



## EFFECT OF ETHNIC CONFLICTS ON TEACHERS INSTRUCTIONAL PERFORMANCE IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN LOWER AREAS OF BARINGO COUNTY, KENYA

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### **Abstract:**

Teachers are the key persons involved in ensuring successful secondary education curriculum implementation. However, their ability to perform their instructional tasks is dictated by the environment they operate from. This paper looks at how ethnic conflicts affect teachers' ability to perform their duties as expected in public secondary schools. The study was conducted in lowland areas of Baringo that have been experiencing inter-ethnic conflicts for a long period of time. The study used mixed method research methodology to collect qualitative and quantitative data. The respondents for the study consisted of 205 teachers, 22 principals and 88 BOM members from which a sample of 136 teachers, 26 BOM members and 22 principals were selected. The study collected data through questionnaire and interview schedule. The study found out that as a result of conflict, majority of teachers did not report to school on time while others failed to attend school completely for some days. This affected their capacity to teach and assess students in secondary schools. The study found out that there existed significant negative effect of ethnic conflicts on teacher instructional performance in public secondary schools in the lower areas of Baringo County, Kenya. The study recommends that schools need to offer psychological support to teachers through guidance and counselling in order to ensure teachers perform well in their duties. Teachers need to be housed in school through construction of teachers quarters.

**Keywords:** ethnic, conflicts, instructional, performance

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## 1. Introduction

Ethnic conflicts arise as a result of a collision between two or more people or between groups of people. It comes about as a result of the difference in interests, needs, understanding, beliefs and/or values (Wachira, 2015). Ethnic conflict can have adverse effects on the academic environment, including affecting the morale of teachers, the pace at which they work, and increasing absenteeism (Opoku-Asare, Takyi & Owusu-Mensah, 2015). It is obvious that many teachers and students alike are caught up in conflicts that results to insecurity to their lives and the school properties. Worrysome enough is when an individual does not have control over a situation but has to rely on the cooperation of others that cannot be guaranteed. The result may be frustration or insecurity which threatens learning and the prevailing peace within and around the school. An insecure environment often has ripple effects on effective teaching, learning and activities in the schools (Akintunde & Selzing-Musa, 2016). Security of teachers requires the presence of factors in the school environments that enhance peace and happiness so as to spur the teachers to effectively function in their instructional tasks. It therefore confirms that safe school environment encourages peaceful co-existence, positive school climate, cordial interactions among teachers and teachers, teachers and principals, students and students, and teachers and students for the overall benefit of the school. Insecurity around the school environment is being identified to have a close relationship to teachers' productivity whether negative or positive (Obiechina, Abraham & Nwogu, 2018). The environment in which teachers teach ought to be safe, friendly, calm and free from external and internal insecurity. Insecurity could come in form of school-community border disputes which could pose serious threats to the lives of teachers. Porous school fence and boundary could attract the community to step into the school environment to claim some parts of the school land. In an attempt to reclaim the land that is in dispute from the community, clashes could erupt and such situation poses serious insecurity challenges. Obviously, this situation could also lead to disruption of school activities and poor attendance to school on the part of teachers and students alike (Akintunde and Selzing-Musa, 2016).

The North Rift region (Baringo County included) has unique characteristics including settlement of identical groups that engage in pastoral ethnic conflicts because of livestock theft, land and territorial boundaries (Weiss, 2004). Pkalya et al. (2003) has documented pastoral communities primarily as those communities that move from place to place and inhabit the semi-arid and arid areas. Their livelihood entirely is dependent on livestock (goats, cattle, sheep and camels). Because of this dependency, pastoralists must be able to get water and pasture for their livestock. The water and pasture are usually hard to find and are under immense pressure particularly in the lowland areas that receive minimal rainfall annually. In this context therefore, conflicts are bound to arise as a consequence of the struggle between communities for the scarce resources, cattle raids and the easy acquisition of small arms. According to Kareithi (2015), incidences of livestock rustling and banditry in pastoral regions in the North Rift has increased in recent years with devastating effect on the livelihoods of the people

