

# PRESCHOOL TEACHERS' PERCEPTION ON THE EFFECTS OF INSECURITY IN LEARNERS' ACCESS TO EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT CENTERS

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**Abstract:** The purpose for this study was to explore Preschool teachers' perception on the effects of insecurity in Learners' access to Early Childhood Education Centers. Objective was to determine teacher's perception on the effects of insecurity in learners' access to ECDE centers. Phenomenological research design was employed in the study. Utilizing a theoretical lens, this study targeted 254 respondents that consisted of 53 head teachers, 120 ECDE teachers, 80 Parents and a sub county ECDE officer. The sample constituted of 16 head teachers, 36 ECDE teachers, 24 Parents and a sub county ECDE officer selected through Stratified sampling, purposive and saturated sampling techniques. Interview schedule, Focus Group Discussion Guide and Document Analysis Guide were used to collect data. Trustworthiness and authenticity of qualitative data was enhanced by using multiple sources. Data was analyzed thematically. The findings of the study may provide greater insight to both the National and County governments to adopt a holistic approach aimed at adhering to safety standards and guidelines in schools. The study found out that insecurity has reduced expected returns to early childhood schooling in Garissa since education is unlikely to be viewed as a value-enhancing commodity in a conflict-prone area as well as problems in harmonization of school calendars. It was also found out that teachers who felt unsafe at school due to potential violence tended to be unmotivated and less committed to their job. The study concluded that insecurity was a really problem to quality preschool education. The study recommended that Garissa County government should enforce regulation on establishment of ECDE centres that can easily be monitored and provided with sufficient security in Garissa, cultural sensitization should be done by the local teachers and experienced non-local teachers to new non-local recruits to address this issue. A study on implementation of security and guidelines in pre-primary schools would expound the understanding of the current study.

**Keywords:** Insecurity, Learners access, perception and Preschool teachers.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background to the study:

The international legal framework protecting education in insecurity and armed conflict covered almost all forms of attacks on education. In June 2015, the Security Council adopted a resolution on Children in Armed Conflict in which it acknowledged that progress has been made on protecting children in armed conflict and welcomed the progress stemming from the "Children, Not Soldiers" campaign, but nevertheless remains concerned over the lack of progress in certain situations. (Hausler, *et al* 2015). Thus, countries that ratified international humanitarian laws are expected to protect civilians during armed conflicts including learners.

Organizational effects of teacher victimization are abound: teachers who felt unsafe at school due to potential violence tended to be unmotivated and less committed to their job (Wilson, Douglas and Lyon, 2011); and teachers have cited unsafe work environments in reasons for leaving the profession completely (Ingersoll 2001). Wilson, Douglas and Lyon (2011) found that teachers experiencing violence predicted fear. Ting, Sanders and Smith (2002) argued that, as a result of workplace violence, teachers experienced avoidance behavior toward students and situations, perceived they had personal safety issues and felt they were being intruded upon. In addition, gender differences exist in teachers' responses to workplace violence thus affecting delivery of services in the education. Religious intolerance and lack of grown opportunities in the teaching profession have also been cited as major reasons hindering the teachers return to work.

Palestinian children of school-age children in Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT) were unable to attend school on a regular basis during Israel's Operation Defensive Shield. The closure of schools had a particularly negative impact on girls in secondary schools. Education under occupation, a recent report by Save the Children (UK and Sweden) documents the negative impact of closures and curfews on Palestinian education. These effects included preventing children from attending school, leaving them filled with anxiety, bored and isolated. Of the children surveyed in the report, from four areas particularly impacted by violence, almost all reported seeing a soldier or crossing a checkpoint on their way to school.

According to Amir and Naylor (2014), there is evidence that schools, learners and teachers are increasingly being targeted during conflict. Some insurgency groups are ideologically opposed to secular education (e.g. Boko Haram in Nigeria and the Taliban in Afghanistan and Pakistan); others attacked schools as they are a highly visible extension of the government they are fighting (e.g. in Sierra Leone, rebel forces targeted schools for destruction, other schools are destroyed simply because they provide tactical bases for insurgency and government armed forces. It leads to drop out of learners from schools.

An average year of civil war reduced education spending at the state level by more than 3 percent. There is a similar decline in enrollment, with the largest percentage decline in pre-school education. In addition, they specifically singled out the DRC and Liberia as countries where war had a particularly detrimental effect on education. There were also high inequalities in education in conflict areas such as Mauritius and Sierra Leone (USAID, 2014). These inequalities means that boy-child were favored than girl-child leading to low enrollment of girls to pre-schools.

