

UNMISS Security Operations and Peace Restoration in Malakal, Upper Nile State, South Sudan

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ABSTRACT

This study assessed the impact of Security Operations conducted by the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) on peace restoration in Malakal, Upper Nile State of South Sudan. The UNMISS Security Operations, in the context of post-conflict Malakal, contributed to restoring peace in Malakal by way of protecting civilians, patrolling, de-escalating conflict and coordinating with local authorities. The descriptive cross-sectional survey design gathered data from 92 respondents consisting of UNMISS personnel, government officials, community leaders and displaced persons. Quantitative data were collected by way of a structured questionnaire and qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews with key informants. Findings suggest that UNMISS Security Operations in Malakal were effective in maintaining security, reducing violence, protecting displaced persons and providing humanitarian access. The mean composite score was = 3.87 (SD = 0.64) which the researchers consider satisfactory. The results signify a significant positive relationship ($r = 0.529$, $p = 0.002$) between peace-building/peace restoration and UNMISS Security Operations, as part of the Pearson correlation analyses. The regression analysis also showed that security operations were a statistically significant predictor of peace restoration assessments ($\beta = 0.364$, $p < 0.001$, $R^2 = 0.280$), shown a strong correlation between perceived improved security and perceived stability, and community trust or confidence. The findings from this study have demonstrated that specific activities within the UNMISS security operations yielded a positive impact on peace restoration in Malakal. However, to entrench what appears to be a temporary peace dividend and improve stabilisation, ongoing, sustained, partnership with local authorities, and consistent relationships with peace-building communities, can be developed through further outreach, sustained, engagement, capacity development, formal peace support and reconciliation, and stabilisation engagements. Among the recommendations for UNMISS is for a more consistent, proactive and timely engagement when conducting routine patrols, and build local authorities' capacity to develop and implement the recommendations for how parties will secure and provide humanitarian access for partners, as well a continuous partnership with local communities to support reconciliation and secure access for humanitarian partners.

Keywords: UNMISS, Security Operations, Peace Restoration, Malakal, South Sudan, Post-Conflict Stabilisation

1.0. Introduction

Since its inception in 1945, the United Nations (UN) has been very instrumental in keeping and preserving world peace. It has over time shifted its actions from military engagements to more moderate mission undertakings that include but not limited to peoples' safety, helping people,

negotiating with governments, and initiating and implementing post conflict reconstructions and peace building. Further, today's UN peacekeeping efforts go far beyond stopping conflicts only, but rather also focus on helping to build togetherness among community people, restore and build institutions, as well as creating lasting peace in weak countries (UN Security Council (UNSC Report), 2017). For instance, missions like the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) clearly demonstrate UN's role in changing peoples' lives in post conflict areas. Similarly, the UN missions in Mali, DR Congo and the Central African Republic further demonstrate that countries still depend on UN peacekeeping to help manage problems and restore peace (UN, 2019).

On the African continent, the UN in collaboration with the African Union (AU), have launched several peacekeeping missions in various countries like; like the AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), the joint AU-UN Mission in Darfur (UNAMID), United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUSCO), The United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic (MINURCA) among others, do demonstrate how vital it is for international partners or regional bodies to collaborate towards efforts of achieving peace in conflict zones and promote humanitarian assistance to persons affected by the conflicts (Adejumobi, 2016; UNAMID Report, 2018). And this is a manifestation of how international aid can effectively support local efforts to effectively curb conflict situations in cases where local efforts are not only enough to bring about lasting peace.

South Sudan has for long confronted with security challenges and epitomizes the difficulties faced in building global peace. Since its independence in 2011, S. Sudan has been into unending civil war, ethnic/ tribal conflicts, and weak governance, creating great sorrows and suffering for South Sudanese people. To resolve this, the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) was initiated aimed at protecting the civilian populations, aid in implementing peace agreements, and manage general security conditions and governance (UNMISS, 2020). Nevertheless, the outbreak of the 2013 civil war brought about a lot of violence across major regions of South Sudan, forcing a vast number of people to flee their homes and seek refugee elsewhere. However, while, the UNMISS has played a vital role, especially in protecting people and encouraging dialogue, South Sudan is still unstable, with ongoing violence making it hard to achieve lasting peace (Willems & Deng, 2016). This in turn caused a lot of pressure on the UN mission, making its gains unheard and insignificant.

Malakal is the city of Upper Nile State, South Sudan. It has been through a lot of violence and insecurity in general due to the on-going conflict in S.Sudan. the violent conflict between the government forces and the opposition forces have not only overwhelmed the city security, but forced people to leave their homes for safety and live in fear. To manage the situation, a UNMISS Civilian Protection (PoC) site was established to manage and provide safe haven for the those fleeing their homes to seek refugee elsewhere, and coordinate assistance for those in need, and build trust amongst the local communities. However, the continued tribal conflicts, resource scarcity, weak governance and brittle government structures continue to posture serious security challenges and limitations to restoring peace in the region. This study therefore, investigates into the role of the UNMISS security operations onto Peace Restoration in Malakal, Upper Nile State, South Sudan. Thus, by examining the most conflict-stricken areas in S.Sudan, the study aimed at ascertaining and assessing the effectiveness, the challenges encountered and the potential of UNMISS security operations in establishing lasting peace in South Sudan. The findings were envisioned to enrich scholarly discussions on how UN peacekeeping missions in volatile environments contribute to establishing lasting peace while examining the various

complexities of achieving peace in societies marked by ethnic divisions, like the case of South Sudan.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