including their general welfare. A study by Pkalya et al. (2003) found that women and children below the age of 14 accounted for more than 70% of those people displaced as a result of conflict. The same study also noted that cattle rustling and banditry activities had displaced over 32,000 people in the Kerio valley and in areas bordering Baringo and West Pokot counties by the year 2003. In Baringo County, violent ethnic conflicts still exist between communities that inhabit the semi-arid and arid (lowlands) areas. These conflicts have consequences to the people living in these areas. Most often people lose their lives and property is destroyed. It also leads to hunger, poverty, starvation, diseases, fear, suspicion, mistrust, insecurity, disruption of education and general hopelessness in the conflict-torn areas. Public peace, law and order is interfered with resulting in to serious infringement of peoples' rights. The law of the jungle is usually the norm in the region (Mkutu, 2008). Baringo County is among the counties in the North Rift region which formerly formed the larger Rift Valley Province. The lowland areas of this County, specifically areas around Marigat, Loruk, Chemolingot, up to Kapedo, Mukutani, and part of North Baringo were the main focus of the study. These areas are mostly inhabited by four communities namely: the Pokot, the Turkana, the Tugen and the Ilchamus. Most of the conflicts revolve around the community boundaries because of their lifestyle which is pastoralist in nature. Marigat is the only town that is cosmopolitan with all ethnic communities. Generally, the effect of such violent ethnic conflicts is costly to the individual, the County and the Government of Kenya (GoK). In addition, schools within the area are greatly affected. The school management has to look for strategies that will enable institutions to run despite the effect of these conflicts.

### **1.1 Problem statement**

The teacher's ability to efficiently and effectively discharge his/her responsibilities for the actualisation of school goals and objectives are subject to the conduciveness of the environment in which he/she operates. In other words, a secure environment is critical to workers' performance. Research examining the effect of ethnic conflict on teacher instructional performance in schools remains inadequate. This necessitated this study to be conducted.

### **1.2 Objectives**

The objectives of the study are to examine the effect of ethnic conflicts on teachers' instructional performance in public secondary schools in lower areas of Baringo County, Kenya.

### **1.3 Literature review**

Save the Children (2011) report on their experience in conflict-affected countries showed that, teachers are central to any learning process. Therefore, there is a significant impact on children's learning outcomes whenever there is a decrease in the number of qualified teachers. Akresh and Damien (2008) found that the armed conflict contributed to long disruption of teachers and students attendance to school. It leads to

reduced capacity for education delivery, persistent demonization and distraction of teachers, lower the quality of teachers and cause fear and trauma and loss of qualified teaching staff. Conflict leads to a diminished teaching force (Jones & Naylor, 2014) due to impacts that may affect the flow of funding to schools which may in turn affect staff payments. In Nepal, Jnawali (2012) research looked at the association that existed between conflict and education. The methodologies for the research involved narrative inquiry approach. The population consisted of eight schools from four Districts. Data was collected through participants' experiences through focus group discussions interviews and narrative writing tasks. The total respondents were 427 that included, children and their parents, head teachers and teachers. Jnawali (2012) found out that in times of conflict, schools were trapped in the middle and teachers and learners were maimed and abducted by security forces and Maoists. In some schools, the fighters for Maoists faction were recruited from there. The researcher established that conflict resulted in the reduction of teachers' morale to carry out their mandate. In addition, teacher recruitment and re-deployment, upgrading of schools and selection of school board of management members were politicized hence affecting education.

In Nigeria, Obiechina, Abraham and Nwogu (2018) investigated the perceived impact of school environmental insecurity on teachers' productivity in public secondary schools in Anambra State. The study adopted the descriptive research design. The target population for the study consisted of 6,089 teachers in the 258 public secondary schools in Anambra State. A stratified random sampling technique was employed to select 611 teachers that formed the sample size. It was concluded that school environmental insecurity disrupts effective teaching and learning and important school activities which somewhat affects teachers' level of productivity. In South Sudan, Manyok (2015) carried out a research in the conflict affected Central Equatorial State to find the root causes of teacher attrition (teacher dropout). The Ministry of Education Science and Technology, in Juba County, Central Equatorial State and two secondary schools formed the case study. Unstructured interviews and document analysis were used to collect qualitative data. The conclusion from the study indicated there was interplay of practices, processes and factors that mediate a teacher's decision towards teaching as a profession. These factors influenced teacher attrition and retention.