There are additional economic pressures heightened through the conflict and the promotion of a conservative interpretation of Islam, further decreased children's ability to participate in learning opportunities. Having been influenced by the views of armed groups and pressured by their own economic constraints, parents, and even children themselves, have created the barriers to educational access (Save Children 2014).

According to UNICEF report (2015) asserts that conflict and violence in Burundi has had a number of impacts on the education system. The killing of educated civilians during the wars contributed to a lack of experienced and educated people in government and the civil service. Displacement of civilians resulted in the disruption of education for many children and youth. Because the normalization of violence within the school and home obstructed children's cognitive, emotional, psychosocial and moral development, in turn are more likely to perpetuate violence in their own lives even during play and in the lives of their families when they become adults.

The internal threats to security consist first, of rampant thefts and robbery that target individuals and which many Kenyans now treat as a normal burden of citizenship. The second type of internal insecurity is directed towards groups of people and goes by many labels such as inter-ethnic clashes, livestock theft, boundary clashes, inter-clan rivalries, and even insurgency. (Ombaka, 2015). Consequently, teachers find it difficult to concentrate on their normal classroom teaching preparations.

According to report by ALDEF Kenya (2015), the north eastern Kenya has seen deliberate policies of marginalization, poor governance and human rights abuse by the Kenyan government since a pre independent plebiscite in north frontier districts in which the local population voted to secede to Somalia. Following the recent incursion of Kenyan defense forces into Somalia where an internationally supported government is being fought by Al-Shabaab – a terror affiliated militant outfit, violent extremism has been witnessed to be on the rise in Kenya. Retaliatory attacks by Al-Shabaab on learning institutions in Kenya and threats of teachers made some teachers to flee leaving behind unattended learners who also feared attending early childhood centers. This was evident in former Northern Eastern Province.

## International Journal of Novel Research in Education and Learning

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Ahmed (2015) in Mandera North Sub- County Kenya carried out a study on the influence of armed conflict on pupils' performance. He revealed that fear of physical attacks was likely to hinder the teachers' ability to handle children in school and that the quality of education suffers due to shortages of teachers during conflicts. Also fear of sexual violence during conflict was likely to hinder the teachers' ability to handle children in school. Fear of physical attacks was likely to hinder the teachers' ability to handle children in school and that the quality of education suffers due to shortages of teachers during conflict.

### 1.2 Statement of the Problem:

Situations of insecurity affect education in many ways. With the recent insecurity cases in Garissa involving acts of terrorism and religious radicalism, some learning institutions were closed down due to lack of teachers who fled, (Adow, 2015). Even though after security normalcy was resumed still some teachers were reluctant to go back to Garissa. No study with focus on insecurity has been done on teachers' perception; hence, this prompted the study to be done in Garissa Township Sub County, Kenya.

### 1.3 Purpose of the Study:

The purpose of this study was to explore Preschool teachers' perception on the effects of insecurity in Learners' access to Early Childhood Education Centers

### 1.4 Objectives of the study:

The objective that guided the study was to determine teacher's perception on the effects of insecurity in learners' access to ECDE centers in Garissa Township sub-county.

### 1.5 Research Questions:

The research question that guided the study was: How is the perception of teachers on effects of insecurity in learners' access to ECDE centres in Garissa Township Sub County?

### 1.6 Significance of the Study:

The findings of this study may generate information that may be useful to head teachers, ECDE teachers, learners, parents and other education stakeholders to strengthen the implementation of the free primary education programme and increase equal access to education of children in ASALs regions.

### 1.7 Limitation of the Study:

The nature of insecurity elements in Garissa is conspicuously different from other counties of Kenya. This is evident in its security elements such as inter-clan conflicts, cattle rustling, religious extremism and heavy security forces operations in the area which makes Garissa unique from majority of other counties.

### 1.8 Scope of the Study:

This study focused on insecurity related to teacher's perception on the effects of insecurity in achieving early childhood education in Garissa Township Sub County, Kenya. The study focused on accessibility, teacher preparation, conducting a successful lesson and learning through play. The phenomenological research design was used.

### 1.9 Theoretical framework:

This study was based on the theory of Abraham Maslow (1954).

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### Teachers' perception on the effects of insecurity in learners' access to ECDE centers:

Rubin and Rudeforth (2016) in Afghanistan with Center on International Cooperation conducted a survey on enhancing access to education: challenges and opportunities in the same country. It was revealed that in 2015, Taliban attacks on schools and threats against educators increased, in line with a general surge in violence following military drawdown at the end of 2014. Incidents have included attacks on schools used by the state for other purposes, such polling places or police or military bases; targeted killings of pro-maktab clerics in Khost; teacher kidnappings in Wardak; and public

intimidation and shaming of students in Kunduz during the Taliban's temporary capture of the city in September 2015. Restrictions on girls' education extend beyond Taliban-influenced areas, and involve pragmatic, historic and cultural factors, in addition to political allegiances.

