

UNDERSTANDING INTER CLAN SOCIAL DISTANCE AMONG THE KURIA ETHNIC GROUP IN TANZANIA

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ABSTRACT

Physical proximity does not always mirror the existing social closeness among groups. This study aimed at using social distance scale in investigating the degree of social distance among the Kuria clans. It also sought to find out social situations in which clan members were willing to interact among the seven situations indicated in the social distance scale. The data were collected from 230 respondents ($M=36$, $SD= 13$) randomly and purposively selected from members of the selected clans using social distance scale, focus group discussion and interview. The findings indicated varied degrees of inter clan acceptance and antipathy among the Kira, the Nchari and the Renchoka clans. The findings revealed that respondents from Kira clan rejected and showed antipathy towards Nchari clan and close social relationship towards Renchoka clan. Comparatively the Nchari clan indicated more antipathy towards Renchoka clan than Kira. It was surprising to find that majority of respondents from both the Kira and Renchoka clan showed antipathy towards Nchari clan. The results also revealed great variation in clan members' decision in accepting others in various social situations. Finally, the study concluded that the degree of social distance among the Kuria ethnic group was dependent upon the existing inter clan relationship and therefore the degree of hostility also varied along the same spectrum between and among clans.

Keywords: Inter clan Social Distance, Attitude, Inter Group Relation and Conflicts

INTRODUCTION

Social distance refers to the varying degree of social proximity to which members of social groups are accepted and/or rejected with respect to each social situation of the social distance scale (Morrissey, 1992; Opara, 1968). It is a way to assess attitudes towards out group particularly those with a stigmatized or devalued social identity (Lauber, Nordt, Falcato & Rossler, 2004, cited in Breheny, 2007). When members of different ethnic groups or perceived out groups live side by side in the same society they either move towards some forms of unification or may intensify their differences (Merger, 1997). For centuries social distance studies have been used to understand inter group relations especially in communities characterized by distrust, dislike and conflicts. Attachment of a person to the perceived out group may range from closeness and acceptance to the extreme of complete denial from the group to genocide behaviour particularly in moment of crisis.

Background to the Problem

An ethnic group is a group within a larger society that display a unique set of cultural traits Merger (1997). Tanzania has about 120 ethnic groups occupying different regions and districts of the country. The Kuria ethnic group inhabit Mara region and Tarime district in particular. This ethnic group is categorized into seventeen clan groups namely *Kenye, Irege, Nchari, Mera, Simbiti, Sweta, Nyabasi, Timbaru, Kiroba, Kerori, Nyamongo, Kira, Renchoka, Hunyaga, Mera, Basi, and Tibori*. These clan groups occupy specific areas namely the territories associated with individual clans (Tobisson, 1986). In its area each clan is autonomous in the political, economic, sociocultural matters of the clan. As a result members of the Kuria ethnic group often prefer and identify themselves on clan groups than Kuria ethnic group particularly when they are in Tarime (Andrew, 2010). Factors such as cattle raiding, land tenure and boundary disputes, deteriorations of discipline among the youth, cultivation of marijuana and inter clan prejudice have made to experience frequent and continuous inter clan

conflicts and other unconstructive social relations (Fleisher, 2000; Iddy, 2007; Andrew, 2010). The inter clan conflicts and prejudice has impact in the societies economic and social development. On one hand Iddy (2007) indicated that members of the Renchoka and Nchari clans were unwilling to cooperate in any development activities such as building schools. On the other hand, a study by Andrew (2010) showed that there was little inter clan cooperation and contact to the extent of prohibiting inter marriage and if a member of a particular clan was found in the territory of another clan could be beaten to death. Moreover, the same study noted that some clans were labelled as immigrants while others were known as indigenous. Other studies conducted in Tarime concerning Kuria inter clan relations focused on cattle raiding; ethnic conflicts from pre colonial period and the influence of prejudice on inter clan conflicts (Fleisher, 2000; Iddy, 2007; Andrew, 2010). Though a number of studies have been done to investigate on the Kuria inter clan relations there has been a lack of such studies in Tanzania that could represent inter clan social distance. This paper reports on the results of a survey that explored the degree of social distance between the Kira, Nchari and the Renchoka clans and social situations in which the Kuria clans were willing to interact in the seven variables of the social distance scale.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore inter clan social distance among the clans of the Kuria ethnic group in Tanzania, specifically in Tarime district.

