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RESEARCH ARTICLE

EVALUATION OF CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS BELIEFS INFLUENCING VIOLENT BEHAVIOUR TOWARDS DONKEYS BY THEIR HANDLERS IN KIBIRICHIA WARD, MERU CENTRAL SUB-COUNTY, MERU COUNTY, KENYA

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Abstract

This study sought to evaluate the cultural and religious beliefs that influence violent behaviour towards donkeys by their handlers in Kibirichia Ward of Meru Central Sub-County. Bandura's Social Learning Theory was used to guide the study. Methodological triangulation approach was used involving Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and interview schedule for two groups and seventy six donkey handlers respectively. Krueger's framework analysis method was used for qualitative data analysis. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) computer programme was used for analysis of quantitative data using descriptive statistics to derive Chi square and cross tabulations. Majority of the handlers perceive violence to donkeys as injuries on donkeys' body, overloading and underfeeding of donkeys. Unlike religion, culture had not influenced the violence. Religion was found to have minimized the violent behavior and insistence on humane treatment as a pre-condition for employment is effective. Incorporation of the findings in policy development by Livestock Department will enhance extension package targeting reduction of cruelty to donkeys by their handlers.

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INTRODUCTION

The sight of donkeys with severe wounds on their bodies is common within Kibirichia Ward of Meru Central Sub-County, Kenya (KENDAT, 2006). Donkeys in Kibirichia Ward support the livelihoods of their handlers through commercial provision of transport of farm produce. The institutional support for donkey welfare has received minimal attention.

Surprisingly the currently operational Sessional Paper No.2 of 2008 on National Livestock Policy (MOLD, 2008) has not mentioned the donkeys even under the animal welfare issues. The current study generated useful information relevant in policy formulation so that donkey users maximize their returns without compromising donkeys' welfare.

The global donkey estimates stand at about 44 million (Food and Agriculture Organization [FAO], 1994). Over 95% are found in the developing countries where they are mainly used as beasts of burden and draft animals (Svendesen, 1981). The few in some countries like Australia and Britain are kept as pets, as companions for horses or for occupational therapy programme. They are also used for riding and sporting activities in some communities in India and Lamu in Kenya. Kenyan donkey population is estimated to be about 1.8 million (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS), 2009). Kibirichia Ward (where the research was done) boasts of about 1165 donkeys in 312 households (DLPO, 2009). These are mainly used for transportation of farm produce. Majority of these donkeys are in poor health and have physical wounds on their bodies (KENDAT, 2006). Among other areas where donkeys with injuries and wounds are found include Mwea, Limuru and Naivasha.

Donkeys contribute to the livelihoods of the pastoral communities through provision of transport as draught animals. Among the traders in Ethiopia it is valued as a low transport investment business venture that has minimal entry requirements (Starkey, 1995).

Even in difficult terrains that are impossible for other modes of transport it sails through with minimal efforts.

Donkey's usage is not only restricted to rural settings only but in the densely populated cities in Egypt they are used by Zabbalin rubbish collectors in Cairo and other cities (Fahmy, 1997). According to Mutharia (1995) among the Maasai women in Kajiado there is a belief that necessitates cutting off the edge of a young donkey's ear and tie it round the child's neck to prevent diseases. Since this surgical procedure is done in a traditional set up it contributes to donkeys suffering through injuries and pain. Donkey usage in the lucrative tourism sector is still largely confined within Lamu through donkey sporting competitions dubbed as Lamu Dugong Festival (Hans, 2009). This is an annual cultural celebration held in May that honours donkey as their main mode of transport and also spread awareness to conserve dugong which is an endangered animal species in that locality. Since the design of the streets in Lamu is too narrow for the cars, donkey transport is the preference.

Popularizing this activity in the study area can possibly allow for diversification and enhance earnings associated with tourism. According to Aluya and Lopez (1991) in a study conducted in Mexico it was found that donkeys generally suffer a lot of abuse and negligence from their owners and users. They attributed the poor welfare to human poverty, lack of education and social problems like alcoholism. Moreover, a study conducted in Morocco by Bakkoury and Belemlish (1991) showed lack of experience in handling donkeys as key to the poor treatment accorded to them. Some of the livelihoods of people in Limuru, Turkana, Samburu, Maasai, Ukambani and Mwea are also partially supported by donkeys to varied extents through transportation of goods (KENDAT, 2006).