In Kenya, Wahu (2013) investigated insecurity and its influence on students' ability to access to secondary school education in Tana Delta District, in the former Coast Province. The study design was descriptive survey research. The study targeted students, principals and teachers of five secondary schools within the area under study. Stratified and random samplings were applied. From the results, the level of insecurity within the study area was found to be medium at the time of data collection. Physical displacement of parents and teachers, however, affected students' access to secondary school education and sometimes forced some to drop out of school. Teachers were few, leading to merging some classes, increased absenteeism of students and lateness. Kaliakamur, Thinguri and Chui (2018) studied influence of insecurity on syllabus coverage. School Management theories and Securitization was employed to guide the study. The concurrent triangulation and mixed methodology design was adopted by

the study. The targeted population was 1,161 comprising the County director of education, 4 Quality Assurance Officers, 80 head teachers and 465 BoM members and 611 teachers. Findings revealed that syllabus coverage was hampered by insecurity in the County. The study suggested to the government to employ peace talks between the local warring communities as a measure to curb insecurity. The gap created from Kaliakamur et al. (2018) research is that they focused on one aspect on syllabus coverage by teachers while this research extends to other teacher instructional performance aspects.

## 2. Materials and methods

This study adopted a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005) with questionnaire and interview being used as instruments of data collection. The schools targeted in the study were 22 schools located in the following lowland areas of Baringo County; Baringo North (5), Baringo South (9), and Tiaty (8). A target population of 205 teachers was targeted by the study. A sample of 22 principals, 26 BoM members and 136 teachers were selected for the study. The teachers and BoM members were selected through stratified random sampling technique. The questionnaires were administered to teachers while interview were conducted with secondary school principals and BOM members. The return rate for the questionnaire was 80.14% (109 out of 136), 18 out of 20 for principals (81.1%) and 20 out of 26 (76.9%) for BOM members. The data collected was analysed using qualitative and quantitative methods. Quantitative data was analysed using frequencies, percentages and correlations while qualitative data was analysed using content analysis.

## 3. Results and Discussion

### 3.1 Teachers Demographic Data

The teachers' demographic data is provided in Table 4.3.

**Table 4.3:** Distribution of Demographic Data of Teachers

Variable	Item	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	77	70.0
	Female	33	30.0
	Total	110	100.0
Age bracket	18 to 30 years	77	70.0
	31 to 40 years	32	29.1
	Above 41 years	1	0.9
	Total	110	100.0
Level of education	Diploma	19	17.3
	Degree	89	80.9
	Masters	2	1.8
	Total	110	100.0
Teaching experience	below 1 year	16	14.5
	1 to 5 years	77	70.0