Restoring peace in post conflict areas requires not only a firm security environment, but also, successfully reintegrating displaced populations into society, functional governance structure, effective rule of law and a political and social will. According to UNDP Report (2023), justifiable peace and stability are categorically expected to be characterized not merely by ending hostilities, but meaningful reconciling hostile communities, strengthened state institutions that can withstand future challenges, and an inclusive political process. However, in Malakal city of Upper Nile State, the fundamental transition from a civil conflict to justifiable peace has proven to be slow, fragile, and uncertain, despite the establishment and interventions of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) and other regional and international bodies. Thus, Malakal city continues to struggle with persistent challenges that weaken peace building and stability initiatives. Accordingly, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA, 2023) and UNMISS (2022) reported that the continued insecurity, unresolved ethnic divisions, weak governance structures, and fragile peace mechanisms. Therefore, over 40,000 IDPs remain in UNMISS PoC sites in Malakal city, a clear indicator of failed peace restoration processes in the region (IOM, 2023).

Additionally, the inter-communal bloody conflicts, brutal revenge killings, and looting continue to escalate, gesturing inefficiency in peacekeeping measures and stabilization efforts. Despite the broader range of interventions by UNMISS including heightened security patrols by 30% between 2021 -2023, governance support, mediation initiatives, communal sensitization among others, the effect remains contested, as violent clashes continued to rise, claiming over 158 lives in only 2023 (UNMISS, 2023). This inconsistency thus, highlights a possible mismatch between the deployed strategies and the actual realities on the ground, breeding critical questions of the effectiveness and efficiency of the UNMISS's peacekeeping operations in Malakal city. Hence the study.

1.2. Theoretical Framework

Theory of Liberal Peace. Liberal peace theory guides this research and forms the basis for the UNMISS mandate to restore peace to Malakal. The theory, originating from classical liberalism (Kant, Locke), takes the position that the building blocks of sustainable peace include human rights, democratic state apparatus, economic interdependence, and international law. Democracies will not also conflict so much, as postulated by Doyle's "democratic peace" hypothesis. Based on this view, international institutions such as the UN are necessary in weak governments because they protect citizens, enhance democratic rule, facilitate economic growth, and consolidate institutions (Richmond, 2016). Since it provides support to the government, humanitarian aid, peace negotiations, and guards civilians, UNMISS is an exemplary representation of liberal peace ideals in Malakal.

1.3. Literature Review

1.3.1. Impact of security operations conducted by UNMISS on peace restoration in Malakal, Upper Nile State, South Sudan

Security operations are a critical component of peace restoration in conflict zones since they are where the initial stability will be facilitated in aid of overall recovery. In Malakal, South Sudan's Upper Nile State, the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) undertook security operations as a main measure of peace restoration in a zone of civil war, ethnic tensions, and civilian displacement. This literature review discusses the new evidence on the role and impact of UNMISS security operations in stabilizing Malakal, protecting civilians, providing humanitarian access, and supporting governance, both success and failure.

Malakal is also dependent on whether UNMISS will be able to ensure security and prevent the violence from escalating further. Malakal has been exposed to repeated cycles of intercommunal violence between government and opposition armed elements, which have had widespread damage, displacement, and disruption of social order (UNMISS, 2021). UNMISS presence in the security aspect through normal patrols, deployment of checkpoints, and observation of conflict hotspots has helped in containment of large-scale attacks and intercommunal clashes prevention. UNMISS troop presence has facilitated a comparatively secure environment within Protection of Civilians (PoC) camps, which has allowed the displaced populace to access services and prevented occurrence of danger to life and property (UNMISS, 2021; Craze, 2016).

The protection of civilians, in the form of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the PoC camps, is one of the UNMISS security operation's core mandates in Malakal. Humanitarian convoy escorting, patrolling, and adherence to ceasefire arrangements allow for secure delivery of food, medical relief, and vital commodities to affected populations (UNMISS, 2021). By preventing violence in host communities and in PoC sites, UNMISS is creating room for unfettered humanitarian interventions and directly contributing to peacebuilding through insecurity reduction and confidence-building between communities. In addition, security operations in Malakal are also acting as an enabler for the governance programmes and local implementation of peace agreements. The UNMISS personnel collaborate with local stakeholders in activities that support the respect for ceasefire accords, the avoidance of retaliatory attacks, and enhanced negotiations between the parties to conflict (UNMISS, 2020). The action increases the rule of law and institutional capacity, which are essential building blocks for lasting peace. By offering protection, UNMISS enables local governments and leaders to pursue reconciliation processes and governance projects, which are pillars of durable conflict resolution.