But exploitation of donkeys' full potential is hindered by poor management broadly covering nutrition, diseases, housing and mistreatment (Mohammed, 1991 in Fernando, 2004). All these either directly or indirectly contribute to planned or accidental abuse. Through this study it was possible to investigate how the community in the study area use their donkeys and how this is linked to violence they are subjected to.

The prevalence level of violence to donkeys by their handlers in Kibirichia Ward is high as evidenced by frequent encounters of many donkeys with inflicted wounds and injuries on their bodies. Apart from contravening the law prohibiting violence to the animals, the optimal economic returns arising from usage of donkeys for transportation is compromised. However, there was scanty academic research that has been done to conceptualize the factors influencing this violence. Hence the study sought to fill this gap through generation of the relevant knowledge with a view of providing possible remedies.

The objective of the study was to examine the cultural and religious beliefs influencing the violent behaviour towards donkeys by their handlers in Kibirichia Ward. This objective was translated into the research question 'what are the cultural and religious beliefs influencing the violent behaviour towards donkeys by their handlers in Kibirichia Ward?'

2. Forms of Donkey Maltreatment

The observed maltreatment falls within the following four categories; namely cruelty, abuse, neglect and use (Rowan 1999 in DeRosa and Vanase 2002). When the sole objective of causing suffering to an animal is pleasure derivation, then that suffices to be termed as cruelty. If the suffering occurs during a behavioral response training programme or in order to succumb to the individual's dominance then that constitutes an abuse.

Challenges in providing the necessary requirements either due to knowledge shortfall or economic incapacitation will lead to negligence. Sometimes in the process of using the animals for food, economic or psychological needs some suffering is bound to occur. In such situations usually an attempt to minimize the suffering is done.

Table 1 *Categories of donkey maltreatment and associated human behaviours*

Type of Action	Actor's motivation	Animal suffering	Societal attitude
Cruelty	Takes satisfaction from suffering	Always	Condemnation
Abuse	Satisfaction derived from dominance or behavioral response	Usually	Condemnation
Neglect	No satisfaction derived.	Usually	Condemnation
Use	Justified by claims to personal or societal gains.	Sometimes	Approval when attempts are made to minimize suffering.

Source: Adapted from Rowan (1999) as cited by DeRosa and Vanase (2002)

All animals are guaranteed five freedoms as they try to cope with their environment (Ministry of Livestock Development henceforth abbreviated MOLD, 2008). These are freedoms from thirst, hunger and malnutrition, freedom from discomfort, freedom from pain, injury and diseases, freedom to express normal behavior, and finally freedom from fear and distress.

Although according to Barton (1987) some animal rights theorists have strongly argued against any use of animals for human purposes, its practicability is not immediately feasible unless more affordable and efficient transportation means for the farm produce are available in Kibirichia Ward. Therefore, this study explored ways of minimizing the suffering they are subjected to as they reinforce the current economic services the community derives from them.

3. Cultural and Religious Beliefs' Influences on Violence to Donkeys

According to Croxton (1993) some communities in Kibwezi and Ikanga regions have some negative myths about donkeys which hinder their usage and full appreciation. Beliefs such as donkey cries result into crop failure, women are under threat of donkey attack during menstruation and it is difficult to train them since they are stubborn are unfavorable. But those farmers courageous enough to have had hands on experience with them have dismissed these myths. In the study area the dominant ethnic group is Ameru. It has also been documented by KENDAT (2006) that they believe a donkey has to be canned to work and once sick it never recovers. Therefore users rarely seek veterinary attention for them, thus worsening violence dimensions.

According to Jones (1991) cultural distortions by forced changes upon a society was observed to have reinforced violence in Zimbabwe when the European colonizers insisted on indigenous people to live apart from their animals thus weakening the traditional understanding of animal management. In the view of the foregoing it is conclusive that different cultural set-ups direct issues on ownership, accessibility, and control of donkeys to varied levels among men and women in various communities. In addition if the cultural orientation and belief system are against animal welfare violence to donkeys is bound to persist. Among the Christians, there is biblical endorsement of donkeys as witnessed when Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey during Palm Sunday signifying humility (St. Mark, 11:1-11). Moreover, the biblical ranking of donkeys as part of riches is reinforced in Genesis 12:16 and Job 1:3 for Abraham and Job respectively. In addition there are also eighty two favourable biblical references to the donkeys.

It would therefore be expected that as a predominantly Christian community, donkeys in the study area would enjoy special care as commanded in Proverbs 12:10 which says "A righteous man cares for the needs of his animal, but the kindest acts of the wicked are cruel". More compassionate support for them is authorized when God commanded the Israelites to help both their friends and enemies when their ox or donkey had fallen over, or was carrying a burden too heavy for it to bear (Exodus 23:5 and Deuteronomy 22:4). But according Blakeway (1994), the approach adopted by protestant missionaries in Nigeria to portray animals as though they only exist to provide service to mankind gradually diffused and shaped attitudes toward animals.