Objectives of the Study

Specifically, the study intended to:

1. Examine the degree of inter clan social closeness or rejection among the Kira, the Nchari and the Renchoka and,
2. Find out social situations in which clan members were willing to accept members of other clans on the social distance scale.

Research Questions

With respect to study objectives, the study was guided by two main research questions: What is the degree of social closeness or rejection that exists among the Kira, Nchari and Renchoka clans of Tarime; in what social situations are Kuria clans willing to interact with each other in the seven situations of the social distance scale?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study adopted a descriptive cross sectional survey design to investigate the inter clan social distance among members of different social economic age groups ranging from 18 years and above. Leary (2001) states that, a goal of a descriptive cross sectional survey is to provide descriptions of people's behaviours, thoughts, and feelings. This was achieved by the respondents to complete a social distance scale triangulated by focus group discussions and interviews. The use of two or more data collection methods provides a more complete view of the complexity of human behaviour as they contrast each other and increase researcher's confidence about the accuracy of the findings (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011).

Area of the Study

This study was conducted in Tarime district, Inchugu division within Sirari, Mwema and Susuni wards. Purposively the study sampled Ng'reng'ere and Remagwe villages from Sirari ward; Korotambe, Kubiterere and Nyamuhunda from Mwema ward; and Kiongera from Susuni ward. These areas were selected because they are inhabited by the selected Kuria clan groups and have experienced historical and frequent inter clan conflicts and were expected to depict certain degree and varying inter clan social distance (Iddy, 2007, URT, 2009).

Participants of the Study

The study comprised of 230 respondents who were randomly and purposively selected. These respondents included traditional elders and clan members. Of these 80 were from the Kira clan, other 80 from the Nchari and 70 respondents were from the Renchoka clan group. The majority of the respondents that is 138 (60%) were males and 92 (40%) were females. By age, respondents ranged from 18 to 66 years ($M = 36$; $SD = 13$). Later the respondents' age was categorized into four age groups. Within those categories 65 (28.3%) respondents were aged between 18- 25, 110 (47.8%) of total respondents were aged 26-45, on the other hand 43 (18.7%) were aged 46-60 and 12 (5.2%) of all respondents were 60 years old and above. Majority of respondents, 210 (91.3%) had primary education and 20 (0.7%) had secondary education.

The Instruments and Procedures

A social distance scale with seven items adopted from Borgadus (1923) was used to get complete picture of the Kuria inter clan social distance and social situations in which clan members were willing to accept and interact with each other (Sherif & Sherif, 1956). Borgadus (1947) argue that social distance scale reveals inter group relation variables such as likes and dislikes and discloses individual or group reaction in a simplest, crudest and purest forms.

The social situations included in the scale were: *as close kin by marriage; as close friend; as next door neighbours; work together; as a speaking acquaintance; as visitors only to my country only and excluded from my country*. During data collection respondents completed a social distance scale which was titled "*social distance scale among the clans of the Kuria ethnic group*". These situations were preceded by a question that guided respondents in their responses the question stated "*How would you feel about having members of the following clans?*" of which members from each sampled clan completed a different scale that included other two clans and excluded their clan. This was done purposively as the purpose of the study was to investigate inter clan and not intra clan social distance.

As such respondents were instructed to indicate their feelings on the identified clans as a group and not a person who is best or worst that they knew within the listed clans. They were also allowed to tick (✓) as many as seven alternatives given depending on their willingness to accept other clan groups. All responses were treated as correct because the aim of the study was to check inter clan social distance. However, during data analysis, the first item that indicated closest social distance was taken to indicate the person's social distance with the other clans and finally used for analysis and reporting.