6 – 10 years	14	12.7
11 years and above	3	2.7
Total	110	100.0

The data shown in Table 1 reveals that majority 77 (70.0%) of teachers were male while 33 (30.0%) of the teachers were female. The data suggests unequal distribution of teachers in the regions that were covered in the study. In agreement with the study results, Nkuene (2015) found out that 68.0% of teachers in schools were male. This was also found by Katam (2004) in Marakwet where only 16.7% of teachers teaching in schools were female. This is because more female teachers would prefer to teach in schools that are considered safe and secure than go to schools which are located in areas that are considered to be insecure. The data on age bracket showed that 77 (70.0%) of teachers were aged 18 – 30 years, 32 (29.15) were aged 31 – 40 years, and only 1 (0.9%) were aged 41 years and above. From the data in Table 4.3, most teachers teaching in the sampled schools of Lower Baringo were young. In agreement with Dunlop (2015) research in Burundi which showed that teachers teaching in conflict regions were mostly young and middle aged. This could be due to the fact that majority are yet to establish families hence their movements are not hindered. Also most of them were just recruited by the Teachers Service Commission to bridge the human resource gap that faced majority of schools in the lower areas of Baringo. The implication is that these were teachers who could be in their first posting and had just been recruited in the newly-established schools. As seen in Table 1, most teachers 89(80.9%) possessed undergraduate degree level of education. This suggested that most (all) teachers who participated in this study had the minimum required qualifications to teach in secondary schools in Kenya. The study is different from Adan and Orodho (2016) research that showed that most teachers teaching in Mandera schools had not attained the degree level of qualification in teaching in secondary schools. However, these teachers were not employed by TSC. The teachers were employed by BoM because the ones posted by TSC had deserted schools as a result of inter-clan conflict and Alshabaab attack. It was also discovered that 77(70.0%) of the teachers had worked as teachers in the area for a period stretching 1-5 years. This data show that most of the educators had worked for between 1 and 5 years as teachers in the area covered by the study. This is different from Katam (2004) outcome from Marakwet that showed that teachers working experience mean in years was 7 years. Nevertheless, the period that teachers have stayed in their current school is significant in understanding their experiences with inter-ethnic conflicts and how it has affected their instructional performance.

### 3.2 Teachers Responses on the Level of Ethnic Conflict

The teachers through the questionnaires were requested to denote the prevalence rate of inter-ethnic conflict in Baringo County through statements measured on a Likert scale of five; Very High, High, Average, Low and Never. The research results are given in Table 2.

**Table 2: Teachers Responses on the Level of Ethnic Conflict**

		Very High		High		Average		Low		Never	
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	F	%
I	Physical attack of people including students leading to injuries	47	42.7	25	22.7	15	13.6	13	11.8	10	9.1
Ii	Livestock theft	70	63.6	24	21.8	8	7.3	6	5.5	2	1.8
Iii	Death as a result of ethnic conflict	29	26.4	18	16.4	13	11.8	30	27.3	20	18.2
Iv	Fear and hostility	63	57.3	31	28.2	1	0.9	11	10.0	4	3.6
V	Displacement of families	58	52.7	16	14.5	13	11.8	18	16.4	5	4.5
<b>Total</b>		<b>43</b>	<b>39.3</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>22.7</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>13.0</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>14.2</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>10.71</b>

Results shows that close to half 47 (42.7%) of teachers agreed that to a higher extent, physical attack of people including students leading to injuries is a common occurrence due to ethnic conflict. 25 (22.7%) said it was high, 15 (13.6%) rated it as average, 13 (11.8%) said it was very low and 10 (9.1%) said it has never happened. The result therefore showed that 65.4% of teachers agreed that inter-ethnic conflicts are associated with physical attacks which lead to injuries upon the victims and also incapacitation to some. This finding coincides with Jones and Naylor (2014) research in Nigeria that showed that students and teachers were attacked due to targeted attacks in schools and homes. This study also established that majority 70 (63.6%) of teachers agreed that to a higher level, ethnic conflict resulted in theft of livestock in big numbers, 24 (21.8%) indicated that the incidents of livestock theft was high, 8 (7.3%) said it was at moderate level, 6 (5.5%) said it was at low level and 2 (1.8%) said that it was at high level. the result showed that cattle rustling incidents are very high (85.4%) in the lower areas of Baringo as reported by teachers. families lose cattle, camels, goats and sheep as a result of raiding activities by raiders from the neighbouring communities.