Moreover, Cadena (2008) has also argued that the past usage of animals as sacrificial objects has been fronted as a defense by animal abusers in criminal proceedings based on religious viewpoint. Therefore, religious values and

claims as features of the ethical framework by which many people live have a bearing in the way donkeys are treated even at individual level (Frasch, 2000). Internalization of such views is adequate authority for the donkey users to justify their violence. The current study investigated how positive religious and cultural attachments to donkeys can be enhanced to reduce the violence directed to them and negative ones suppressed.

4. Materials and Methods

A descriptive survey method was used to gather information on the cultural and religious beliefs influencing the violent behaviour towards donkeys by their handlers in Kibirichia Ward. The selected sample of donkey handlers were subjected to both interview schedule and focus group discussions by the researcher. Kothari (2006) supports the use of descriptive surveys in situations where no treatment or manipulation is given. Through the survey it was possible to get the perceptions, attitudes, and behavior patterns of the respondents useful for making inferences (Borg, 1992).

The study was conducted in Kibirichia Ward of Meru Central Sub-County. The Ward enjoys adequate and reliable rainfall which is also supplemented with several group owned self-help water projects. Poor road network coupled with the hilly and stony topography limits efficient vehicle transport service to the main roads hence ferrying of farm produce (cabbage, Irish potatoes, green maize cobs, carrots etc.) from the fields to the local markets or collection points is done through donkey driven carts and or on donkey backs (District Agricultural Officer henceforth abbreviated DAO, 2008). A proportion of the produce is transported over 10km to the main vibrant market at Gakoromone in Meru town.

Apart from transportation of agricultural goods, donkeys are also used for fetching of firewood from the neighboring Mt. Kenya forest and transportation of manure to the farms. Therefore this mode of transport is economically crucial in linkage of agricultural produce and other goods to the markets.

Apparently out of the three Wards comprising the Sub-County; namely Kibirichia, Abothuguchi and Central Wards, Kibirichia Ward donkey population was recorded as 1165 in 312 households reflecting the highest concentration and majority have physical injuries on their bodies (DLPO, 2009). These injuries result from the beatings they are subjected to during transportation of goods by their handlers. The study was confined to Kibirichia Ward due to the higher prevalence of donkeys with injuries in comparison to the others.

According to Joseph (2009) the target population is the entire group of individuals or objects to which a researcher is interested in generalizing the conclusions. But usually the target population has varying characteristics. Since some donkey handlers maybe humane and others violent, deliberate efforts were made to pick the ones whose donkeys had wounds inflicted on them. These formed the accessible population from which a sample was realistically drawn to participate in the study.

As noted by Bryman (2008) a multimethod approach captures a more complete and holistic findings through overcoming the weaknesses and biases associated with a single method. Therefore the methodological triangulation approach used in this study involved the use of two different units of analysis, namely focus groups and a donkey handler. According to Orodho (2009) the unit of analysis in focus group interviews is the groups themselves. Therefore in this study the different sets of focus groups of donkey handlers within Kibirichia Ward formed one unit of analysis while the other was the donkey handler who mostly uses the donkey during transportation of goods from each of those households with donkeys within the Ward.

Purposive and probability sampling methods were also used. Morgan (1998) has highlighted that purposively selected focus group participants generate in-depth understanding and insight when the culture and belief system influences the behaviours of individuals. According to Israel and Galindo-Gonzalez (2011) a focus group is a planned, relaxed, naturalistic dialogue among a small group of people on a specific topic. As pointed out by Krueger and Casey (2000) membership of each group should preferably be between 6 to 8 carefully recruited participants. Such a number is large enough to produce a variety of perspectives and is easily manageable. The donkey handlers selected through a local contact as much as possible shared similarities in age, social status, gender and levels of education to enhance compatibility and encourage discussion.

Krueger (1994) has documented that multiple sessions of different sets of focus groups should be conducted until a clear pattern emerges and subsequent groups produce repetitious information. This is normally achievable with three to four groups. In this study the two different sets of focus groups included men less than 35 years and those men above 35 years. Homogeneity in all the other aspects was observed. Since there are no women donkey handlers the two other planned focus groups for them could not be realized.

