resistance’ or (Konthofili) ‘the enigma or thorn in the flesh’. Historians also documented the Great Colonial Resistance during the first decade of the 19th Century. From these new districts were found in Northern Sierra Leone based on military power or trading connections (Deveneaux, 1975). The new districts meant creation of new communities and neighbourhoods. Conflicts also emerged. The Haidara Konthofili was head of the movement of Madingo-speaking Islamists up into the interior of Guinea-Conakry and Liberia in search of land where they could establish their own homeland, independent of British, American and French rule. Thus, it was a socio-economic and political movement, which led to conflicts, and loss of life due to cultural diversity (Bedert, 2017).

Similarly of late socio-economic meltdown and political rivalry in Guinea-Conakry, for example, in the Liberia, caused yet other Konthofili. Sierra Leone has not been spared, leading to closure of some industries, businesses, and low capacity utilisation and uptake among existing businesses. Many causes are proffered. Some of which were the Sierra Leonean government policies on investment such as the indigenisation law. It was said to be viewed as compromising to investors.

There is little scholarly work on migration in Kambia District, Northern Sierra Leone, more so, on challenges of social cohesion for the migrants. Therefore, this research attempts to close the information gap. Whilst the research will concentrate defining the concept of social amity in the paragraphs to come, in this research it refers to the bonds and willingness among folks related by either blood or the community surrounding them (society) to cooperate with each other in order to survive and prosper. Social cohesion is a multidimensional concept, which has roots in the field of comparative sociology (Delhey et al., 2018). Durkheim a Sociologist, constructed it in an attempt to inform the world that transforming Europe could weaken social solidarity in society (Thilakarathna, 2019). The fact is that “the Durkhemian social construct of solidarity still holds true with regard to the working of or keeping a society together admits all of its differences” (Thilakarathna, 2019).

The available literature, on this issue cite unemployment as one of the pushing elements. Both adults male and female, and children are found to be migrating in search of survival means. International Organisation for Migration (2020) noted that some families in areas along the borders were actively encouraging children to cross borders to seek employment. This was in an attempt to improve household food and income security. It was difficult to establish the actual levels of unemployment in Guinea-Conakry, though figures as high as 80% of the population are cited in literature. It is indisputable that high numbers of the youth were and are still being churned out of schools and tertiary institutions, and yet are not being absorbed in any industry. In 2014, the United
Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) estimated that 13 percent of Guinean children were engaged in child labour (International Labour Organization, 2021). Unaccompanied child migration has been cited in the literature. The International Labour Organization (2021) report on child labour in Guinea revealed that children were engaging in mining for long working hours and used dangerous chemicals such as mercury, cyanide and explosives. Some were involved in fishing, which is a demanding task. As a result, they faced dangers such as drowning. This flouted the children’s rights as espoused in the Constitution of Guinea-Conakry.

Guinea, recorded an ever-growing tragedy of unaccompanied and undocumented child migrants. Of the 510 children assisted by Save the Children International -Guinea at the Kambia Border Posts between June 2019 and 2020 86% were boys, and 96% were between the ages of 12 and 17. Kambia Town, Rokupr, Bamoï were cited as the major child-migrant-sending towns in Kambia district, Northern Sierra Leone (Unicef, 2019). The International Child Labour and Forced Labour Report (2021) also reported that amid the chaos in the streets, especially in Kambia Town of Sierra Leone were children begging or selling plastic bags, cigarettes and sweets, many of them having travelled unaccompanied. They risked being exploited and abused by ‘Criminal Okadas’ (criminal bike riders or smugglers), who steered them into a cycle of debt and forced labor. Girls were particularly vulnerable to sexual violence due to desperation.

Literature informs this research that a significant proportion of children of school going age were not in school due to financial constraints. Some children registered in schools were being turned away due to non-payment of school fees. Some children with parents in Guinea-Conakry are also convened to be out of school due to lack of discipline and fees. As a result, they resort to either migration, or other immoral engagements such as prostitution, early marriages, and delinquent social behaviour.