The data from social distance were triangulated by focus group discussions with ordinary clan members and interviews with clan elders. Borgadus (1947) argued that supplementing social distance scale with personal interview help to learn about the experiences which respondents have had in the interim between taking the measurement and obtain some degree of understanding the factors that bring about these likes and dislikes. Opara (1968) supported that interview and focus group discussions probe the motives of respondents with respect to the choices and rejection. The scale was originally prepared in English, and then translated into Kiswahili to easy responses from respondents as most of them understand Kiswahili. Later the scale was retranslated into English for data analysis and reporting.

Data from the social distance scale were coded, entered and analysed using SPSS version 15.0. The frequencies and percentages of respondents concerning the seven distances in relation to clan groups were computed and used to investigate the existing degree of closeness clan groups were willing to place others. In this study statement number one stated *as Close kin by marriage* meant "*Complete Acceptance among clans*". Item number two and three as stated as close friend and as next door neighbours meant "*Partial Acceptance*"; item number four and five stated as work together and as a speaking acquaintance meant "*Inter clan Rejection*". Finally, the last two items: visitors only to my country and excluded from my country indicated "*Inter clan Antipathy*". Furthermore, the qualitative data from FGD and interview were descriptively analysed in themes where some expressed voices from respondents have been presented as respondents statements.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Inter Clan Social Distance

The findings revealed various degree of inter clan social relationships among the Kuria ethnic group. Table 1 demonstrates the general existing inter clan social distance among the three target clans.

Table 1. Existing Inter Clan Social Distance Scale

Levels of Social Acceptance	Kira toward Nchari		Kira toward Renchoka		Renchoka toward Kira		Renchoka toward Nchari		Nchari toward Kira		Nchari toward Renchoka	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
	Complete Acceptance	17	21.3	71	88.7	60	85.7	9	12.9	16	19.7	10
Partial Acceptance	9	11.2	5	6.3	8	11.5	7	10	17	21	12	14.8
Rejection	13	16.3	2	2.4	2	2.8	10	14.3	21	26	7	8.7
Antipathy	41	51.2	2	2.6	-	-	44	62.8	27	33.3	52	64.2

Social Distance between the Kira and Nchari Clans

The findings from the table above indicate the degree of social proximity that members of the Kira clan were willing to accept members of the Nchari clans and the degree at which members of Nchari clan accepted to place members of the Kira clan. The study revealed that the Kira and the Nchari clans had negative attitude towards each other as majority of respondents indicated rejection or antipathy relationship between them. The inter clan relations on the social distance scale showed that the Kira rated Nchari by 17 (21.4%) as complete acceptance, 9 (11.2 %) partial acceptance, 13 (16.3%) rejection and 41 (51.2%) showed antipathy towards the Nchari clan. Similarly, 16 (19%) respondents from the Nchari clan indicated complete acceptance with the Kira, 17 (21%) partial acceptance, 21 (26%) rejection and 27 (33.3%) indicated hostile relationship toward Kira as demonstrates in figure 1.