The probability sampling method was done through systematic random sampling procedure (Bouma and Atkinson, 1995). This was through listing all the 312 households with donkeys to get the sampling frame and subjecting the list to sampling by picking every fourth member. Special attention was paid to keenly observe whether the donkey for the handler picked had injuries and wounds. Those whose donkeys did not have were replaced with those whose donkeys had injuries still from within the sampling frame by repeatedly picking the subsequent fourth member with the predetermined qualities. It was assumed those injuries had been inflicted by the handler and tactful efforts to confirm this were employed. Those earlier on involved in focus group discussions were replaced. This interval was derived from dividing target population by the sample size. The starting point was blindly selected using table of random numbers (Mugenda and Mugenda, 1999). The study used the Coefficient of Variation Method to calculate the sample size from the households. According to Nassiuma (2000) coefficient of variation of at most 30% and standard error of 3% are usually acceptable. Therefore the sample size was calculated as;

$$n = \frac{NC^2}{C^2 + (N-1)e^2}$$

Where:

n = the desired sample size

N = the population size

C = Coefficient of Variation at 30%.

e = the acceptable error margin at 3%

Hence;

$$n = \frac{312(0.30)^2}{(0.30)^2 + (312-1)(0.03)^2}$$

$$n = 75.91$$

Therefore when approximated;

$$n = 76$$

The minimum sample was therefore 76 donkey handlers.

The study used an interview schedule with predetermined open and close ended questions. First section had demographic information of the respondents while the other had questions that focused on the research problem.

A tape recorder and guiding questions were employed during focus group discussions. Secondary data had been obtained from various sources including journals, annual reports, library material and internet. The process of collection of primary data started after permission was granted by the University. Approval from the National Council of Science and Technology was sought and shared with the Sub-County Commissioner of Meru Central Sub-County before seeking audience with the participants in the Focus Group Interviews and the selected donkey handlers. As noted by van Teijlingen and Hundley (2001) piloting was necessary so as to test the adequacy of the research instruments and identify any logistical problems that might occur to allow for advance planning. One focus group involving males participated in the focus group discussion while fifteen donkey handlers were subjected to interview schedules for piloting purposes.

The choice of focus group discussion method was guided by the need to gain an in-depth knowledge on the donkey handlers' beliefs and cultures that influenced their feelings, attitudes and behaviour in relation to violence to donkeys (Rabiee, 2004). In order to achieve reasonable homogeneity in terms of gender, age, education, ethnic and social class as recommended by Krueger (1994), the researcher engaged a local person well informed about these qualities to assist in the recruitment of participants. In conducting each focus group discussion, the researcher while using guiding questions lead the discussion, kept the conversation flowing and took a few notes to remember comments that he wanted to use later as suggested by Morgan and Krueger (1998).

The assistant moderator took comprehensive notes, operated the tape recorder, handled the environmental conditions and logistics, responded to unexpected interruptions, observed non-verbal interactions and kept track of time. An oral presentation summarizing the main issues by the recorder allowed for arrival at a consensus and generated any extra information earlier on omitted. Two focus groups on the same topic were conducted with donkey handlers below and above 35 years so as to understand the perspectives of different groups of people. In order to complement the above method structured interviewing was also done. As highlighted by Kumar (1999) this method was necessitated by uncertainties in literacy levels and it also allowed for easy comparability of data. In addition any ambiguities were clarified and in-depth inquiries of personal feelings, opinions or perceptions were easily captured.

The face to face interaction with the researcher enhanced bonding, thus minimizing temptations' for dishonest responses. It also assisted in capturing the facial expressions of the donkey handlers, thus enhancing clarity of some issues. The interview schedule was first pre-tested on similar respondents in the neighbouring Timau Ward (outside the study area) to test its effectiveness to the proposed study before actual administration. Timau was chosen because it shared the same inhabitants (Ameru) with Kibirichia and it also had some donkeys with injuries on their bodies. Donkeys were also used for similar purposes like in Kibirichia. Depending on the responses given questions that required further clarity were addressed accordingly. The researcher also had a chance to experience the challenges likely to be encountered in the actual study, thus allowing for advance planning.

The analysis of the data from the focus group discussion was done concurrently during data collection using the framework analysis suggested by Krueger (1994). Therefore skilful facilitation of the discussion by the researcher was observed to generate rich data that was complimented with observation notes and the transcribed recorded information. This information allowed for coding and highlighting the comments of the topics discussed, followed by summarizing the data in a compilation sheet. By using the study objective, systematic comparison between groups on all topics was done and the major findings for different study populations put in one sheet and the reporting done in the narrative.