Hart (2001) in Nepal carried a study on conflict and its impact on children. Children are still unable to gain access to schooling due to exclusion that may occur at the level of family, community or state, due to factors of economy, caste-ethnicity, gender, and security. In Nepal it is part of the Maoist agenda to eliminate discrimination on the basis of gender and caste-ethnicity that prevent girls and those from marginalized caste ethnic groups from gaining equal access to schools. Although the factors found out by Hart could also be affecting accessibility to ECD centres, however, the current study endeavored to investigate basically teachers' perception on the effects of insecurity on learners' level of accessibility to ECDE centres.

According to Marcs' study (2002) about Children, Education and War around the world. The author targeted primary school-going children dwelling in IDP camps and refugee centers where he asserted that, in war-affected areas, many children who should be in school are hard to find, hard to get into school, and hard to make sure they remain there until completing, at the very least, their primary education. Of these three, the first challenge is often the most difficult – children are too often fighting, fleeing, or hiding during conflicts. They are hard to get into school, relatively speaking, if they're already in a refugee or IDP camp. Nonetheless, the proportion of children in war-affected areas receiving education is usually very low: during much of Sierra Leone's recent civil war, for example, tens of thousands of children in camps attended primary schools, but hundreds of thousands more were either difficult to locate or completely unable to regularly attend school.

According to Martinez (2013)'s study on the impact of conflict and grave violations on children's futures using country case studies constituting Central African Republic, Mali, Pakistan and Syria, children living in conflict zones face many barriers to education. These range from schools simply not being available in the worst-affected areas of a country, to the difficulty of recruiting sufficient teachers or persuading former teachers to return to teaching. Even where children can access schools or schools are functioning, the chances of receiving a good-quality education – and learning basic skills – can be diminished as a result of, for example, disrupted attendance, poor learning environments, unsafe or no school reconstruction, and reduced distribution of learning materials. In an already precarious context, these constitute additional barriers that can lead children to drop out permanently. The author used many countries as case study, but these countries faced systemic security issues and its effects on children's education. However, the current study was done in Kenyan context by investigating the effects of insecurity in learners' access to ECDE centers.

Bortu (2009) in Buduburam Refugee Camp in Ghana conducted a study to address the challenges that Liberian refugee children and youths face in accessing education. In exploring on the educational challenges facing these children, a qualitative research design using Library Research and Documentation, Semi Structured Interviews and Observation was employed. The study found out that social events unfolding at the camp was a factor discouraging children from attending classes. Bortu also found out that Liberian refugees (parents and children) are not easily willing to integrate into the Ghanaian community. Amidst the quest for education by children, thousands of them at the Buduburam Refugee Camp are denied the opportunity of attending schools or prefer other means at their disposal rather than the classrooms.

Monique (2014) in Liberia studied the challenges of access and retention endeavored to explore former refugee and internally displaced secondary school girls' challenges of access and retention in formal school in post-war Zwedru. The study revealed that the education system of Liberia was a contributing factor to the 14 years of war in Liberia from 1989 to 2003. In presenting the process of education reconstruction and girls' reintegration into formal school, the author identified political, economic and cultural challenges as underlying factors which slow down girls' participation and completion of secondary school.

Migosi, Nanok, Ombuki and Metet (2012) in Kakuma and Lokichoggio divisions Turkana County, Kenya did a case study on Hindrances to pupils' access and participation in primary school education. The study, paradoxically, revealed that financial resources played insignificant role in school access whereas cultural factors, parental negligence and ignorance of their roles in education provision, poverty among the majority of parents and insecurity played a major role in hindering education access and participation in the area.

## International Journal of Novel Research in Education and Learning

Vol. 5, Issue 4, pp: (60-74), Month: July - August 2018, Available at: [www.noveltyjournals.com](http://www.noveltyjournals.com)

Mudege, Zulu and Zugbara (2008) in Nairobi wrote a journal on how insecurity impacts on school attendance and school dropout among urban slum children. The study relied on qualitative data collected and also analyzed data from individual interviews and focus group interviews and focuses on the narrative of respondents on how insecurity impacts on educational attainment. The study found out that perceived increased community violence affected not only students' dropout rate but also the quality and quantity of education they received. Teachers were afraid to discipline students because they feared they would be attacked by the students or the students' colleagues outside the school system. Teachers often came to school late and left early because they were afraid of being attacked. Teachers claimed that sometimes students spied on them and "sold" them out to gangs.

### 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Research Design:

This study used phenomenological research design to cover contextual conditions relevant to the phenomenon under study.

