Ethnic Conflicts and Students Participation in Secondary Education in Lowland Areas of Baringo County, Kenya

By

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Abstract

This paper looks at how ethnic conflicts in lowland areas of Baringo County have influenced students' participation in secondary education in schools. The study was conducted to establish how the students' participation in secondary education was affected by the conflict in the study area which covered Baringo South, Tiaty and Baringo North. The respondents for this study were students, principals and Board of Management members from 22 public secondary schools. The study adopted the descriptive design. The study collected information using questionnaires and interview schedules. The data was analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The results showed that the lowland areas of Baringo County experience ethnic conflicts which are mainly driven by cattle rustling. Further, the study found out that as a result of conflicts, schools recorded higher students' absenteeism and dropout rates. In some areas, schools were inaccessible as parents could not allow their children to go to school. Further, as a result of insecurity students desire to go to school on daily basis decreased significantly. Computed correlation statistics showed that there was significant negative effect of ethnic conflict prevalence and students participation in secondary education. The paper concludes that as a result of ethnic conflict, students' active participation in secondary education was limited and this affected their education development. The study recommends that government need to consider building more boarding schools in the low land areas of Baringo. Peace initiatives need to be boosted to ensure that all communities in the region live in peace and harmony with each other to facilitate socio-economic development.

Key Words: Ethnic, Conflicts, Students, Participation

Introduction
Education is important to human development across the world (Smith, 2014). The United Nations through Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) identified basic education (which includes secondary) as a key educational goal (United Nations, 2015). In addition, the United Nations has been pushing with the agenda on country members to ensure that Education for All objectives attained by the year 2015 is sustained. World Bank (2005) has indicated that secondary school education is important in human capital development as it ensures acquisition of knowledge and enabling skills necessary for civic participation and economic success. The demand for education especially in African countries is increasing rapidly and is attributed to the need for countries to break away from low growth equilibrium (Vespoor, 2008).

In Kenya, the Basic Education Act (2013) and Sessional Paper No. 14 of (2012) on reforming education and training sectors acknowledge holistic needs children should be maximised to ensure

the realisation of their full potential (Republic of Kenya [RoK], 2012, 2013). In Kenya secondary education, according to the World Bank (2005), is significant for development because of the private and social benefits attached to it. It is a critical tool for generating opportunities for social and economic transformation. Moreover, it provides a vital link between primary education and the world of work and opportunities for further training. This therefore makes it key in the preparation of human capital development and provision of life opportunities (Onsomu et. el., 2006). This means that measures need to be put in place to ensure that children do not face barriers in accessing basic education. However, various factors appear to hinder students' participation in secondary education starting from; poor funding by governments for secondary basic education, poverty, increased child labour, long distance from home to school, unequal access to secondary due to gender or cultural factors and the existence of armed and ethnic conflict in developing countries of the world (Smith, 2014). This paper looks at the effects of ethnic conflicts on students' participation in secondary education and what schools are doing to address the challenge in lower areas of Baringo County, Kenya.

Amalu and Abuo (2015) indicates that a school is an organised social system that helps the students to acquire values, skills, competencies and knowledge which aid the student to function well through his/her contribution to the society and self. Given this importance of school in transforming an individual child, it is expected that their learning environment is secure and safe for them to acquire required competencies. However, incidents of insecurity appear to offer various challenges towards ensuring holistic learning takes place in public secondary schools in various countries that have been ravaged by conflict. Data from global bodies shows that armed conflict across the world has significantly reduced. However, coming down to countries ethnic composition, there exists ethnic conflicts between tribes, sub tribes, clans and also families mostly in pastoralist communities (Ignace, 2014). This is commonly between communities that practice livestock keeping with those who practice crop farming (Mudege, Zulu & Izugbara, 2008; Poirier, 2011). The common form of conflict that has been reported in the Northern Kenyan regions has been livestock raiding commonly known as cattle rustling.