When asked to indicate the level of deaths as a result of ethnic conflicts, 29 (26.4%) said it was very high, 18 (16.4%) said that it was high, 13 (11.8%) said that it was average, 30 (27.3%) said it was very low while 20 (18.2%) said that it has never occurred to them. The results indicated that 42.8% of teachers agree that death of teachers and students was as a result of ethnic conflict, while 45.2% disagreed with the statement. Nevertheless, people have lost lives due to ethnic conflicts occurring in lower areas of Baringo. These findings are in agreement to a longitudinal study conducted by Justino et al. (2014) in Timor Leste that found out that majority of boys (school going children) died during the armed conflict as a result of Indonesia occupation. Majority 63 (57.1%) of teachers rated fear and hostility associated with ethnic conflict in the area to be very high. 31 (28.2%) rated them high, 1 (0.9%) said it was moderate, 11 (10.0%) said it was very low and 4 (3.6%) did not experience any fear at all or hostility within the surrounding. This showed that 85.3% of teachers felt that ethnic conflict resulted in fear and hostility among communities living in the study area thereby resulting to unstable situation. This outcome was also established by Shany (2016) who found out that the level of psychological trauma was high in schools that were prone to terrorist attack than those that were far away. Moreover, 58 (52.7%) of teachers said that displacement of households was very high, 16 (14.5%) indicated to be high, 13 (11.8%) said it was

moderate, 18 (16.4%) said it was very low whereas 5 (4.5%) disagreed to the existence of displacement. The data therefore showed that 67.2% of teachers have witnessed displacement of families due to ethnic conflicts in the area. This has also resulted in students being transferred to other schools while others dropped out as a result of their families moving out of their original homes. In agreement with the responses made by teachers, one secondary school principal had this to say with regard to intensity of ethnic conflict:

*“Conflicts happen severally leading to loss of lives of both teachers and students. ”*

The issue of cattle raiding was seen to be the main cause of ethnic conflict that happens in the study area and it became worse when individuals were killed (mostly herders), or those who attempted to follow the raiders. The study further asked the BoM members to give their side of the story with regard to ethnic conflict prevalence. One remarked that conflicts:

*“Occurs during school holidays and mostly through cattle rustling leading to loss of livestock.”*

The data showed that even some students were involved in the ethnic conflict activities especially during school holidays. This showed that students were used by raiders to ignite conflicts between the communities thereby affecting their upbringing and their educational development signified by their indiscipline behaviour in schools.

### 4.3 Effects of Ethnic Conflicts on Teachers Instructional Performance

Teachers’ opinion concerning the effect of ethnic conflicts on teachers’ instructional performance in secondary schools in the lowland areas of Baringo County was sought. Teachers were asked to agree or disagree on the statements measures on the following scale: strongly agree-SA, Agree-A, Undecided - N, Disagree-D, and Strongly Disagree-SD. Students’ responses are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3:** Effect of ethnic conflict on Instructional Performance by Teachers

Statements	SA		A		N		D		SD	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
ii During ethnic conflicts teachers rarely attend lessons	50	45.5	43	39.1	10	9.1	7	6.4	0	0.0
iii Ethnic conflict result in lateness of teacher reporting to school	40	36.4	36	32.7	17	15.5	13	11.8	4	3.6
iv Ethnic conflicts lead to poor syllabus coverage	53	48.2	43	39.1	14	12.7	0	0.0	0	0.0
<b>Average</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>43.3</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>34.4</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>11.6</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>7.5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>3.3</b>

It can be seen that 50 (45.5%) of teachers strongly agreed and 43 (39.1%) agreed that during conflict periods, teacher rarely attend lessons. Further results showed that 10 (9.1%) were undecided while 7 (6.4%) disagreed with the statements. The study