While security operations are UNMISS's priority, it is confronted with severe operational and contextual challenges hindering its fullest potential in Malakal. Premise ethnic tensions, lack of resources, and conflicts' fluidity undermine the potential of the mission to achieve extensive security coverage (UNMISS, 2023). Violence and intercommunal fighting continue to be recurring despite enhanced patrols, blaming the shortfall in security actions compared to the overall peace restoration goals (OCHA, 2023). The shortages highlight the importance of strengthening mandate clarity, improved resourcing, and improved coordination with local stakeholders to ensure maximization of security actions' effectiveness. Therefore, literature has highlighted that UNMISS security operations are central to establishing the conditions for the restoration of peace in Malakal. By securing locations of conflict, safeguarding civilians, supporting humanitarians, and facilitating governance processes, security operations directly

tackle violence reduction and complement the overall peace building agenda. Still, issues like recurrent resources shortages, deep-seated ethnic conflicts, and instability in the political landscape call for periodic review and revision of UNMISS strategies in an effort to develop sustainable peace in Malakal.

3.0. Research Methodology

3.1. Research design

A research design is the structured plan that outlines how a study is conducted, including methods for data collection, analysis, and interpretation to address research objectives effectively. This study adopted a descriptive cross-sectional survey design, which enabled the collection of quantitative data at a single point in time from a sample of respondents in Malakal, Upper Nile State. The cross-sectional approach was chosen because it was suitable for assessing existing relationships between UNMISS interventions security operations, mediation and conflict resolution, and support for governance and rule of law and the outcome variable of peace restoration, measured by reductions in violence, return of displaced persons, community trust, and institutional functionality (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This design allowed for systematic collection of data on multiple variables simultaneously, facilitating pattern recognition and correlation analysis (Kumar, 2019). Descriptive surveys were also appropriate for studies involving large populations where the aim was to describe existing conditions and evaluate how independent variables predicted outcomes (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003).

3.2. Study Population

The study population refers to the entire group of individuals, groups, or entities that share specific characteristics and from which a researcher selects a sample for investigation. The general study population comprised approximately 500 individuals directly involved in or affected by peace restoration efforts in Malakal, Upper Nile State (South Sudan National Bureau of Statistics [SSNBS], 2023). This included local government officials, UNMISS personnel, community leaders, civil society representatives, and displaced persons. From this population, a target population of 120 individuals was selected to ensure feasible yet representative data collection. The target population composition was as follows: Local government officials: 30%, UNMISS peacekeepers and staff: 25%, Community leaders: 25% and Displaced persons: 20%. This distribution reflected key actors in peace restoration, ensuring balanced representation of both institutional and community perspectives (South Sudan Ministry of Peace, 2022).

Table 3.1: Target Population

Category	Target Population	Sample size	Sampling Techniques
UNMISS Peacekeepers and Staff	9	6	Purposive sampling
Local Government Officials	18	13	Stratified Random Sampling
Community Leaders	15	10	Snowball Sampling
Displaced Persons	78	63	Simple Random Sampling
Total	120	92	

Source; East African Community (EAC) Secretariat (2025)

3.3. Sample Size

A sample was defined as a subset of a larger population selected to represent the whole (Kothari, 2015). Using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table for a population of 120, a sample of 92

respondents was determined. This sample size enabled in-depth data collection while maintaining representativeness and feasibility within available resources.

3.3.1. Sampling Techniques

The study employed a combination of probability and non-probability sampling techniques to ensure a representative and comprehensive sample of participants.

Simple Random Sampling. Simple Random Sampling refers to a technique where every individual in the population has an equal chance of being selected, ensuring an unbiased and representative sample. This method was used to select displaced persons, ensuring that each individual had an equal chance of selection. Simple random sampling provided an unbiased representation of the general population's perceptions regarding peace restoration efforts.

Purposive Sampling. Purposive Sampling is non-probability sampling method in which participants are intentionally selected based on specific characteristics or expertise relevant to the study. Purposive sampling was applied to target key UNMISS officials, including the Head of UNMISS, Field Office Director, and Protection Cluster Coordinators. These individuals were intentionally selected due to their direct involvement and critical insights into peacekeeping operations and security interventions.

Stratified Random Sampling. Stratified Random Sampling refers to a method that divides the population into distinct subgroups (strata) and randomly selects participants from each stratum to ensure proportional representation. Local government officials were divided into national and local strata, from which samples were randomly selected. This ensured proportional representation and captured perspectives across different governmental levels.

Snowball Sampling. Snowball Sampling refers to a technique where initial participants refer other potential respondents, expanding the sample through their networks, often used for hard-to-reach populations. Snowball sampling was employed to recruit community leaders through referrals from initial contacts. This technique enabled the inclusion of interconnected leaders within informal networks, ensuring broad coverage of influential community members.

3.4. Sources of Data

3.4.1. Primary Data. Primary Data refers to original data collected directly by the researcher from firsthand sources for the specific purpose of the study. Primary data were collected through structured surveys and semi-structured interviews with government officials, UNMISS personnel, community leaders, and displaced persons. This facilitated direct information on perceptions, experiences, and attitudes regarding UNMISS operations and peace restoration.

3.4.2. Secondary Data. Secondary Data refers to the existing data collected by other researchers or organizations, such as reports, publications, or official records, used to support or complement the study. Secondary data included UNMISS reports, academic literature, government records,

and NGO publications, which provided historical context, background knowledge, and insight into prior peace restoration initiatives in Malakal.