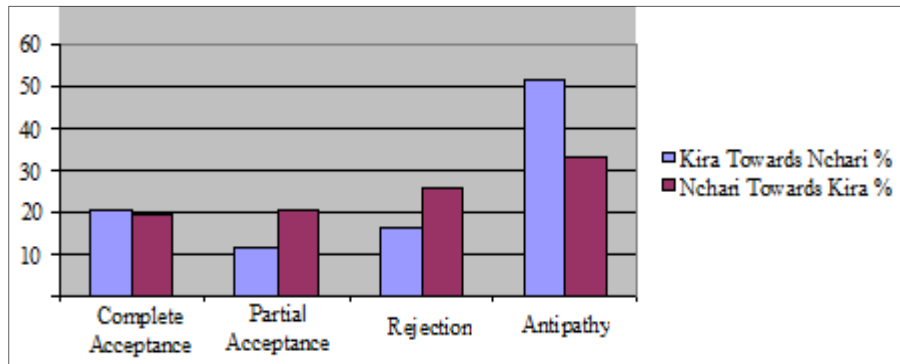


Figure 1. Inter clan social distance between the Kira and the Nchari clans

Comparatively, members of the Kira clan showed more antipathy to the Nchari clan than the Nchari clan did to the Kira. The positive attitude showed by members of both clans who indicated complete and partial acceptance between them was attributed to nostalgia they had when they lived together, shared the totem, had close contact, inter marriage, some persons still have friends and in laws who are members of the current rival clan. Currently, the two clans are rivals and are living apart, share almost nothing and have less inter clan contacts. Inter group contact as the factor for inter group social distance was noted by Nix (1993) and Bratt (2005) that respondents contact with other ethnic groups lowered their social distance as a results of increased knowledge about the out group. This is contrary to findings by Sherif and Sherif (1956) which showed that inter group contact translated their hatred

into overt hostilities (Zanden, 1965). The inter clan antipathy and less contact was also best expressed by a male Nchari clan member during focus group discussion when he said that:

“...currently since when we started fighting we have no inter clan contact. A member of any rival clan if found in another clan could be killed as members out group clan could saw him/her as the one who killed their fellow clan members or stolen their cattle...”

The above voice indicates the existence of inter clan social distance between the Kira and Nchari clans. It implies that there is high social distance and antipathy between the two clan rooted in the historical inter clan conflicts. This finding was similar to other psychological studies on social distance which were conducted between 1989-1990 in Bosnia, Croatia and Herzegovina. For instance, the study by Kandido-Jaksic (2008) indicated that before the war there was no ethnic distance among different ethnic groups. After the war ethnic distance among all different nations dramatically increased in a short time. Only 25% of the Serbs would accept blood relationship with the Croats, 19% with the Bosnians and 16% with Albanians. The same study also indicated that 85% of the Serbs expressed ethnic distance in relation to the Croats, 50% with utmost antipathy.

Members of the Nchari or the Kira clan who are married to the rival clan were not willing to be identified as members of their mother clan but rather members of the married clan. This resulted from the fear of being mistrusted, isolated or killed because they would be perceived as enemies or spies in the married clan. Such condition in support of this finding the study by Vignjevic (1991) cited in Kandido-Jaksic (2008) showed that in Yugoslavia during conflicts women and children of the ethnically mixed marriages experienced painful period. They were rejected and denied humanitarian aids with explanation that they should get from the side woman belong ethnically.

Social Distance between the Kira and Renchoka Clans

The results on the social distance scale revealed that the Kira and the Renchoka had intimate relationship as they rated each other close on the social distance scale. For instance 71 (88.8%) respondents from the Kira clan completely accepted (they would marry) from the Renchoka clan. Where as 5 (6.3%) indicated partial acceptance, only 2 (2.5%) rejected the Renchoka and 2 (2.6%) showed antipathy towards the Renchoka clan as they indicated that members from the Renchoka should be visitors or excluded from the country. Irrespective of the intimate relationship shown by majority of members from the Kira clan towards the Renchoka some members were less willing to accept members from the Renchoka clan. This may be due to inter clan mistrust and the deep rooted stereotypes among some Kuria clans that Renchoka are immigrants from Kenya

The inter clan attachment shown by members of the Kira towards the Renchoka was also replicated by members of the Renchoka clan. The findings revealed that 60 (85.7%) of the Renchoka members showed complete acceptance (marry into clan) of the Kira clan. In addition, 8 (11.4%) of all respondents indicated partial acceptance, 2 (2.8%) indicated rejection and no Renchoka clan member showed hostility towards the Kira clan by rating them as only visitors or else be excluded from the country. The positive relationship between the Kira and the Renchoka clans is depicted in figure 2.