Unemployment has also been convened as the cause for most social ills, as folks struggle to survive. These include prostitution, theft, gambling, irregular migration and drug peddling among others, which involves and affects both sexes especially girls. These social transactions establish cultural diversity. This is so because society has steadied prospects. This leads to cultural diversity in social and cultural recognitions. Some parents’ migration culminated in other challenges such as child care deficit. The root of child care deficit arose from the fact that primary careers could not be coincidentally in two places at the same time, that is at home and work. This exposed children to further risks of child abuse at home, during migration and at their workplaces in other countries like Sierra Leone, Senegal, Mali, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia and Cote d'Ivoire.

As alluded above, social cohesion refers to that sense of oneness, familialhood or social solidarity. Hlebova et (2021) equated it to social solidarity or togetherness. Fonseca, et al., (2012) defined social cohesion as people living in the local area who get on well. Higgins, S.S. et al. (2021) argued that it is the strength of interactions between members of society. Boytsun et al. (2011) goes on to say that these interactions are characterised by a number of norms. The norms involve expectation, a sense of belonging and a willingness to participate. In brief, social cohesion is determined by index involving generalised expectation, interpersonal expectation, civic engagement and volunteerism. Vonneilich (2021) perceived social capital as a capital that draws benefits from social relations. Social capital is an instantiated informal norm that promotes cooperation between two or more individuals (Chen, 2016). Social capital integrates engagement, empowerment, altruism or social giving, volunteerism, expectation, communication, networking, social solidarity and social inclusion among many (Koutsouris et al., 2019). Chamie (2020) argues that migration has a lot of challenges, for example that being around people one is different from make them uncertain. Increased immigration augments cultural diversity. This decreases expectation, social solidarity, and social capital (Chamie, 2020). Migration increases human factor decay (Grabowska & Grabowska, 2019). Durkheim
felt that the transformation of Europe society due to industrialisation and globalisation included migration across boundaries of Europe (Thilakarathna, 2019). He felt that this would weaken social solidarity in society. Cultural diversity is defined and measured by ethnicity, religion, place of birth, and nationality (Schneider and Mannheim, 2020). (Howard, 2014) indicates how folks from Guinea-Conakry, Mali, Liberia, Senegal, Ghana, Nigeria and Lebanon were engaged in long distance trade and helped shape structures in Kambia District, Northern Sierra Leone.

Culture Shock

Empirical world class researches have revealed negative relationship between cultural diversity and social cohesion. VoBS (2020) argues that cultural diversity alienates folks. It has a ‘hunkering down’ impact, meaning pushing towards segregation and isolation. Jachimowicz (2017) revealed that holistic expectation and interpersonal expectation was decreased in more ethnically heterogeneous communities on poverty reduction and discounting. Dinesen revealed that people in diverse neighborhoods trusted their neighbours less and were less likely to be communally involved or participate in community politics (Dinesen, 2018). A comparative research on trust by Stole also revealed robust negative impact of cultural diversity on trust (Beugelsdijk and Klasing 2016). Levy et al. (2020) notes the fragmentation of societies as a result of increased immigration. This is so because immigration gives rise to ethnic and linguistic cultural diversity.

Nikmah et al. (2020) noted that there are conflicting demands between family and work. This impact negatively on family life and restraints the chances for broader social relationships and associations. Thus, work is an obstacle to social cohesion and not an agent of integration as is often assumed. Nikmah et al. (2020) also revealed that coming in of immigrants means more pressure on resources such as accommodation, educational resources, health facilities and other service deliveries. As a result, the stigmatisation of new arrivals as social distancing increase. The same research also revealed antagonistic responses towards new arrivals as part of a community role play and conflict.

The Kambia District Migration Project (KDMP) (2012) and Holtug and Uslaner (2021) noted that immigrants are often seen as a threat to national identity and social cohesion. Consequently, this establishes a division between those who “belong” and those who “do not belong”, the “insiders” and the “outsiders”. Kambia in recent years experienced antagonisms in the form of xenophobic violence. This shocked the Susu-Guinean community since Sierra Leoneans and foreigners had lived together in those communities since time immemorial. Whist history show some ugly treatment of foreigners by those in authority (Howard, 2014), native elderly Kambians treated fellow Susu-Guineans as brothers and sisters. Kambia District Migration Project (2020) posited that there are myths that for every migrant that had access to economic opportunity, denied a citizen a job or the opportunity to establish a business. Another myth is the concern that the influx of immigrants impedes citizens’ access to service deliverables. This concurs with Holtug and Uslaner (2021) who argued that immigration on resident communities was felt in areas ranging from language, jobs, housing, diet, arts and education. Therefore, migration has gender, social, economic, struggles, political and cultural ramifications.