The data collected through interview schedule was edited, coded and analyzed through Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software. The analysis output was summarized in form of tables and figures to facilitate drawing of conclusions of the sample and subsequent recommendations. Various forms of descriptive statistics were employed for analysis of the objective.

Frequency distribution tables were useful in measuring patterns of similarities and differences in people's responses. These were therefore used in analysis of the cultural and religious factors that lead to violence to donkeys.

5. Results and Discussions

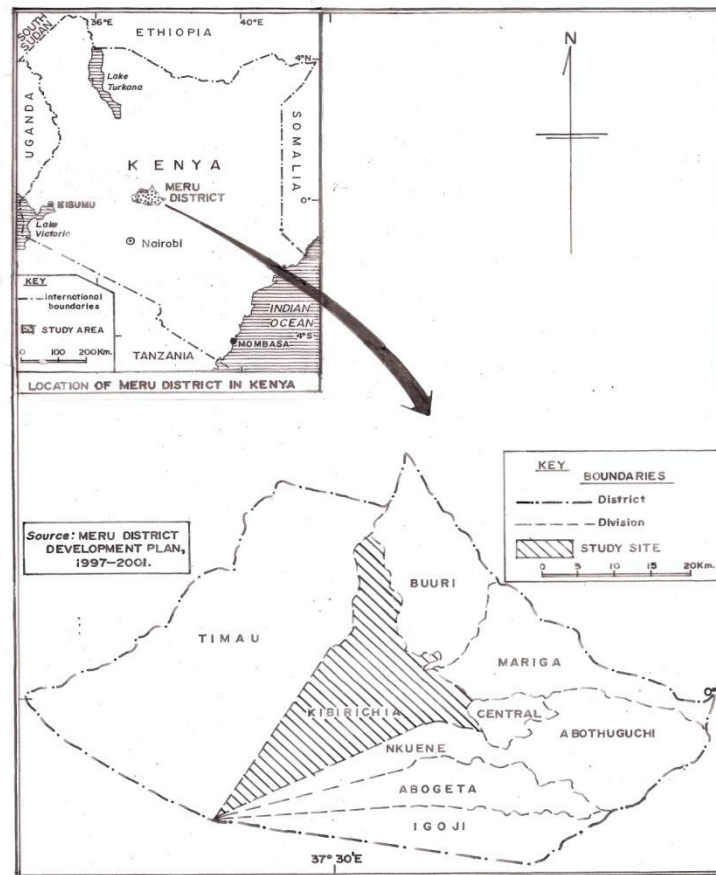


Figure 1: Meru County Map showing Kibirichia Ward
Source: Meru District Development Plan (1997-2001)

5.1 Religion of the Respondents

Religion shapes reactions of individuals to varied aspects of the environments they live in. As a belief system, it influences what people think and consequently their behaviour. Therefore, in order to interrogate the influence of religion in the donkey handlers' violent behaviour to donkeys the respondents' were requested to state their religion. Findings from the study revealed that majority of the respondents were Christians (89.5%), 9.2% were of other religious beliefs while a small percentage was from the Muslim community (1.3%).