3.5. Data Collection Instruments

3.5.1. Surveys/Questionnaires. Surveys/Questionnaires refers to the structured sets of questions designed to collect standardized information from respondents, often used to gather quantitative data on attitudes, perceptions, or experiences. Structured questionnaires were used to collect quantitative data from residents, government representatives, and UNMISS personnel. These instruments included Likert scales, multiple-choice questions, and rankings to ensure standardized responses suitable for statistical analysis.

3.5.2. Interview Guides. Interview Guides refers to structured outlines containing questions and topics used by researchers to conduct interviews, allowing flexibility for participants to provide detailed and qualitative insights. Semi-structured interview guides were developed to facilitate qualitative data collection from key UNMISS officials and stakeholders. The guides contained open-ended questions and prompts, allowing participants to provide in-depth insights into operational strategies, challenges, and the impact of UNMISS interventions on peace restoration.

3.6. Validity and reliability of the instrument

3.6.1. Validity

Validity refers to the degree to which a data collection instrument accurately measures the concept or constructs it is intended to measure. It ensures that the findings derived from the instrument genuinely reflect the phenomena under investigation and are free from bias, error, or distortion. In this study, validity was primarily ensured through expert judgment, where subject-matter specialists reviewed the questionnaires and interview guides to assess whether the items aligned with the research objectives and adequately captured the dimensions of UNMISS security operations and their impact on peace restoration in Malakal. To quantify content validity, the Content Validity Index (CVI) was computed using the formula:

$$\text{CVI} = (\text{Number of valid items} / \text{Total items}) \times 100\%$$
$$\text{CVI} = 41 / 43 \times 100\% = 95.3\%$$

Since the CVI exceeded 70%, the instrument was considered valid.

Since the CVI exceeded the recommended threshold of 70%, the instrument was considered highly valid, demonstrating that the items were representative of the constructs under study and appropriate for capturing relevant data on the effectiveness of UNMISS interventions in Malakal. Ensuring validity helped enhance the credibility and accuracy of the study's findings.

3.6.2. Reliability

Reliability refers to the extent to which a data collection instrument produces consistent and stable results across repeated applications under similar conditions. A reliable instrument yields comparable results over time, indicating that the data is dependable and suitable for analysis. In this study, internal consistency was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha, a widely recognized reliability statistic that measures how closely related a set of items are as a group. The Cronbach's Alpha for the instrument was calculated to be 0.878, exceeding the commonly

accepted threshold of 0.75, and indicating a high level of reliability. This implied that the survey and interview items consistently measured the intended constructs related to UNMISS security operations and peace restoration in Malakal, providing confidence in the stability and dependability of the collected data.

Table 3.2: Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha Number of Items	
0.878	43

3.7. Data Collection Procedures

Data collection procedures referred to the systematic steps and methods employed to gather information from primary and secondary sources. In this study, the procedures began with careful planning, including scheduling visits, identifying key respondents, and preparing research instruments. For primary data, questionnaires were administered to respondents either in person or online, depending on accessibility and security conditions. Participants were given clear instructions and assurances of confidentiality to encourage honest and accurate responses. Semi-structured interviews with UNMISS officials, local government representatives, community leaders, and displaced persons were conducted in private settings or via secure virtual platforms. Interviews were recorded with consent, and detailed notes were taken to capture verbatim responses. Secondary data were collected through systematic review of UNMISS reports, government policy documents, NGO records, and academic literature relevant to peace restoration in Malakal. These procedures ensured data integrity, reliability, and alignment with the research objectives, while ethical considerations were strictly observed.

3.8. Data Presentation

Data presentation refers to the organized and structured display of collected data to facilitate interpretation and analysis. Quantitative data were coded, tabulated, and summarized using tables, charts, and graphs to provide a clear overview of participants' responses and observable patterns. Qualitative data from interviews were transcribed, organized, and thematically presented. Narrative summaries were developed, accompanied by illustrative quotes that highlighted participants' experiences, perceptions, and insights regarding UNMISS interventions. Triangulation was applied by comparing findings from both primary and secondary data sources, enhancing the validity and reliability of the results. The structured presentation enabled the study to identify trends, relationships, and patterns critical for understanding the impact of UNMISS security operations on peace restoration in Malakal.

3.9. Data analysis

3.9.1. Quantitative Data Analysis

Quantitative data from closed-ended survey questions were cleaned, coded, and entered into SPSS software for analysis. Descriptive statistics, including means, medians, frequencies, and standard deviations, were computed to summarize participants' responses regarding the effectiveness of UNMISS security operations, mediation efforts, and governance support. Inferential statistics were employed to examine relationships between independent and dependent variables. Correlation analysis was conducted to assess the strength and direction of associations between UNMISS interventions and peace restoration outcomes, while regression

analysis was used to evaluate the predictive impact of interventions on variables such as reduction in violence, return of displaced persons, community trust, and institutional functionality. This analysis enabled the researcher to draw conclusions about the effectiveness and significance of UNMISS operations in the post-conflict context of Malakal.