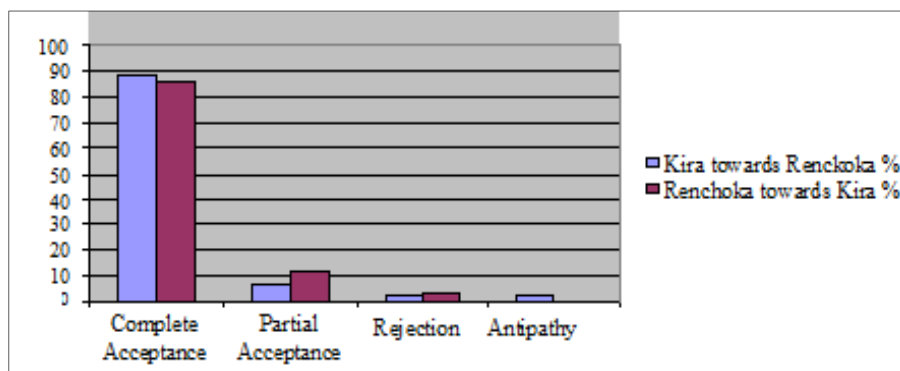


Figure 2. Inter clan social distance between the Kira and the Renchoka clans

The intimate relationship indicated by members of the Kira and the Renchoka clans on the social distance was also narrated by one respondent from the Renchoka clan during the focus group discussion at Kubiterere village when he said that:

“...members of the Kira clan are somehow living far compared to Nchari, but in terms of relationship we have more friends from Kira than Nchari. We are free to go to Sirari market and they are free to come to our market too...”

The above statement from one of the FGD discussants implies that the Kira and the Renchoka clans have good relationship and have open and frequent inter clan interactions irrespective of the physical distance between them. These findings relate with the findings by Sablic and Peko (n.d) in Croatia where respondents expressed social closeness to more remote European nations than to former fellow Serbs citizen. On the part of respondents who showed antipathy towards each other the behaviour was attributed to the general mistrust and stereotypes among the Kuria clans or individuals. Lock & Johnston (2001) put it clear that every body irrespective of personal beliefs activate stereotypes when judging out group members. In the study by Sablic and Peko (n.d) stereotypes about self and others was noted as the key element for determining ethnic closeness and distance that enabled respondents to maintain their identity and allow others into their group or to drive them even further away. Similarly Kandido (2008) found that extensively accepted stereotypes about Romans as being primitive, dirty and non educated people influenced respondents to rate them far.

There is no doubt that several factors have influenced the perception and the responses of the respondents of the two clans. The most salient factor which tended to exert some influence on the inter clan responses was absence of inter clan conflicts between them. Moreover, during data collection there was no inter clan conflicts between the two clans but both clans had great animosity with the Nchari. As a result it was possible that all feelings of hostility of these two clans were expressed towards Nchari. This suggests that the two clans had negative attitude against the Nchari clan. In the study by Borgardus (1947) on personal- group relation he observed that the feelings are spontaneous expression of the autonomic nervous system to whatever is happening to the human organism. He continued that feelings become expanded in driving power in the form of the emotion and are vital clues to human attitude. Therefore, feeling reactions to proposed human relationships possess a possible predictive significant.

Social Distance between the Nchari and Renchoka Clans

The findings revealed that there was hostility between the Renchoka and the Nchari clans. On the social distance scale 10 (12.3%) respondents from the Nchari clan completely accepted members from the Renchoka clan, 12 (14.8%) respondents showed partial acceptance and 7 (8.7%) indicated rejected members of the Renchoka clan. About 52 (64.2%) of all respondents from the Nchari clan showed hostility towards the Renchoka by indicating that they should be visitors or be excluded from the country. The hostility of the Nchari clan members towards the Renchoka was also shown by members of the Renchoka clan towards the Nchari. About 44 (62.8%) respondents from the Renchoka clan showed antipathy towards Nchari clan by rating them as only visitors or be excluded from the country. Only 9 (12.9 %) completely accepted the Nchari, 7 (10 %) indicated partial acceptance and 10 (14.3 %) rejected members of the Nchari clan. The described hostility between the Renchoka and the Nchari can be clearly demonstrated in figure 3 below.