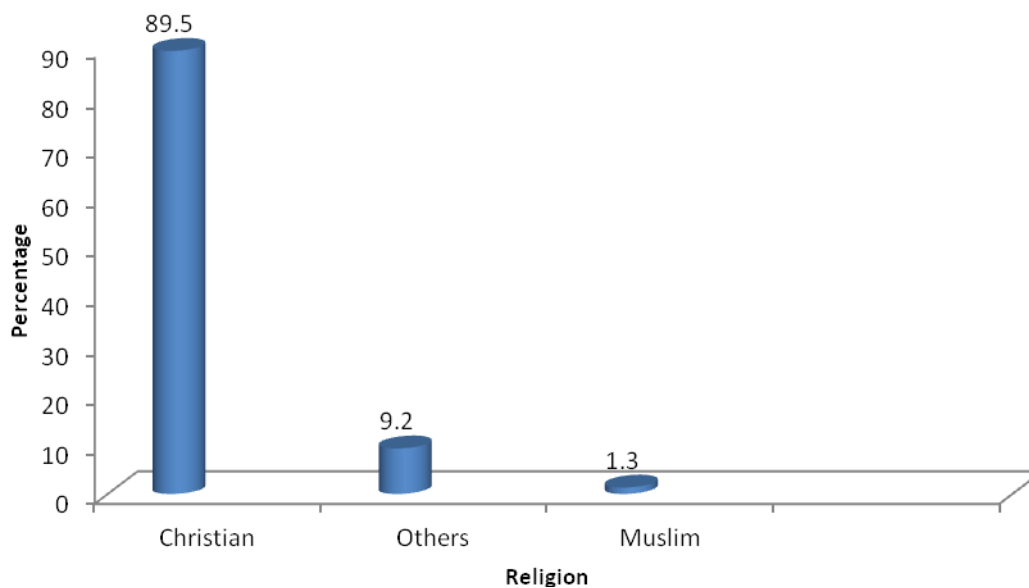


Figure 5.1: Distribution of respondents by religion

Source: Field data, 2010

Figure 5.1 demonstrates that majority of the donkey handlers' prophesized Christian faith. Coincidentally among the respondents in the FGD was a church elder, who reported, *"We occasionally have projects with dairy, poultry and horticulture farmers. We even assist those keeping pigs. But we have never thought of those using donkeys' for transport. A disgusted respondent asked, "Has any of you heard a preacher talk about taking care of donkeys?"* A negative response cut across the respondents. The implication of these statements is that the church has virtually no contribution to this form of livelihood and has consequently missed out in addressing violence to donkeys.

The numerous favourable biblical references to the donkey coupled with the commands in Proverbs 12:10 which say "A righteous man cares for the needs of his animal, but the kindest acts of the wicked are cruel" has not been constantly reinforced.

5.2.1 Cultural and Religious Beliefs Influencing Violence to Donkeys

Since all the donkey handlers belong to Ameru ethnic group the study investigated if any of their cultural practices and beliefs impacted negatively on violence to donkeys. Among the respondents, 89.5% of them derive their spiritual nourishment from the bible in which donkey is severally quoted.

5.2.2 Cultural Beliefs

A person's cultural heritage is often one indicator of behavior. Usually the various environments that children encounter in day-to-day life have a potential impact on their overall behaviors and attitudes in adulthood. The respondents were required to present their outlook on how cultural beliefs influence violence to donkeys. Majority of the respondents did not believe that donkeys are used in sporting competitions (68.4%), donkey cries result into crop failure (60.5%) nor does cutting off the edge of a donkeys' ear and tying it round a child's neck prevent diseases (56.6%). Over half of them (59.2%) also indicated that their culture condemned any form of abuse to donkeys and that the children are taught by elders to treat donkeys in a humane way (50%).

Table 5.1 Cultural practices

Cultural practices	Agree		Don't know		Disagree	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
Cutting off the edge of a donkeys ear and tie it round a child's neck prevents diseases	-	-	33	43.4	43	56.6
Donkeys are used in sporting competitions	2	2.6	22	28.9	52	68.4
Our culture condemns any form of abuse to donkeys	45	59.2	13	17.1	18	23.7
Donkey cries result into crop failure	-	-	30	39.5	46	60.5
Children are taught how to care for donkeys in a humane way by the elders	38	50.0	26	34.2	12	15.8
Donkeys have to be canned to work	31	40.8	4	5.3	41	53.9

Source: Field data, 2010

During FGD an old respondent regularly referred to as 'Chairman' by others for his long experience with donkeys strongly remarked, "*Children are aware that if I encounter a donkey overloaded or with injuries I reprimand them on the spot and I have to question their fathers as well. Everybody here should do that*". This statement indicates that the community has devised some mechanisms to address violence to donkeys.

Despite the little knowledge on donkey racing competitions (2.6%) a youthful respondent's passionate appeal directed to the researcher during FGD demonstrates the existence of unexploited potential for youth engagement. He reported, "*I happened to have been in Lamu during donkey competitions. Tourists attend in big numbers and they are charged. Please tell the government to introduce the sport for us here*". A possible interpretation of this statement is the need to exploit the economic returns and leisure associated with sports. The condemnation of abuse to donkeys, involvement of elders in teaching children to take care of donkeys and disapproval of canning of donkeys demonstrate that the cultural beliefs and orientation of residents of Kibirichia Ward are for animal welfare.

The findings that children are taught by elders to treat donkeys in a humane manner supports Bandura's Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977). The theory asserts that children tend to model their behavior according to the personalities and or the environment they are exposed to. Therefore projections of gradually creating a generation not violent to donkeys are feasible in accordance to this theory. It also disqualifies the documentation by KENDAT that Ameru have several myths and misconceptions about donkeys since they don't attach crop failure to donkey cries nor do they engage in tying part of a donkeys' ear round a child's neck to prevent diseases. The desire for engagement into donkey sporting competitions is in agreement with Hans (2009) documentation that usage of donkeys can be diversified into sporting as well. Since this study sought to determine if cultural beliefs had influenced violent behavior towards donkeys by their handlers, cross-tabulation of cultural beliefs and violent behaviour was done. Table 5.2 presents the findings.