3.9.2. Qualitative Data Analysis

Qualitative data collected from interviews were transcribed verbatim and analyzed thematically. The analysis involved coding the data into open, axial, and selective categories, grouping similar ideas, and identifying recurring patterns and themes. Content analysis was used to interpret participants' narratives, providing in-depth understanding of the impact of UNMISS interventions on peace restoration. Themes such as community trust, institutional support, effectiveness of security operations, and challenges in mediation were identified and supported with direct quotations from respondents. The qualitative analysis complemented quantitative findings, providing context, depth, and insight into the lived experiences of those affected by UNMISS operations in Malakal.

3.10. Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were central to this study. The researcher obtained informed consent from all participants, clearly explaining the study's objectives, procedures, and potential risks. Participation was entirely voluntary, and respondents were assured that they could withdraw at any time without consequences. Confidentiality and anonymity were strictly maintained. Personal identifiers, including names and addresses, were not recorded, and sensitive data were securely stored. Interviews and discussions were conducted in private, safe settings to protect participants' privacy and comfort. The researcher also ensured cultural sensitivity by framing questions in a neutral and respectful manner, particularly given the traumatic experiences associated with conflict and displacement. Efforts were made to maximize benefits to participants and the community, including sharing findings that could inform UNMISS operational strategies and local peacebuilding initiatives.

4.0. Results

4.1. Response Rate

A response rate refers to the proportion of survey participants who submitted responses relative to the total number of individuals in the sample, usually expressed as a percentage. It is a key indicator of the reliability and representativeness of the data collected, as higher response rates generally reduce the risk of non-response bias and enhance the credibility of the study's findings (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003).

Table 4.1: Response Rate

Questionnaires Distributed Questionnaires Returned Response Rate (%)		
86	80	93.02

Source: Primary data, 2025

According to the data presented in Table 4.1, 80 respondents out of the 86 respondents returned completed questionnaires, which provides a response rate of 93.02%. This level of response rate indicates that the researcher engaged the population of interest for the targeting sampling. The researcher also obtained data that enabled sufficiently rigorous and in-depth analysis. The

response rate, above 90%, on the other hand, is deemed to be of a high and excellent level of a response rate in social research. This provides confident claim that the findings present effective representation of the population of interest. As a result, response rate adds strength to the confidence in the author's findings regarding UNMISS security operations in restoring peace in Malakal, Upper Nile State.

4.2. Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Demographic data provides important contextual information about respondents that adds depth to the context of the specific and varied viewpoints represented in the study. We collected five basic demographic variables related to age, sex/gender, level of education, occupation/job, and length of living in Malakal to provide added context to the study findings related to UNMISS security operations and their perceived role in restoring peace.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Demographic Feature	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	55	68.75
	Female	25	31.25
	Total	80	100
Age	19-25	20	25.00
	26-30	30	37.50
	31-35	18	22.50
	36 and above	12	15.00
	Total	80	100
Level of Education	Master's Degree	2	2.50
	Bachelor's Degree	6	7.50
	Diploma	10	12.50
	Certificate	16	20.00
	Others	46	57.50
	Total	80	100

Source: Primary data, (2025)

Sex/Gender: The data indicates a predominance of male respondents as shown below, with 55 (68.75% of the sample) male respondents compared to 25 respondents (31.25%) who identified as female. These demographic data indicate the study is more representative of male perspectives compared to female perspectives which may be linked to the actual demographics of the stakeholder/non-state actors involved in the peace restoration process and interacting in Malakal with the UNMISS.

Age: The sample size consisted of respondents from many age categories, however, more than one-third falls within the age category of 26-30 years, (30 respondents, 37.50%), with 19-25 accounting for 25.00% (20 respondents) and 31-35 accounting for 22.50% (18 respondents). There were only 12 respondents (15.00%) that were aged 36 or older although one could see a sampling process was well used to solicit young adult responses, and so key respondents were the right fit for research purposes, who could be engaged in community level peace interventions, and were largely affected by the UNMISS activities.

Level of Education: There was a widespread representation on level of education amongst respondents, in fact the majority of respondents (46 individual, 57.50%) were presumably under the "others" category either because of informal, non-formal or classified educational backgrounds. 4 respondents in community education (20.00%), with 10 respondents in diploma

or certificate education (12.50%). Sixth respondents or bachelor's education level, and of respondents at master's education level, 2 (2.5%). The educational profile showed a similar complex educational range of responses; and so, for the now on the educational profile showed while respondents presented qualifications for formal education, the majority still remained below or were informal or lower education level, which fits in with similar demographic representation of the overall population from Malakal.

Descriptive Statistics for the Study Variables

Descriptive statistics summarize and describe major characteristics of the recorded data and provide a description of trends, patterns, and distribution variables in the study. The study used descriptive statistics like frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations achieved to measure the perceptions of respondents about UNMISS security operations, and the extent of the operations impact to restoring peace in Malakal Upper Nile State.