Methodology

This exploratory research was carried out in Kambia District, Northern Sierra Leone in order to have a scientifically constructed understanding of the nature of relationships emigrants and their spouses, children, relatives and acquaintances who remained in Guinea-Conakry had. Kambia District shares border with Guinea-Conakry to the north, Port-Loko district to the South and Bombali to the East and the Atlantic Ocean to the West. Kambia District has approximately 301, 300 people living in 805 Villages (The Kambia Appeal United Kingdom Charity, 2022). Females constitute slightly more
than half of the people (52%) in the district. The exploratory design was used because fairly little is known on this subject especially in an Afrocentric setting. George (2021) argued that exploratory designs are conducted on researches where few or no earlier researches to refer to or rely upon to predict an outcome have been conducted. Exploratory researches focus on gaining insights and familiarity for latter investigations or undertaking research problems that are in preliminary stages of being understood. George (2021) referenced some merits associated with the exploratory research design. Exploratory design is a significant approach for gaining background information on a ‘flowery’ topic, and indeed this is fairly a flowery topic.

A semi-structured interview guide was used in this study to facilitate conversations with a judgmental sample of twenty-eight people (13 females and 15 males) in Kambia District, Northern Sierra Leone. Out of these, ten worked in Kambia Town, eight were spouses, two parents, four children and three acquaintances. Out of all the participants fourteen were married, nine single and five widowed. Eighteen of these were either formally or self-employed. All the respondents had attended formal education as follows; four had done primary school, two were attending secondary school, seventeen had secondary school qualifications and seven had tertiary qualifications. All the categories of folks described above were regarded as key informants with respect to social cohesion constraints of migration to Kambia Town. Thematic content analysis was used to analyse the qualitative data. Lochmiller (2021) saw thematic analysis as a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns within data. It minimally organises and describes data set in rich detail. One strength of thematic data analysis was its flexibility. The semi-structured interview guide was made up of the following questions.

**Constraints and Potentials**

Current social and economic concerns can be attributed to historical systems of exclusion and discrimination. Many voices, which remain on the outskirts, struggle to find their way into the policy papers that determine and influence how decisions about folk's lives are made. There is a need to establish a scholarly platform where counter-stories and voices can be heard in a quest for democracy and cohesiveness. The dominant discourse that so often overshadows voices from down below may lead to what may be called 'enforced cohesiveness' where narratives of cohesion (rainbow nation) are circulated without acknowledging visible signs of non-cohesion (For instance, as can be seen in the constant media coverage of racism in borders, communities, xenophobic attacks, and hate-crimes). A concerted effort to wrestle with these affairs be made if Kambians are to imagine a socially cohesiveness society in which folk’s every day experiences are acknowledged and not taken for granted. As Arant et al. (2021) argues that social cohesion is about getting by and getting on with the mundanities of everyday life and that “Cohesive societies is related to prevailing mentalities of individuals once the social structure of a community is accounted for”. It is at these mundane thresholds and mentalities that Kambians need to zoom in and pay attention to the perpetual constraints with which many Susu-Guineans continue to contend.