Table 5.2 Cultural Beliefs and Violent Behaviour towards Donkeys by Their Handlers.

				Ever been violent to your donkey		Total	
				Yes	No		
Culture condemns any form of abuse to donkeys	Agree	Count		31	14	45	
			% within Culture condemns any form of abuse to donkey	68.9%	31.1%	100.0%	
			% within Ever been violent to your donkey	57.4%	63.6%	59.2%	
	Don't know	Count	% of Total	40.8%	18.4%	59.2%	
			Count	10	3	13	
			% within Culture condemns any form of abuse to donkey	76.9%	23.1%	100.0%	
	Disagree	Count	% within Ever been violent to your donkey	18.5%	13.6%	17.1%	
			% of Total	13.2%	3.9%	17.1%	
			Count	13	5	18	
	Total	Disagree	Count	% within Culture condemns any form of abuse to donkey	72.2%	27.8%	100.0%
				% within Ever been violent to your donkey	24.1%	22.7%	23.7%
				% of Total	17.1%	6.6%	23.7%
Total		Count	Count	54	22	76	
			% within Culture condemns any form of abuse to donkey	71.1%	28.9%	100.0%	
			% within Ever been violent to your donkey	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	
		% of Total	71.1%	28.9%	100.0%		

Table 5.2 shows that 59.2% (45) of the respondents indicated that their culture condemned any form of violence against donkeys while 23.7% (18) claimed that it did not. Out of those who claimed that their culture condemned any form of violence against donkeys, 68.9% (35) indicated that they had been violent to the donkeys at some point while 31.1% had not. Among those 17.1% (13), who did not know whether such cultures condemned violence against donkeys, 78% indicated that they had been violent to the donkeys at some point. Among those who disagreed 23.7% (18) that their cultures condemned violence against donkeys, 72.2% indicated that they had been violent to the donkeys at some point. This implies culture had not in any way influenced violent behaviour against donkeys by their handlers.

This was further confirmed by the Chi square test which was done on the frequencies to establish whether a statistically significant difference existed between individuals with strong cultural beliefs and those that did not

believe that culture influenced violent behaviour. The computed Chi square value of 0.332 was not significant with $p=0.847>0.05$ at 5% level of significance and with 2 degrees of freedom. We therefore accept the null hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between culture and violent behaviour against donkeys by their handlers.

5.2.3 Christian Religious Beliefs' influence on donkey handlers

A major reason that society needs religion is to regulate behavior. Most of the laws for what is acceptable for society are largely based on religion. Strong conviction in religious doctrines impacts in mental processes resulting into influenced behaviour and actions. Since religion is all about beliefs it may affect people's attitudes towards treatment of animals, donkeys included either humanely or in a cruel manner. As a predominantly Christian community (see figure 5.1) the study sought to establish the influence of religion on violence to donkeys. Majority of the respondents felt that though biblically donkeys are a part of one's riches (40.8%) and are a symbol of peace in the community (67.1%), they should not enjoy special care (40.8%).

Table 5.3 Religious Beliefs on Donkeys

Religious beliefs	Agree		Don't know		Disagree	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
Biblically donkeys are part of one's riches	31	40.8	17	22.4	28	36.8
Donkeys should enjoy special care	29	38.2	16	21.1	31	40.8
Donkeys symbolize peace in the community (Jesus used a donkey)	51	67.1	22	28.9	3	3.9

Source: Field data, 2010

Deliberations within focus group discussion yielded mixed reactions with one respondent reporting, *"I have heard about donkeys in the Bible but I work with mine in an ordinary manner"*. A different opinion was expressed by another respondent who commented,

"I take donkeys to be of value. Why did Jesus prefer to be carried by a donkey yet He could still pick on other animals? Donkey is blessed if it could see the angel which Ballam could not (referring to Numbers 22:25 which says "When the donkey saw the angel of the Lord, it pressed close to the wall, crushing Balaam's foot against it. So he beat the donkey again"). It also has two crosses, one on the forehead and the other at the back"

Looking at the respondents varying opinions it can be deduced that religious beliefs have gradually diffused and shaped donkey handlers attitudes differently, hence influencing violence to donkeys in varied ways. Positive attitudes are strongly anchored in the scriptural teachings.