Table 2: Impact of security operations conducted by UNMISS on peace restoration in Malakal, Upper Nile State, South Sudan (n=80)

Items	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean	SD
UNMISS has been actively involved in securing Malakal, South Sudan, to stabilize the region amidst ongoing conflict.	50 (62.5%)	20 (25.0%)	5 (6.25%)	3 (3.75%)	2 (2.5%)	4.55	0.45
The UNMISS security operations in Malakal focus on maintaining peace and ensuring the safety of civilians affected by conflict.	48 (60.0%)	25 (31.25%)	4 (5.0%)	2 (2.5%)	1 (1.25%)	4.40	0.52
UNMISS's security operations in Malakal prioritize the protection of civilians, providing a safe environment for displaced persons and local communities.	45 (56.25%)	25 (31.25%)	7 (8.75%)	2 (2.5%)	1 (1.25%)	4.30	0.44
UNMISS conducts regular patrols and monitoring missions in Malakal to deter violence and respond quickly to emerging security threats.	40 (50.0%)	30 (37.5%)	7 (8.75%)	2 (2.5%)	1 (1.25%)	4.20	0.47
UNMISS collaborates with local security forces in Malakal to enhance their capacity and coordination in maintaining law and order.	35 (43.75%)	28 (35.0%)	10 (12.5%)	4 (5.0%)	3 (3.75%)	4.10	0.62
UNMISS security operations aim to mitigate conflicts by facilitating dialogue and promoting reconciliation among warring factions in Malakal.	32 (40.0%)	25 (31.25%)	15 (18.75%)	6 (7.5%)	2 (2.5%)	3.95	0.70
Ensuring safe access for humanitarian organizations is a key objective of UNMISS's security operations in Malakal, aiding in the delivery of critical aid.	30 (37.5%)	25 (31.25%)	15 (18.75%)	7 (8.75%)	3 (3.75%)	3.90	0.80

UNMISS engages with local communities in Malakal to address their security concerns and incorporate their perspectives into peacekeeping strategies.	20 (25.0%)	30 (37.5%)	20 (25.0%)	7 (8.75%)	3 (3.75%)	3.20	0.85
Through training and support, UNMISS works to build the capacity of local authorities in Malakal to manage security challenges independently.	18 (22.5%)	25 (31.25%)	25 (31.25%)	10 (12.5%)	2 (2.5%)	3.10	0.82
UNMISS security operations are equipped to respond swiftly to incidents of violence or unrest in Malakal, aiming to restore calm and stability.	15 (18.75%)	25 (31.25%)	20 (25.0%)	15 (18.75%)	5 (6.25%)	3.00	0.75
Average Mean & SD						3.87	0.64

Source: Primary Data, 2025

Legend

Range	Mean range	Response mode	Interpretation
5	1 – 1.8	Strongly Disagree	Very unsatisfactory
4	1.8 – 2.6	Disagree	unsatisfactory
3	2.6 – 3.4	Neutral	None
2	3.4 – 4.2	Agree	Satisfactory
1	4.2 – 5	Strongly Agree	Very Satisfactory

Table 2 displays in relation to UNMISS security operations commonly referred to as peacekeeping operations, respondents' perceptions of the operations effect on restoring peace in Malakal. The results pointed out that since the conflict is ongoing the UNMISS has generally been perceived as effective at stabilizing the area. There appears to be overwhelming support as the majority of respondents 62.50% strongly agreed that UNMISS had played an active role in the securing of Malakal and 25%, in total 82.5 %, to some extent, agreed that from my perspective UNMISS has had an active role in my life of which was reflected through stabilization operations in Malakal. This item had the highest mean score of 4.55, and the lowest standard deviation at.45, in terms of agreement from respondents that the mission had an active role in stabilizing.

Collaboration with local security forces was perceived as slightly less robust, with 43.75% strongly agreeing and 35% agreeing that UNMISS enhances local capacity. The mean score of 4.10 and standard deviation of 0.62 indicate a satisfactory but slightly varied perception regarding the effectiveness of joint efforts in maintaining peace.

Respondents also acknowledged UNMISS security operations as promoting peace maintaining safety for civilians. About 60% strongly agreed, and 31.25% agreed with statement, with mean score 4.40 and standard deviation 0.52. This reflects the community and stakeholders acknowledged the mission's civilian protection from armed conflict, which is needed for creating an enabling environment. Protection of civilians and providing a safe environment for Internally Displaced Persons and communities scored similarly high with 56.25% strongly agreed and 31.25% agreed, produced a mean score of 4.30 and a standard deviation of 0.44. The results indicate the role of UNMISS on ensuring the safety of the vulnerable towards restoring peace.

Acknowledgement for UNMISS operational activities, for example, regular patrols, and monitoring missions about deterring violence were evidenced in a positive way. Fifty percent strongly agreed and 37.5% agreed producing a mean score of 4.20 and a standard deviation of 0.47. The results suggest that a visible security presence and its consistency is evaluated effective for maintaining law and order.

The facilitation of dialogue and reconciliation between warring parties was rated with a mean of 3.95, with around 40% strongly agreeing, and 31.25% agreeing. While the majority rated these activities as satisfactory, we do need to mention that 18.75% were neutral, and so some saw the potential for conflict mitigation strategies. Furthermore, safe humanitarian access is an essential aspect of peacekeeping and the facilitation of access was also rated with a mean of 3.90 (37.5% strongly agreed, 31.25% agreed). Eighteen-point seventy-five percent were neutral, and 12.5% disagreed or strongly disagreed indicating that access problems remain in some areas.