Cattle rustling do happen when warriors of one ethnic community attacks homestead or grazing fields with guns to take a way livestock forcefully. In some cases these may lead to death and injury to the herders who in most cases are school going children. Lolchuraki, (2013) intimated that cattle rustling is purely for the purpose of enabling young men who are ready for marriage to raise enough cattle to offset the bride price ranging from fifty up to hundred heads of cattle among pastoral communities in North Rift region of Kenya. It is an undisputable fact that the bride price has been rising with time while that of the cattle has not been commensurate leading to the clash (Chemjor, 2012). In some cases, ethnic conflicts arise as a result of one community avenging against the other for a crime committed on their side leading to escalation of conflicts. The study understands that evidence exists that indicates the occurrence of ethnic conflicts in the various regions of the county, but little attention has been specifically given to lowland areas of Baringo that continuously experience ethnic conflict between communities (Njemps, Pokot, Turkana, Tugen and Ilchamus) living in the three sub counties namely Tiaty (East Pokot), Baringo South and Baringo North.

Statement of the Problem
Kenya is made up of different ethnic communities with diverse cultural practices. Due to negative effects of climate change, there has been competition for scarce resources among the different

ethnic communities resulting in ethnic polarisation. Ethnic conflicts between communities living in Kenya and especially lower areas of Baringo have led to the violation of fundamental human and community rights. This is mostly through destruction of properties, creation of fear and tension, injury and in some instances loss of lives. Research studies examining how the inter-ethnic conflicts in the low land areas of Baringo County affect student participation in secondary education remain limited. This indicates there is lack of empirical evidence which prompted this study. This study therefore sought to examine how ethnic conflicts affected student participation in secondary education in public secondary schools in Baringo County, Kenya.

Objectives of the Study
(i) To establish the effect of ethnic conflict on student participation in secondary schools in the low land areas of Baringo County, Kenya
(ii) To establish mitigating measures that can be put place to ensure peace is restored to allow students participation in secondary education.

Literature Review
Ethnic Conflicts and Education
Education is the cornerstone of a holistic sustainable response that sources the protection and development of all children (Save the Children, 2012). It is placed almost together with the basic needs of food, clothing and shelter in conflict and crisis situations. Education is one of the building block of human development; a foundation for progress (Vespoor, 2008). Education is viewed as the key to providing a better life through increasing each person's ability to participate fully in the life of their society-economically, socially and politically (INEE, 2004). Schools have traditionally been seen as constituting the society's' main socialisation agents (Davies, 2004), and as fulfilling an essential collective function. The link between conflict and education is complex. Conflict and disaster often destroy normal lives of young people who may be thrown in to unfamiliar and hostile realities out of the safety nets of schools and family. Education is therefore seen as a protector of lives of children through the creation of a safe space (INEE, 2004). Thus, the continued lack of it can lead to continued unrest and exacerbation or reoccurrence of hostilities in conflict zones.

According to UNICEF (2012), wars, earthquakes, tsunamis, flooding and other emergencies like ethnic conflicts wreak havoc on society and affect access to schooling. The impacts of conflicts on education to some extent are similar internationally. As noted by Collier (1999), civil wars compared to international wars are more likely to devastate a country and are likely to destabilize state institutions including schools. The functioning of education systems is impaired by wars and military conflicts which are often associated with considerable destruction of the original educational infrastructure. Millions of children are prevented from attending school as a consequence of violent conflicts. UNESCO has therefore regarded conflicts and their consequences as the largest obstacles to realising the EFA objectives for many of the affected countries (Bensalah, 2001; UNESCO, 2002). The long period of conflict makes it very difficult to re-establish peace in an area affected by conflicts. According to the World Bank (2003) report, it is evident that the economic and social costs of wars are high and that they persist for years after the end of the conflict. A substantial literature in which researchers debate the long-term negative consequences of armed conflicts has been developed recently. Evidence drawn from the American bombing in Vietnam (Miguel & Roland, 2006) indicates a similar conclusion. They found that poverty rates, consumptions levels, literacy, and infrastructure and population density was affected by war.