As highlighted earlier, the complexities and constraints faced by the Kambian society cannot be divorced from gender politics. Issues that pertain to gender politics involve the interweaving of individual, family and societal understanding of how men and women construct their roles on a daily basis. One of the issues that beg attention is the persistent intimate partner violence that continues to be a predicament in many of the Kambian communities. It therefore becomes pertinent to also pay attention to how the formation of the Kambian family becomes disrupted as a result of various forms of gender violence (specifically intimate partner violence where victims are often women). The perpetual violence is linked to men's (particularly unemployed men) positions within society. That is, violence is more likely to occur when a man is criminalised or inhabits a
space that does not acknowledge his masculinity, is unemployed and thus frustrated. The complexity of how gender-based violence manifest itself needs to be troubled and understood in context if Kambians are to get a deeper understanding of the socio-economic and historical underpinning that directly influence how Susu-Guinean men experience their lives daily. The Kambia District local policy contributed immensely in the emasculating of Susu-Guinean men (for example, the persistent reference by Kambians to Susu-Guinean adult men as ‘Ahn bois Ahnnye daayray’ - the boys who come) and the remnants of these can still be felt in the present. These multiple and intersecting variables cannot be understood in isolation if Kambians are too seriously engage with the notion of social cohesion in general and gender violence in particular. The importance of putting on the intersectionality insight is also highlighted by Bauer et al., (2021) who argue that "intersectionality is rooted in the premise that human experience is shaped by multiple social positions (ethnic, gender), and cannot be adequately understood by considering social positions independently". Kambia, violence is marked by multiple social drivers, including widespread and ethnicised poverty, persistent unemployment, and extreme income inequality; patriarchal notions of masculinity that celebrate toughness and risk-taking; extensive exposure to abuse in childhood; access to drugs; excessive alcohol misuse; and weaknesses in law enforcement. These multiple social elements contribute towards the frustration and sense of helplessness and hopelessness that so many folks experience as they navigate and attempt to make sense of their lives.

When folks continue to exist in the zone of "non-being" (Du Plessis, 2018), it becomes difficult to imagine a cohesive space where everyone operates at the same threshold. Women are oppressed by gender lines, which are further aggravated by ethnic lines. For sustainable progress to take place, women's silenced knowings should be acknowledged and taken into consideration as failure to do so may hinder their innate potential. This warning is also stressed by Martin (2021) in her involvement or research with women and the ‘Fambul Tok’ where she asserted that "the silences expressed by women telling their stories of loss and pain during the 2020s, were part of a deeply evocative language articulating women's embodied courage and consciousness of their precarious positions as mothers, wives, and sisters of often absent men". While the ‘Fambul Tok’ offered a platform for women's life experiences that had been silenced and ignored for a long time, more spaces need to be established to impart further opportunities for women to express their concerns.

To understand the experiences of Susu-Guinean women who grew up in the Kambia District, involving a group of women who are part of a rice production project in Kambia District (Massaquoi, 2022). Kambia District has master social narratives of reconciliation, gender equality and policies that ensure democracy in various facets of the society. The aim of this research was to offer women an opportunity to carve visual narratives of their lives. The medium of telling stories through work may conjure hidden feelings therefore allowing thoughts to be visually expressed. In her article, McAlister (2022) explains that narrations of extreme human rights violations leave women with an inability to speak about their felt pain and loss. Language fails Kambians, as it becomes inadequate to the task of conveying the experience of systematic degradations and humiliations. The working in rice farms afforded the women an alternative tool to deal with the inadequacy of spoken language by assisting them to visually reflect on their past and engage with their current experiences as full migrants with equal rights as men. When reflecting on being part of the research, the women stressed the hard work and journey that still lies ahead before full cohesion can be attained. They pointed to how positive transformation is still yet to be felt as folks are still poor with many being unable to afford basic human needs such as food. They zoomed in on the daily constraints that they continue to face; for example, they expressed how food prices continuously increase while folk's earnings do not. They further referred to the high unemployment rate, and how this
affects young people who obtain educational qualifications but are unable to find employment. The Susu-Guinean women expressed anger as they had hoped for a better life from the new dispensation. While they acknowledged that oppression, due to them being migrants or foreigners, has not decreased, they argued that the remnants of being foreigners could still be felt and seen. Ethnic imbalance is still rampant, and for the women in the project this meant: Where you come from determines what you get access to. They stressed that many Susu-Guinean women farmers who work in the food security mandate are not receiving the recognition they deserve, indeed most do not benefit for their efforts.

The Susu-Guinean women further revealed that while on the surface the schools were admitting everyone irrespective of tribe, in reality separation still existed within many schools. Moreover, while all are allowed to study wherever they want, many are restricted by financial constraints. For the Susu-Guinean women in the research, being referred to as foreigners may be a thing of the past in terms of papers and policies, however; on the ground folks are still struggling. They highlighted that education remained a critical catalyst to a better future; however, in many ways the attainment thereof still remains a privilege. Touching briefly on the status of education in village schools, the Susu-Guinean women expressed how children were sent to school only to find teachers who were not passionate about teaching.