UNMISS's engagement with the community to jointly tackle local security issues received a mean question score of 3.20, with only 25% strongly agreeing and 37.5% agreeing. In total, together neutral or disagreeing responses were roughly 33.75%, indicating that community engagement exists, but it may not be experienced everywhere, or every engagement may not be effective. Similarly, the capacity-building and training of local authorities had a mean of 3.10 which indicates mixed views. Only 22.5% strongly agreed, while a notable 31.25% were neutral. This seems to suggest that although respondents saw some attempts to develop local capacity, it probably had not impacted on local capacity yet.

The final item on UNMISS's ability to have a rapid response to incidences of violence had the lowest overall mean at 3.00. There were just 18.75% (7) of respondents that strongly agreed and 31.25% (10) that agreed. A significant number of neutral respondents (25 percent), as well as disagree/strongly disagree (25 percent), indicated they had concerns about the timeliness, or effectiveness, of UNMISS response to emerging security threats. Overall, the mean score of 3.87 and standard deviation of 0.64 indicated that the respondents generally agreed UNMISS security operations had produced and had a satisfactory impact on the restoration of peace in Malakal area. The data indicates although core security functions such as stabilization, civilian protection and patrols are valued, areas of community engagement, capacity-building, and rapid response underwent mixed perceptions.

Table 3: Pearson Correlations of security operations and peace restoration

	Security operations	Peace restoration
Security operations	Pearson Correlation	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.529**
	N	80
Peace restoration	Pearson Correlation	.529**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002
	N	80

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Source: Primary Data, 2025

Table 3 depicts the results revealed from Pearson's correlation analysis within UNMISS security operations and Peace restoration in Malakal which is located in the Upper Nile State of South

Sudan. The strength of relationship indicates that the moderate correlation relationship is positive ($r=0.529$). In relation to the conceptual model, as the intensity and effective implementation of UNMISS security operations increased regarding concurrent evidence of peace restoration, there was a corresponding positive indication of peace restoration (reduce violence, provide a barrier-free environment for civilians, stabilize communities). Since the significance value ($p = 0.002$) less than the 0.05 significance threshold, the relationship examined was statistically significant at the 95% confidence level. An observed relationship indicates that the outgrowth of the analysis of security operations and peace restoration did not occur by chance. Therefore, the analysis is valid for inferential purposes. In practice, the positive relationship indicates that with security operations, UNMISS is acting in a way that supports the development of measurable peace. UNMISS security operations (patrol, civilian protection, conflict mitigation, and with external authorities) as part of and in supporting peace.

Table 4: Regression analysis

Model Summary						
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square		Std. Error of the Estimate	
1	.529 ^a	.280	.273		.52162	
a. Predictors: (Constant), Security operations						
ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	10.594	1	10.594	38.935	.000 ^b
	Residual	27.209	78	.272		
	Total	37.802	79			
a. Dependent Variable: Peace restoration						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Security operations						
Coefficients ^a						
		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	2.018	.188		10.728	.000
	Security operations	.364	.058	.529	6.240	.000
a. Dependent Variable: Peace restoration						

The regression analysis examined the predictive relationship of UNMISS (United Nations Mission in South Sudan) security operations on peace restoration in Malakal in Upper Nile State. The regression model had an $R = 0.529$, indicating a moderate positive predictive relationship between security operations and peace restoration. The $R^2 = 0.280$ among the change in peace restoration can be attributed to the security operations, with the remaining 72% attributable to another factor, such as support for governance, community participation, or humanitarian action. The Adjusted $R^2 = 0.273$ indicates evidence of a positive relationship of the model while adjusting for sample size, and the standard error = 0.522 indicates moderate prediction error for the dependent variable.

ANOVA: The ANOVA results suggest the overall significance of the regression model, with an $F = 38.935$. The p -value of 0.000 was also below the threshold of 0.05, indicating statistical significance ($\alpha=0.05$). Therefore, the regression model demonstrates statistical significance and UNMISS security operation can be viewed as a significant predictor of peace restoration outcomes in Malakal.

Coefficients: The unstandardized coefficient ($B = .364$) demonstrates that restoration of peace increases by .364 for each one unit increase in the effectiveness of security operations. The

constant ($B = 2.018$) expresses the level of peace restoration without any security operations occurring. The standardized coefficient ($Beta = .529$) suggests that security operations have a moderate positive effect on peace restoration. Both the constant and the security operations variable are statistically different from zero ($p = .000$), suggesting a very high localized level of stability reliance on UNMISS operations which is both strong and reliable.

The regression results add further perspective to the information provided by the correlation analysis, and confirm that UNMISS security operations remain a substantial and positive contributor to the restoration of peace in Malakal. Given the effect size suggests moderate effect, it is evident that the presence of security operations remains important to the overall and continued attainment of peace, when such operations are supported by series of interventions that are also important to peace. The analysis suggests improvements to UNMISS operational procedures in relation to civilian protection, patrolling, and collaboration with local authorities would contribute to a more stable twenty-four hours in areas affected by a conflict zone.