Conflict has often been considered to be one of the most important factors in the deterioration of education. Akresh and de Walque (2008) have demonstrated the strong negative impact of Rwanda's genocide on children's schooling, which resulted in an 18.3% decline in school completion. According to Bird (2007), the first victims of wars are often young children, with about two million children having died in the past decade as a consequence of armed conflict within the SSA region. A further six million were injured or permanently disabled. In addition, O'Malley (2010) pointed out education, as one of the more visible institutions in the civil society, that is often targeted by the belligerent parties in countries affected by military conflict. Quite often, an attack on the educational system represents an attack on the state.

The right to education is most at risk during emergencies and during the transition period following a crisis. The earlier findings from the various scholars pointed to a link between education and ethnic conflict (Davies, 2004; Sommers, 2002). However, recent findings from (GCPEA, 2014; O'Malley, 2010; O'Malley, 2011) point to a link that is complex. The cross-sectional studies by (Dupuy, 2008; Thyne, 2006; Dixon, 2009; Coenders et.al, 2003) on education and conflict point to a negative relationship between levels of education and the risk of conflict. Conflict may constrain the supply of education in a number of ways ranging from physical damage to education infrastructure to physical harm to the students and teachers.

Smith (2014) intimated that education in the midst of conflict can be a part of the solution, as well as driver of conflict. Davies (2005) is in agreement to the later and indicates that in some countries it's the school system that sows the seeds of war and conflict. Marcel and Scheepers (2003) attempt to explain the negative link between education, ethnocentrism and out-group prejudice by attributing it to the socialisation theory and its central thesis, as the pacifying effects of the values, norms and modes of behaviour often cognitively transmitted by the educational systems. Similarly, other scholars (Davies, 2005; Lange & Dawson, 2008) support the view that schools under certain conditions might contribute to violence and conflict than they do to peace. For example, in Cyprus the education system is segregated in structure along ethnic lines that was inherited from the British rule, thus confirming the view by some scholars (Makriyianni & Psaltis, 2007; Vural & Ozuyanik, 2008; Canefe, 2002) on the instrumental role played by education as an underlying cause in the emergence of conflict. This may be true owing to the fact that conflict may arise out neglect of some areas by the state or by the inequalities brought about by education.

The Global Monitoring Report (2011), indicate that twenty-eight million children of primary school age in conflict-affected countries, are out of school, about half of the world total. A study carried out by Smith (2014), dubbed 'the hidden crisis: armed education and conflict' compared the effect of conflict at different education levels. The findings pointed to a deeper or more lasting effect on post- primary education. The cross-rational study by Lai and Thyne (2007), observed that enrolment suffers comparatively more at secondary and tertiary levels than primary school because secondary school-age youth are more likely to be soldiers. In agreement are the findings by Gates et.al (2012) report that indicated that countries in conflict-affected regions experience declines in secondary school attendance and attainment. In my view this could be true since wars and conflict may result in displacement and death of family's' breadwinners leaving the youth to take up the roles of household heads, spouses and/or workers. Refugees and internally displaced people face major barriers to education. Some of the largest gender inequalities and the lowest literacy levels in the world are in the conflict-affected countries because education remains to be of low priority in situations of conflict.

Empirical Studies on Effect of Ethnic Conflict on Students Participation in Secondary Education

According to the Global Monitoring Report (2011), the education of children in conflict-affected countries is at risk with over twenty-eight million children of primary school age being out of school. This accounts for about a half of the world total. The study that was carried out by Smith (2014), with the title 'armed education and conflict' compared effect of conflict on different levels of education. The findings pointed to a deeper or more lasting effect on post- primary education. Lai and Thyne (2007) carried out a cross-rational study to compare enrolments at different levels of education in conflict-affected countries. The study observed that enrolment suffers comparatively more at secondary and tertiary levels than primary school because secondary school-age youth are old enough to be used as soldiers. Further, Gates, Hegre, Nygard and Strand (2012) report indicated that countries in conflict-affected regions experience declines in secondary school attendance and attainment. In my view this could be true since wars and conflict may result in displacement and death of family's breadwinners leaving the youth to take up the roles of household heads, spouses and/or workers. The people are internally displaced as well as refugees also cannot access education easily. Education remains to be of low priority in situations of conflict.