Another crucial point raised by the Susu-Guinean women was the health issue. While they acknowledged that they had access to private hospitals; many did not go to them as they could not afford to pay for the treatment. Although there are public hospitals in many villages most lack resources needed to assist patients. The struggles the women suffered in their past were perceived to be directly linked to their current predicament. By highlighting their struggles, the Susu-Guinean women echoed the dominant western oppositional hierarchies of silence and speech, and instead adopt frameworks where words, silence, dreams, gestures, tears all exist interdependently and within the same interpretive field, the research find that the mute Susu-Guinean women always speak (Dadzie, 2021). It is during these moments of embracing intersectional existence of memories, experiences, and how lives are lived that Kambians can move a step closer towards a possible social cohesion.

Feasible Future

If Kambians continue to swim in the sea of unemployment, challenging heath care and schooling systems that are geared towards producing market ready individuals and not independent thinkers, then Kambians will continue to produce individuals who perpetuate that which is already in place, and thus cannot expect a transformed society. Kambia District comes from a past of division (Themne and Limba), and the remnants of this can still be felt in the present. A unified approach is required to achieve a truly cohesive society. It is critical to acknowledge that various forms of inequalities continue to be felt and if a concerted effort to remove the veil of equality as painted on the canvasses called 'policies' is not made, Kambia District run the risk of having a society that continues to give birth to wounded generations. Social cohesion needs social, economic, and political reconstruction of the District. Kambians ought to ask questions about who they are with multiple voices being given opportunities to respond. Daazie (2021) asserts that making efforts to link our social narratives to the everyday practices and fractured meanings of existence of individuals and communities is indeed a constraint, but also part of the unavoidable search of telling free and democratic social narratives from African women and girls. Therefore, if Kambians are to imagine 'true social cohesion', they need to establish the spaces for multiple converging and diverging social narratives to be told. It is at these often-uncomfortable intersections that true healing and reconciliation may be initiated.

Kambia District social cohesion remains an epistemological dilemma that requires constant interrogation. When millions continue to live below the poverty line, how can social cohesion
be possible? When many stomachs continue to make a hollow sound, while others swim in abundance, Susu-Guinean women cannot begin to claim a socially cohesive society. Proclaimed as one of the most unequal district in the world, Kambia District continues to lag behind in the journey towards social cohesion. Politics and ethnicity played a central role in ensuring inequality among members of the society, and over twenty years after the country’s democracy cost accounting for the imbalances of the past remains of migration in the imaginary realm as women discrimination and gender inequality continue to loom. It is critical to acknowledge the interconnectedness of government functioning and its implications in the experiences of folk’s everyday lives (service delivery, social welfare, health systems and education). Kambia District has a history of oppression, inequalities, and skewed privilege, and all these were not normalised prior to 2020. For a long time these injustices made a home in the Kambia District.

Revisiting injustices of the past, many of which are still being maintained, is crucial. There needs to be a space for uncomfortable conversations if Kambians are to imagine a free and truly democratic society. The persistent ghosts that lurk in the divergent dark corners of their existence need to be confronted and brought to light. Kambians need to let the past guide them as to how they should deal with the present. Spaces for negotiation and confrontation of what 'being human' means need to take place as a starting point towards historical justice. Kambians need to have conversations around "redress" as many people continue to live in poverty with minimum access to resources. These crucial aspects have to be met if Kambians are to imagine a socially cohesive society.

Results and Discussion

The research discusses the reasons for migration, migration privileges and constraints, social cohesion and diversity challenges. This research revealed that migrating to Kambia District contributed to the economic well-being of the family back in Guinea-Conakry, but had its own share of negative upshots. Hultug and Uslaner (2021) argued that in as much as folks are different in significant ways, the upshot of immigration are also divergent. These dichotomies establish both privileges and constraints. A recent comparative research on public perception of immigration raised the question whether immigration was good or bad, or whether it had no impact on local community, the majority of the respondents revealed that migration was bad compared to a few who said it was good (Lobbers & Geurts, 2022).