therefore indicated that most of the teachers (84.6%) agreed that as a result of insecurity situation, attending classrooms at times became difficult. In other words, some of them said that in some cases, learners were not available in classrooms and therefore majority of lessons in a day were missed. Coinciding with the study outcome, Hamman and Muhammad (2017) established that insecurity environment made learners not to attend lessons hence poor academic performance in schools. Moreover, Owan (2018) found out that teachers were inadequately prepared to attend to their lessons due to insecurity situation in their schools. The research results showed that 40 (36.4%) of teachers strongly agreed, 36 (32.7%) agreed, 17 (15.5%) were unsure, 13 (11.8%) disagreed and 4 (3.6%) strongly disagreed that ethnic conflict resulted in lateness of teacher when reporting to school in the morning. The finding therefore showed that most teachers (69.1%) agreed that they are usually late during conflict times because of the concern about their safety. While supporting this study finding, UNESCO (2011) Global Monitoring Report found that due to inaccessibility of some schools, most teachers tended to be late as they waited to be escorted to schools in several war torn sub Saharan African countries. In some schools, some teachers reported that they have to go with police reservists as they cannot go on their own leading to them being late for class. This meant that instructional tasks were greatly affected hence learners' poor performance in examinations. The study discovered that 53 (48.2%) of teachers strongly agreed, 43 (39.1%) agreed and 14 (12.7%) were undecided on the statement that ethnic conflicts lead to poor syllabus coverage. The above result implied that as a result of conflict, majority of teachers were not in a position to cover the syllabus on time. This situation was found to be common in majority of schools that were visited in this study. In agreement with the study results Dunlop (2015) study in Burundi found out that teachers were unable to complete syllabus on time due to persisted fear and hostility within the school environment. In addition, Najjuma (2011) found out that most schools in Northern Uganda performed poorly because the teachers available were few to cover the syllabus. This situation was compounded by the fact that most teachers had deserted schools and with the remaining ones unable to complete the syllabus on time. Further, a correlation was performed to check on the effect of ethnic conflict on teacher instructional performance. The results are given in Table 5.

**Table 5:** Correlation on Ethnic Conflicts and Teachers Instructional Performance

		<b>Ethnic conflict prevalence</b>	<b>Teacher management</b>
<b>Ethnic conflict prevalence</b>	Pearson Correlation	1	-.306**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.001
	N	110	110
<b>Teacher management</b>	Pearson Correlation	-.306**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	
	N	110	110

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The results in Table 5 showed existence of significant negative effect ( $r=-0.306$  and  $p=0.001$ ) between ethnic conflict prevalence and teacher instructional performance in

public secondary schools in insecure regions of Baringo County. This means that incidents of ethnic conflict affect teacher instructional performance in schools. During the interview, principal (No. 5) indicated that ethnic conflicts had effect on teachers' instructional performance in public secondary schools in the lower regions of Baringo County:

*"Ethnic conflict situations attract few TSC teachers; those available ask for transfers and the available ones have low moral thereby affecting their instructional performance."*

The responses showed that few teachers were attracted to schools located in the ethnic conflict areas. In addition, the available teachers were demoralised and had no impetus to teach. This in the end affect teacher productivity as delivery of curriculum content became difficult. The BoM member (No. 10) also had this to say with regard to effect of ethnic conflicts on teachers' instructional performance:

*"It destabilises teachers as most of them are under fear of banditry attacks. A few cases of absenteeism are experienced during the conflict period. Also other seeks transfer to areas they consider safe."*

The above response showed that most teachers cannot perform their duties well since they are psychologically affected. Incidents of absenteeism were also experienced during these periods.

## **5. Conclusions and Recommendations**

The study found that teachers' were unable to conduct their instructional activities during the period of ethnic conflicts. In addition, the implementation of the secondary school curriculum was hindered by conflict. The study also found out that due to fear of attack on their lives, some teachers do not go to school on daily basis. In terms of teacher instructional activity and preparation during conflict, teachers rarely attended their lessons and even when they did, their level of preparation and classroom delivery was found to be low. This situation was not conducive for the internal instructional curriculum supervision by principals. The study found that due to the rise in insecurity levels, teachers' capacity to monitor and evaluate their students became difficult. Finally, the study found existence of significant negative effect of ethnic conflicts on teachers' instructional performance in public secondary schools in low land areas of Baringo County Kenya. As part of the recommendations, the study suggests that teachers need to be provided with psychosocial support regularly to enable them to adjust from the traumatic experiences and to be able to perform their duties without fear. In addition, to ensure security of teachers, there is need for the government to consider putting up teachers' quarters within the school in order to guarantee their security and peace of mind to carry out their mandate adequately.

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