Omoeva, Moussa and Hatch (2018) researched on the impacts of armed conflict on educational inequality and years of schooling. The data used was collected from ethnic power relation databases and Uppsala conflict data programme. They found out that conflict worsened educational performance and significantly increased educational inequalities since not all students could access secondary education. In their research, Kibunei and Timaiyu (2010) documented that as a consequence of ethnic violence many children did not complete their schooling and end up dropping out completely. Other causes of children dropping out of school are the unavailability of schools after they were burned or looted during the conflicts or they have been turned in to safe camps (Mokoro & Mesgen, 2010). According to UNICEF, (2012) access to schooling is affected by tsunamis, wars, flooding, earthquakes, and other emergencies like ethnic conflicts and wreaks havoc on society. However, ethnic conflicts over a long period of time result in the displacement of school-going children. The nature, intensity, contributory factors and duration of conflicts can affect education.

Shemyakina (2011) used municipal level data (1992-1998) to examine the impact of Tajikistan civil conflict on school attendance. The study established that conflict has gendered effect on school access. The study showed that exposure to Tajik civil war had a large negative effect on girls but had little or no effect on boys' school enrolment. The study concluded that households facing uncertainty such as conflict are more inclined to investing on education for boys rather than girls. In Sub-Saharan Africa, Poirier (2011) measured the impact of war on a sample of 43 countries in Africa from 1950 to 2010 using a time-series cross-sectional (TSCS) database. The conflicts mostly in form of civil wars were shown to affect educational performances of the countries studied negatively. High populations of children were not attending school and this was particularly prevalent in secondary schools during periods of conflict. Bird and Higgins (2009) conducted a qualitative study in Northern Uganda. They found out that, the Northern region lagged behind in school retention compared to the rest of the country. Due to the widespread poverty brought about by conflicts, households in the region were unable to retain their children in school. A study by Wairagu (2007) in Turkana District established that frequent raids of Turkana's cattle by the Pokot led to overnight poverty in the District. As a result, households were unable to meet school costs resulting in decreased school enrolment rates and high drop outs in the District. According to

UNESCO (2010) few children attend primary school in conflict-prone areas due to frequent displacement, fear and students' recruitment into armed conflicts. The review of empirical literature has shown that ethnic conflicts results to challenges in students attending and being retained in secondary schools. Therefore, this study looked at how students' attendance was affected as a result of insecurity in the lower areas of Baringo County, Kenya.

Materials and Methods
This study applied a mixed method research approach that utilised both qualitative and quantitative techniques in collection and analysis of data from respondents. The research was carried out in the lowland areas of Baringo County, specifically in Baringo North, East Pokot and Baringo South sub-counties. Two locations from each of the sub-counties which have borne the brunt of many ethnic conflicts were selected for the study. All student leaders (4 per each school), principals and BoM members of public secondary schools in the six locations were integrated in the investigation. A sample size of 88 students leaders, 26 BoM members and 22 principals were selected to participate in the study. Questionnaires and interview guides were used as instruments of collecting primary data. Data collected was analysed using qualitative and quantitative methods. The results were presented in tables, graphs and narrations.