In this research migration brought more savings and improved financial status of individuals who migrated but there was a downward community and social cohesion. Mannarini et al. (2021) summarised the concepts of community and social cohesion as the common values, civic culture and social order. This included social control, social solidarity, social networks, place attachment and identity. Some respondents in this kambian District research were able to build better houses, other properties and even start own businesses. However, level of social capital in the form of trust, communication, networking and social cohesion among emigrants and those who remain at home in Guinea-Conakry was found to be low.

Four broad reasons for migrating emerged. These were social, economic, political and educational. An individual either voluntarily migrates or is compelled to. Almost all the participants revealed that circumstances compelled them to migrate. Specifically, only one respondent went to Kambia District voluntarily through a french exchange programme. Some migrated to seek for better employment opportunities, whilst some sought better educational and investment opportunities. Some became cross-border traders. These were involved in buying and selling of goods. Worse some became criminals. They were involved in activities like smuggling of palm oil, Marijuana, Tramadol and ‘Kush’ which had a lucrative market in Kambia District. Some resorted to prostitution and illegal gold mining. These exposed them to diseases like sexually transmitted infections, HIV/AIDs, tuberculosis.
and cyanide poisoning. This shows diversity challenges, that when people mix, they compete for both social and economic resources. In the process some benefit either positively or negatively.

When people migrate, cultural diversity in recognitions is inevitable. Results from this research revealed high level of mistrust among family members and acquaintances. For instance, some spouses ended up in infidelity, justifying this as doing what the other spouse elsewhere was being suspected of doing the same. According to O’Doherty (2022), trust is a multi-layered concept that comprises a range of attributes such as dependability, credibility, faithfulness, and information sharing, as well as the expectation of cooperation between partners. However, some respondents felt that as long as they got material and financial support, they trusted a family member or acquaintance. Some respondents said that once one was in Kambia District he or she changed in behaviour. The change is a result of either community or socio-cultural diversity. Participants revealed some extra-marital affairs emerging as a result of relocation. One respondent confided that her husband had another wife in Bami. A Susu male counterpart also said that some women were having second husbands in Kambia District. This was normally as a result of failure to get decent work; thus, a marriage would be a supplement to wages.

Jason et al. (2017) argued that, trust play an unarguable role in maintaining social relationships and building communities. Both men and women said that being separated with one’s spouse rendered absence of emotional support, including sexual needs. Sex is a basic human need on the Maslow’s hierarchy of needs (Bowen, 2021). It is on the foundation level of human needs. Being away also led to the neglect of family and social obligations such as attending family and community gatherings. One respondent felt that his brother now cared more about his in-laws, than his own people. These perceptions are inclined to cultural diversity.

Cultural beliefs in use of luck charms, and sacrifices that affected other family members was said to be a source of mistrust. This cultural phenomenon is common among the Susu-Guinean indigenous knowledge systems. Some respondents said that those who went to Kambia District ended up visiting ‘juju’ (witch doctors) with the aim of getting luck charms to succeed in life. They were suspected of using goblins which negatively affected those back home. Avenging spirits would spell bad luck or cause death to relatives back home. This militated against trust, which is at the core of social cohesion. Indeed, trust is at the centre of relationships (Jason et al., 2021), and lack of it was the cause of result low social cohesion among family and community members. Child care deficit also emerged in this research. This was manifested in school drop outs, children without peace of mind, sense of insecurity and unhappiness in the absence of parents. The child-parent bond disappeared. Children born after departure of a parent, had identity crisis. Some of these felt they were being treated like illegitimate children. Lubbers and Geurts (2022) argued that at root, the care deficit arose from primary careers not being able to be in two places. Worse still, conjugal deprivation in a community with diverse norm, led to spouses finding alternatives. The results ranged from unwanted and unplanned marriages, pregnancies and some venereal diseases. One respondent was open to say “I cannot sleep alone… I stopped enjoying sexual pleasure”. Another respondent testified, “My wife became a prostitute so I divorced her”. Bowen (2021) argued that one cannot reach self-actualisation before basic needs are met and one of which is sex. Migration eroded gender roles and responsibilities ascribed by culture. Absence of physical contact, ineffective communication, financial crisis and food shortages were cited as issues that led to family breakdown and divisions within the extended family.