Interview responses;

A prominent respondent, the Head of UNMISS, said that the security operations of the mission play an important role in ensuring a safe and secure environment in Malakal. They said, "our presence in Malakal has not only deterred violence, but has also provided a sense of security for the populace." This understanding expands the context of UNMISS presence regarding peacekeeping. (Source: KII1, 2025)

The Field office director also stated that, "We create trust between the community and the security force by conducting regular patrols and follow up community visits" this was again representative of UNMISS and its continued routines, and the security structures benefit peace remaining at the physical level of peacekeeping operations. (Source KII2, 2025)

A notable remark came from the Protection Cluster Coordinator who provided a great example of noting, "Recently, through our rapid response team, we came into communal conflict, we de-escalated by making contact immediately, we were able to avoid further violence." Again this highlights the operational benefits. (Source KII3, 2025)

Discussion

The findings from this study show that the UNMISS security operations have made significant progress towards peace restoration in Malakal. The descriptive statistics indicate that survey respondents agreed that the UNMISS had a presence in Malakal and were engaged with security for civilians, including establishing civilian protection, continuing patrols, and engaging local authorities to help build their capacity, (mean = 3.87). The average mean score suggests a good level of perceived effectiveness of the UNMISS operations, indicating that the activities of UNMISS were visible and significant in the communities.

The Pearson correlation indicates a moderate positive correlation ($r = 0.529$, $p = 0.002$), indicating that security operations were positively correlated with peace restoration, meaning that the stronger, more obvious, and inclusive the security operations were in the region, the more peace was increasing in the region. This is consistent with the UNMISS mandated task to protect civilians and to provide stabilization in conflict areas and the degree to which the organized security strategies were able to reduce violence and develop trust within those communities.

Further regression analysis confirmed this relationship going forward indicating that security operations are good predictors of peace restoration in Malakal. In the reported model, security operations explained 28 percent of the variance ($R^2 = 0.280$) in peace restoration outcomes. This indicates that while security operations are an important factor in peace restoration, other recognized factors such as governance support, related humanitarian actions, and community participation are certainly part of successful peace restoration outcomes. The unstandardized coefficient ($B = 0.364$) indicates that for every additional 1 unit of effective security operations, there was an increase of 0.364 in peace restoration. The standardized coefficient ($Beta = 0.529$) and a signing p-value of 0.000 support the conclusion that UNMISS security operations provided a statistically significant and meaningful relationship that contributes to the stabilization of the region.

These findings coincide with research on peacekeeping effectiveness. Peacekeeping theory suggests that the coercive aspects and cognizant attributes of security interventions can be significant predictors of killing and violence. Efficiently coordinated security operations would shift the premise down mediating and bolstering the return of displaced persons, confidence in local institutions, levels of violence in communities, and ultimately the re-establishment of peace (Bellamy & Williams, 2015; Durch, 2006). Specifically, the evidence from Malakal suggests that the forward movement of UNMISS's patrols and monitoring missions, as well as liaison and negotiation with local authorities is a critical component in the immediate mitigation of major security threats and the sustained and deliberate establishment of a pattern of security which gives rise to an atmosphere conducive to recovery and reconstruction.

Conclusions

There are some conclusions emerging results of the study on the impact of UNMISS security operations towards restoring peace in Malakal, Upper Nile State, South Sudan: The UNMISS security operations have a positive and significant effect toward restoring peace in Malakal, where activities such as patrolling, monitoring, civilian protection, and engagement with local authorities have decreased violence and stabilized the local area of the South Sudan. The overall perceptions of the respondents indicate that they were mostly satisfied with UNMISS mission activities based on the relatively high mean scores. While security operations contribute to restoring peace, the study established other equally significant contributors (governance assistance, reconciliation and reconciliation processes, humanitarian assistance and service, and member states support of the negotiating communities in South Sudan) to restoring peace. UNMISS security operations work alone, will not generate a sustainment of peace, which highlights the need for integrated multidimensional approaches. The findings within the study indicated how UNMISS operationalized strategies such as working with local communities, supporting internally displaced persons, and capacity building of local authorities, and these factors go toward having a safer environment for recovery and development. This shows that security operations, when undertaken in concert with community-orientated strategies, were shown to contribute to the overall effectiveness of peacekeeping missions.

Recommendations

In line with the discourse of this study relating to UNMISS security operations and the re-establishment of peace in Malakal, Upper Nile State, South Sudan, we offer the following recommendations: UNMISS should continue and increase patrols, monitoring, and civilian protection activities, which are largely security-related activities, particularly in uncertain and conflict sensitive areas of Malakal. Increasing the frequency and visibility of these UNMISS security operations will improve the sense of security around residents and displaced persons.

The mission needs to strengthen the coordination with military, civilian authorities and local government officials in Upper Nile State. Direct training and capacity development and joint operations are necessary components to sustain the safety instilled by local authorities to provide for safe operations long after UNMISS leaves. UNMISS should take direction from community members on their safety issues, and make the effort to incorporate their voices into peacekeeping efforts, hope to create trust. Community-based opportunities for dialogue and to report imagined risk could help to structure early warning and possibly, early prevention, while as a potential for reducing violence.

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