Results and Discussions
Table 1 Students Responses on prevalence of ethnic conflicts in low land Baringo areas

	Prevalence rate of conflict	High		Average		Low		Not at all	
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
i	Physical attack of people including students leading to injuries	38	43.2	25	28.4	15	17.0	10	11.4
ii	Livestock theft	58	65.9	18	20.5	10	11.4	2	2.3
iii	Death as a result of ethnic conflict	11	12.5	18	20.5	29	33.0	30	34.1
iv	Fear and hostility	52	59.1	31	35.2	1	1.1	4	4.5
v	Displacement of families	54	61.4	16	18.2	13	14.8	5	5.7

According to students, 65.9% said that ethnic conflicts occurring in their areas involved livestock theft (cattle rustling). This coincides with Katam (2004) who found out that conflict in the Kerio vValley pitiing the Marakwet and the Pokot involved stealing of cattle. Secondly, 59.1% said that ethnic conflicts created an environment of fear amongst them. Thirdly, 61.4% said that ethnic conflicts resulted to their families being displaced from their homesteads. Further, 43.2% said that ethnic conflicts in their areas involved incidents where individuals were physically attacked by the raiders. To a lower extent, only 12.5% of students said that death came as a result of inter-ethnic conflicts.

The principals were also asked to indicate their responses on the manifestation and prevalence of ethnic conflicts in their areas by way of interview. Principals were asked to indicate how ethnic conflicts occurred in their areas. Principal No. 6 indicated that conflicts:

> *"...occur during times of drought resulting in loss (death) of parents of students and displacement of families to internally displaced camps."*

This showed that ethnic conflicts happened during the dry season when food for livestock (grass) was inadequate forcing the pastoral communities to move and search for water and grass for their livestock hence leading to conflict situations. The study sought information from executive members of Board of Management from several schools with regard to the rate of ethnic conflicts in their area. They were asked to indicate the frequency at which ethnic conflicts occurred in their areas. A board member (No. 7) indicated that conflicts occurred:

> *"...frequently and parents are displaced leading to loss of income since animals are stolen and houses burnt."*

This showed that ethnic conflicts result in destruction of houses and stealing of livestock which was the main source of income for majority of households in the study area. This left people with no choice but to leave their homes and land and migrate to safer regions.

Effects of Ethnic Conflicts on Students Participation in Secondary Education
Table 2 Students Responses on the Effect of Conflict on their Education

	Statement	SA		A		N		D		SD	
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
i	Ethnic conflict had resulted in increased students' absence from school	43	48.9	31	35.2	4	4.5	5	5.7	5	5.7
iii	Some students drop out of school during and after ethnic conflicts	37	42.0	20	22.7	12	13.6	9	10.2	10	11.4
	Average	**38**	**42.9**	**20**	**22.3**	**12**	**13.6**	**8**	**8.9**	**11**	**12.3**

As shown in Table 2, close to half 43 (48.9%) of the student leaders strongly agreed ethnic conflicts prevalence increases students' absenteeism, 31 (35.2%) agreed, 4 (4.5%) were undecided, 5 (5.7%) disagreed and 5 (5.7%) strongly disagreed with the statement. The result showed that 84.1% of student leaders agreed that occurrence of ethnic conflicts made most of the students to miss school on daily basis. This mostly happens to those attending day schools where students could be attacked along the way and therefore their parents advised them not to attend school. This observation is supported by Human Rights (2012) report that showed that in areas that experienced violence, learners were not able to attend school on daily basis. The same observation was made by UN (2013) report on situation of education in war torn regions where students' absenteeism cases were high. Thirdly, the research outcomes showed that 37 (20.0%) strongly agreed that some students dropped out of school during and after ethnic conflicts, 20 (22.7%) agreed, 12 (13.6%) were unsure, 9 (10.2%) disagreed and 10 (11.4%) strongly disagreed. The result henceforth reveals that 64.7% of student leaders agreed that some of their colleagues dropped out of school due to ethnic conflict situations. This situation was observed by Justino (2016) that showed that students tend to drop out of school in big numbers as a result of conflict situation. This made majority of those conflict regions to have high illiteracy rates.

A correlation analysis was also computed to check on the effect of ethnic conflict on students' participation in secondary education. The results are given in Table 3.

Table 3 Correlation on Ethnic Conflicts and Student Management

		Ethnic conflict	participation
Ethnic conflict	Pearson Correlation	1	-.235[*]
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.027
	N	88	88
Student participation	Pearson Correlation	-.235[*]	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.027	
	N	88	88
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).			