Levy (2020) noted the fragmentation of societies in the face of increasing immigration. Economic hardships in Kambia District caused some men and women to become married to two men or women. Some men who failed to find jobs were forced into abusive marriages by women with resources for survival. Back home some women
end up in nightclubs as a source of livelihood. One respondent was quick to say: “I lost my wife to another man”. Wives of people outside Guinea-Conakry are stereotyped as promiscuous. They are treated as single mothers. For example, one respondent said that “Some men propose love to me, yet they very well know that I am married”.

Extended family members at times disrupted marriages by rumour mongering about alleged cheating and adultery by the remaining woman. Nikmah (2020) noted fluidity of families due to the complex ways of altering family dynamics. For instance, remarriage altered the balance of expectations around care and responsibilities. Secondly, the formation of inter-ethnic families altered the cultural contours of the immediate and extended family. Thirdly, family reformation introduced new economies of care. While income levels were boosted family connections were depleted. HIV/AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Infections are a major concern. This is resulted of illicit affairs necessitated by distance between husbands and wives.

Immigrants also had a number of cultural diversity challenges on arrival and during their stay in Kambia District. Firstly, there were language barriers which made it difficult to seek for employment, speak with neighbours and those in close contact. With high crime rates in Kambia District immigrants were the best candidates for ‘Raray men’ (criminals) due to language problems. Immigrants also faced other resource challenges such as accommodation and food. Some respondents experienced local and ethnic discrimination. This affected the level of trust between residents and immigrants. In a comparative research, Mannheim and Schneider (2020) found that interpersonal trust is lower in more ethnically heterogeneous communities like in the Kambia District, Northern Sierra Leone. Cultural differences, beliefs and ethnicity make immigrants and their neighborhoods to be suspicious of each other.

Chamie (2020) argued that there is impact in being around folks who are different from us mideset. This makes Kambians uncertain to trust anybody. Host residents felt that immigrants competed for jobs, education, health facilities, accommodation, and women. On the other hand immigrants were at times waylaid by ‘Raraymen’ or criminals or assailants to harm and rob them once they started to get earnings from their new jobs. The African Centre for Economic Transformations (2022) posited that communities which viewed a locality as belonging to them economically, politically, and culturally were more likely to blame new arrivals for problems that often already existed.

The Kambian District Migration Project (KDMP) (2020) affirmed that one of the key concerns about the influx of migrants was the recognition that migrants impeded Kambians access to education, housing, health care, other social and welfare services. Underpayment as a result of underemployment was also a challenge. Values of fairness and tolerance were little for migrant workers. They were subjected to exploitative working conditions.

In Kambia District, xenophobic attacks both physically and psychologically torture affect immigrants as they live in continuous fear. Immigrants were given names like ‘Ahnnye Daayray’-those who come ‘Boloh’-uncivilised. Kambia District Migration Project (2020) noted that immigration was often seen as a threat to Kambia district identity and social cohesion with one consequence being establishment of division between those who “belong” and those who “do not belong”, with country of origin or nationality being the defining characteristic.

**Conclusion and Recommendations**

This research has not only revealed issues of integration of Susu-Guinean immigrants but it further showed the cultural diversity challenges family members, acquaintances in the country of origin experience and neighbours in the country of entry by immigrants. The research recommends a revisit to the Mano River virtues of unity, in which people have that feeling of others. Mano River countries are encouraged to remove travel restrictions on borders, because this creates the “we” and “them” attitude. Governments are encouraged to ensure social
protection and labour rights laws are upheld. Mano River governments are encouraged to work towards improving governance issues since they are an ingredient to economic stability. This removes burden on the neighboring countries. It is important for governments to improve social welfare especially the vulnerable groups namely women, children, youths and the old. A holistic approach to economic development which create jobs is required. The Kambia District Local Council should also do awareness campaigns on the benefits that the District is accruing from the immigrants. The Kambia District Local Council must improve its security in order to create a crime-free community for both the host and immigrant citizens.

References