Reference to Proverbs 12:10 which says "A righteous man regardeth the life of the beast' (Proverbs 12.10) clearly demonstrates this. Several favourable ratings of donkeys have been mentioned in the Bible. Apart from their high ranking as part of Abraham's riches (Genesis 12:16) they also deserve compassionate care as commanded in Exodus 23:5. It directs "if you see the donkey of someone who hates you fallen down under its load, do not leave it there; be sure you help them with it". Despite the foregoing biblical endorsement the study partly shows that the respondents perceive donkeys as though they only exist to provide service to mankind as noted by Blakeway (1994). He observed that the approach adopted by the protestant missionaries in Nigeria portrayed animals' existence as justifiable only when they serve humans.

5.2.4 Positive Influence of Religion

Findings on influence of religion showed that majority of the respondents felt that religion had indeed influenced the treatment of donkeys positively (89.5%) with only 1.3% expressing no influence at all.

Table 5.4 Positive Influence of Religion

Results	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	68	89.5
Don't know	7	9.2
Disagree	1	1.3
Total	76	100.0

Source: Field data, 2010

As Christians the donkey handlers are guided by the Christianity principles in the Bible. The biblical endorsement of the donkey is featured when Jesus rode on it during Palm Sunday (St. Mark, 11:1-11). In addition, the donkeys' ability to see the angel that Ballam could not initially see reinforces the belief that it's a blessed animal among those professing Christian faith (Numbers 22: 21-33). This shows that religious values and claims as features of the ethical framework by which the respondents live as seen above have had a bearing in the way donkeys are treated. In order to determine if religious beliefs had influenced violent behavior towards donkeys by their handlers, cross-tabulation of religious beliefs and violent behaviour was done. The findings are presented below.

Table 5.5 Religious Beliefs and Violent Behaviour towards Donkeys by their Handlers

			Ever been violent to your donkey		Total
			No	Yes	
If religion have influenced the treatment of donkeys positively	Yes	Count	51	17	68
		% within If religion have influenced the treatment of donkeys positively	75.0%	25.0%	100.0%
		% within Ever been violent to your donkey	94.4%	77.3%	89.5%
	No	% of Total	67.1%	22.4%	89.5%
		Count	3	5	8
		% within If religion have influenced the treatment of donkeys positively	37.5%	62.5%	100.0%
Total	% within Ever been violent to your donkey	5.6%	22.7%	10.5%	
	% of Total	3.9%	6.6%	10.5%	
	Count	54	22	76	
	% within If religion have influenced the treatment of donkeys positively	71.1%	28.9%	100.0%	
	% within Ever been violent to your donkey	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	
	% of Total	71.1%	28.9%	100.0%	

Table 5.5 shows that 89.5% (68) of the respondents indicated that their religious beliefs had influenced violence against donkeys while 10.5% (8) claimed that it did not. Out of those who claimed that their religious beliefs influenced violence against donkeys, 25% (17) indicated that they had been violent to the donkeys at some point while 75% had not.

Among those 10.5% (8) who said that religious beliefs had not positively influenced violent behaviour, 62.5% indicated that they had been violent to the donkeys at some point. This implies religious beliefs had in some way influenced violent behaviour against donkeys by their handlers.

This is further confirmed by the Chi square test which was done on the frequencies to establish whether a statistically significant relationship existed between religious beliefs and violent behaviour. The computed Chi square value of 4.894 was significant with $p=0.041 < 0.05$ at 5% level of significance and with 1 degree of freedom. We therefore reject the null hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between religion and violent behaviour against donkeys by their handlers.

6. Summary

Findings of this study showed that there is no significant relationship between culture and the violent behavior against donkeys by their handlers although the community at large is opposed to their mistreatment.

Most of the donkey handlers profess Christian faith and they recognize the favourable biblical endorsement of donkeys. However the religious institutions' capacities to reinforce mechanisms to address cruelty to donkeys are underutilized according to the study findings. But based on their Christian principles the study findings indicated that religion had influenced the donkey handlers to minimize the violence they subject to donkeys. Consequently religion had positively impacted on humane treatment of donkeys.

7. Recommendations for Policy

Findings from the study indicated that majority of donkey handlers are Christians. This fact combined with the favourable biblical backing of donkeys is an avenue available for the church to formulate donkey related programmes tied to humane treatment. For instance special low interest loan facilities for those with donkeys not subjected to violence and during Palm Sunday festivities physical involvement of donkeys that are well treated. Both the government and other organizations could closely collaborate with the church to formulate appropriate approaches.

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