The negative attitude and inter clan hostility between the Renchoka and the Nchari was also vividly explained during interview and focus group discussion with respondents from both clans. For instance, one member from the Nchari clan during focus group discussion at Korotambe village put it clearly that:

“...There is hatred between the Kira, the Nchari and the Renchoka clans. In our case Renchoka are our great enemies. We have been fighting with them for years now and no members of one clan dare to visit another clan...”

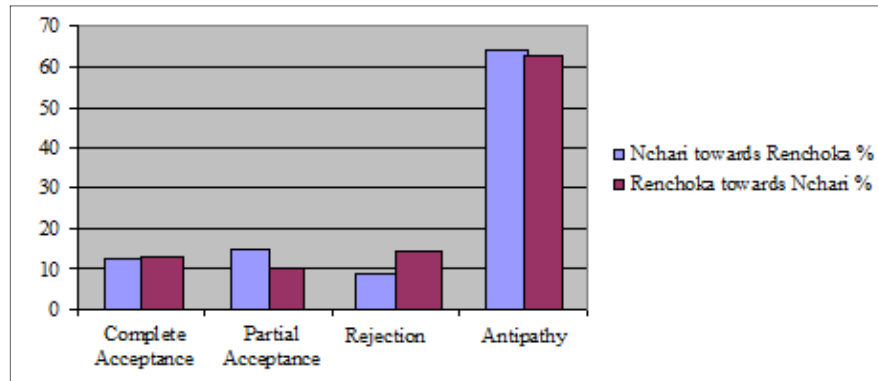


Figure 3. Inter clan social distance between the Renchoka and the Nchari clans.

Substantiating existing social distance and hostility between the Nchari and the Renchoka one clan elder from Renchoka clan during interview narrated that:

“...The Nchari are our great enemies, we are fighting with them frequently and they are saying that they want to evict us from this area. Currently we have prohibited inter marriage between the two clans. Our daughters married to them bear great warriors who come to kill us during inter clan fighting...”

The voices above imply that there is a great hostility and mistrust between the Nchari and the Renchoka clans. It also suggests that inter clan conflict is the main cause of the existing social distance between the two clans. This had resulted into less inter clan contact that also limit inter clan interaction, working together, and other interaction that could cultivate positive attitude and reduce inter clan social distance. In line with these findings, Andrew (2010) and Iddy (2007) observed that conflicts have resulted into socio-economic unrest and have caused people to become unwilling to interact and some clans have prohibited inter marriage among some Kuria clans. These results could also be attributed to some deep rooted stereotypical attitudes of immigrant and indigenous between the two clans. Inter group marriage is a sensitive barometer of ethnic patterns as it suggests that ethnic identities are weakening, amalgamation and low social distance between groups (Zanden, 1965). Merger (1997) commented that inter group prejudices involve not only mental perceptions but also emotional and preparedness to act in a certain way towards members of the perceived out groups. It should be noted that in terms of physical proximity the two clans live close to each other and in the same village like Kubiterere they share the same village. The results of the current study are different from those by Festinger (1951) cited in Stephen, Liberman & Trope (2011) who found that people were more likely to develop relationship with residents of nearby apartments than those who lived farther away as the spatial distance was associated with opportunities for exposure, interaction and exchange.

Inter Clan Social Distance Variations

The second objective of the study sought to find out social situations namely; close kin by marriage; as close friend; as next door neighbours; work together; as a speaking acquaintance; as visitors only to my country only and excluded from my country in which the three selected clans were willing to interact each other. It was expected that respondents would indicate a continuum of responses from complete acceptance to antipathy. Where as, clans with negative attitude respondents would indicate a continuum rating each other from negative to positive situations indicated in the social distance scale. The study found great variations in the expression of respondents’ likes and dislikes among the three selected clans table 2 helps to demonstrate respondents inconsistency on the way they rated each other on the social distance scale.