The correlation statistics showed existence of significant negative effect ($r=-0.235$ and $p=0.027$) of prevalence of conflict and student participation in public secondary schools in the lower areas of Baringo County. This means that whenever ethnic conflict occurs, most students are not in a position to attend school and therefore fail to participate in educational activities. During the interview, the principals asserted that the numbers of students in their schools reduced during and after incidences of conflicts due to displacement, insecurity during travelling to school and back home, animosity and lack of fees due to loss of properties during the conflicts. One of the principals (No. 17) said that:

> *"There is decrease in enrollment of students in the school during and even after the conflicts because those students from North Baringo cannot attend East Pokot schools due to animosity even if the school is near. At the same time passing through to school is a problem due to fear of attacks".*

This showed that fear created by ethnic conflicts made it difficult for learners from different communities to interact. The study also collected information from BoM members on how ethnic conflicts affected management of schools in their areas. Through interview, BoM member (No. 10) said that:

> *"As a result of insecurity, students miss schools when they open, there are cases of delayed reporting and some students end up dropping out completely."*

This showed that as a result of ethnic conflict, students failed to report on time hence affecting curriculum planning. A certain number of students could not be traced hence incidents of dropping out of school increased as a result of ethnic conflict. In agreement with the findings, Shemyakina (2011) research discovered that girls' ended up dropping out of school as a result of armed conflict in Tajikistan.

Mitigating measures that can be put in place to ensure peace is restored to allow students participation in secondary education

The study also asked the principals and BoM members to provide mitigating measures for ensuring peace is restored to allow students participation in secondary education. BoM (No. 10) said the following happened in their school:

> *"Sensitising and mobilising resources from the community to put up dormitory especially for the girl – child. To teachers, we motivate them by giving them food; breakfast, lunch and dinner. Teachers and students are also transported using school bus to shopping centres where they live."*

Further, one principal indicated that this is what they were doing to address the challenge brought about by ethnic conflicts in their area:

Principal (No. 1) had this to say:

> *"Demystify stereotypes, introduction of boarding facilities to avoid absenteeism of students, involve community in school programmes such as meetings for parents and religious activities and sensitise the community on the importance of peace for social and economic development."*

The above outcome showed that some schools had started boarding sections for both boys and girls to ensure that they were accommodated within the schools. This had been successful through application of support from National Government Constituency Development Fund (NG-CDF) and also writing of proposals to the Ministry of Education and NGOs like World Vision to help them in various initiatives. The research result therefore showed that various strategies were being put in place (depending on the school) to ensure that education was not halted and involving the community members to support expansion of infrastructural resources in the school.

Conclusion and Recommendations
This study found out that indeed ethnic conflicts have disorganised students' participation in secondary education in the low land areas of Baringo County, Kenya. According to the responses made by students, principals and BoM members, students' access and retention in schools becomes a challenge during times of ethnic conflicts. This is further compounded by the fact that ethnic conflict comes as a result of cattle rustling which takes away family source of livelihood leading to parents inability to meet the costs of secondary education. When ethnic conflicts happen, parents would not allow their children to report to school (for those in boarding) or allow their children attending day secondary schools to go to school due to fear of attack. This situation denied the students a chance to continue with their education leading to increased incidents of dropout, transfer to other schools, absenteeism case and poor performance in academics in comparison with students from other sub counties (Baringo Central, Mogotio and Koibatek). In general, the study found out that ethnic conflicts had a significant negative effect ($p<0.01$) with students participation in secondary education in public secondary schools in the low land areas of Baringo County, Kenya. The study recommends that the peace initiatives that are currently ongoing to be supported by all stakeholders within the communities. Further, the county government of Baringo need to seek more support from national government in order to construct more boarding schools in the area to help keep students from these regions in school until they complete their secondary education. The peace strategies initiated by secondary schools also need the support by the Government and Non-Governmental Organisations in order to build long-lasting peaceable communities in the lower areas of Baringo County using education as the stepping stone.

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