The findings revealed that respondents may refuse to associate with a particular clan in the situation which indicate closest social distance but accept the same clan group in distant situations. Additionally, clan members may accept other clans on situation that indicate partial or rejection and indicate unwilling to associate in the close social situations. Merger (1997) argued that groups my

display both integration and separation in different spheres of social life as in some cases group difference is a matter of group perception. For instance 17 (21%) of respondents from the Kira clans accepted to marry from the Nchari clan but 4 (4.9%) were willing to accept the Nchari as their next door neighbours. In addition 2 (2.5%) respondents from Kira clan indicated that they would accept to work together with the Renchoka and no one was willing to accept them as next door neighbours and speaking acquaintances respectively.

Table 2. Respondents Rating Variations on the Social Distance Scale

Social Situations	Kira towards Nchari		Kira towards Renchoka		Renchoka towards Kira		Renchoka towards Nchari		Nchari Towards Kira		Nchari towards Renchoka	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
	Close kin by marriage	17	21	72	88.9	60	85.7	9	12.9	16	20	10
Close friend	5	6.2	4	4.9	4	5.7	7	10	9	11.3	5	6.3
Next door neighbours	4	4.9	1	1.2	4	5.7	-	-	8	10	7	8.8
Work together	5	6.2	2	2.5	1	1.4	1	1.4	5	6.3	2	2.5
Speaking acquaintance	8	9.9	-	-	1	1.4	9	12.9	16	20	4	5
Visitors only to my country	30	37	1	1.2	-	-	29	41.4	17	21.3	28	35
Excluded from my country	12	14.8	1	1.2	-	-	15	21.4	9	11.3	24	30

Respondents from the Nchari clan also showed disparity in rating members from the Kira and Renchoka in various social situations. Among them 16 (19.8%) were willing to have Kira as speaking acquaintances but reluctant to associate with them as next door neighbours 8 (9.9%) or work together 5 (6.2%). Furthermore, 7 (8.6%) of the Nchari clan were willing to live with the Renchoka as next door neighbour but 5 (6.2%) would accept the Renchoka as close friends. The same variation of respondents' decision in admitting members of other clans was noted among the respondents of Renchoka clan. Among them 9 (12.9%) were willing to accept the Nchari as speaking acquaintances but only one would accept to work with the Nchari and no the Renchoka was willing to live with Nchari as next door neighbour. However, the findings depicted a linear continuum response of the members from the Renchoka clan towards the Kira where the number of responses decreased from close relationship toward antipathy as table 2 indicates.

The variation in acceptance and rejection of members of other clans in certain social situation was attributed to a number of factors. Respondents who indicated that they could marry from members of the rival clan resulted from their social cultural perception of women or men of that group on the aspect of marriage. Findings from the study by Yang, Lee and Yu (n.d: 45-46) revealed that Chinese students had different view about the Japanese where male students were willing to marry from Japan as they regarded Japanese women as good wives where as Chinese female students regarded Japanese males as bad husbands. Moreover, respondents rating variation on different social situations could be influenced by memories of inter clan interactions they could remember in those situations. Stephen, Liberman and Trope (2011) comments that past events that are spatially remote, the experience of other people and hypothetical alternative to reality are beyond our perception, but they may be construed, that is, predicted, contemplated, remembered or imagined and influence person's decisions.

For instance Renchoka and Nchari could be loath from accepting each other in situations such as being next door neighbour or work together because of worry that members of the rival clan are thieves, unsympathetic and could kill one easily.

CONCLUSION

The indicated social distance among the Kuria clans indicate the real pictures of inter clan relations in Tarime. Several important measures can be used to reduce social distance among certain clan groups. These measures includes educating and fostering clan members on inclusive identity (Kuria) instead of clans; encouraging inter clan contacts; recategorization Furthermore, it was noted that inter clan conflicts were one of the important factor that influenced members to admit each other in a particular social situation and contribute to inter clan perception, relation and existing social distance.

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