#### 3.2 Location of the Study:

The study limited its focus to Garissa Township Sub County, Kenya. It had a latitude of  $1^{\circ} 58'$  N and  $2^{\circ} 1'$  S and longitude of  $38^{\circ} 34'E$ ) and  $41^{\circ} 32'$  E, is an administrative region located in the area of former North Eastern Province in Kenya that was a part of Africa.

#### 3.3 Population of the Study:

The target population included 53 Head teachers, 120 ECDE teachers, 80 parents as well as a Sub-County ECD Coordinator.

#### 3.4 The sample of the study:

The sample constituted of 16 head teachers, 36 ECDE teachers, 24 Parents and a sub county ECDE officer

#### 3.5 Research Instruments:

The study employed Focus Group Discussion Guide and interviews schedules as well as document analysis Guide to collect data.

#### 3.6 Trustworthiness of qualitative data:

Validity and reliability of qualitative data was ascertained through Lincoln and Guba (1985) qualitative paradigm: Credibility; Transferability; dependability; and conformability.

#### 3.7 Data Analysis:

The data were reflectively analyzed starting from the time they were collected while still in the field (Creswell, 2009; Gall *et. al.*, 2007; Maxwell, 2005). Thematic analysis was then done on the data.

#### 3.8 Ethical Considerations:

The ethics of research were upheld by researcher such as accessibility and acceptability, protecting participants from harm, obtaining informed consent of participants, anonymity and confidentiality and respecting the privacy of participants.

### 4. RESULTS AND FINDINGS

#### Preschool teacher's perception on the effects of insecurity in learners' access to early childhood development centers Observable distance between school and residential areas:

In the data collected through the use of in-depth interview majority of informants said that distance was a factor in accessibility to ECD institutions by learners. Garissa Sub-County ECD Coordinator explained that:

*For the last 5 years there have been improvements with regard to accessibility to ECD centers since many centers have been opened in Garissa Town. However, learners in the outskirts of Garissa Township still found it very difficult to access school due to long distances. There is poor infrastructure and lack of school vans in areas such as Sankuri and Komor Location where schools are also situated away from settlement areas.*



**International Journal of Novel Research in Education and Learning**

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The findings from focus group discussion also confirmed that learners in the outskirts of Garissa Town do not access ECD centers the same rate as within the township.

They said that:

*Nowadays parents prefer taking their children to private ECD schools because they are accessible and widespread. They are able to choose the nearest and/or most convenient ones for their kids( FGD1).*

One Head Teacher added that:

*Almost all middle class people take their kids to private ECD centers for various reasons including distance. Private schools are spread all over and give people wide choice of what is best for their kids, thus, the problem of distance does not affect them (HT1).*

The findings above shows that distance influence accessibility to ECD institutions. Schools located far away from children's residential areas facilitate inaccessibility. This findings concurs with Beste (2015)'s argument that there is practical barriers to accessibility to school such as lack of information on how to access education services, distance from school, overcrowding of classrooms, bullying and protection concerns for young girls.

**Observable reactions that portrays fear on part of Garissa residents:**

These are perceptible behaviors that conveyed by Garissa residents as a result of evident security causal factors. From the data collected it was found out that fear were caused by rumours of attacks or invasion. These rumours emanate from non-locals and security intelligence which even though they hadnot been substantiated cause fear to both ECDE teachers and parents who do not let their kids go to school in the wake of such event.

Sub-County ECDE Coordinator assessed that:

*...insecurity has reduced expected returns to early childhood schooling in Garissa since education is unlikely to be viewed as a value-enhancing commodity in a conflict-prone area as well as problems in harmonization of school calendars. Sub-County ECDE Coordinator.*

School buildings and compounds were common war targets in conflict zones. Fear of abduction, rape, stepping on landmines or being caught in cross-fire makes travel to school treacherous. These and other factors are obviously disincentives for attending school, except in situations where schooling takes place in alternative locations.

An ECDE teacher who teaches in the outs cast of Garissa Township narrates that:

*...during the wake of terrorist activities we fear abductions and stepping on landmines. Even learners either avoid certain routes or avoid coming to schools especially after explosions along the way....FGD2*

Worst still no non-local teacher was willing to work in the outs cast of Garissa Township constituency more specifically along the border with Fafi, Dujis and Dadaab constituencies due to their remoteness and lack of security apparatus coupled with conservatism nature of Muslims in those areas. Fear engulfed them and as also parents of pre-schools they have relocated their kids to 'down Kenya' as some of them sought transfers to other regions thereby affecting operations of pre-schools in Garissa. This view was shared by teachers in the FGD. For example, four teachers in the focus group discussion said that:

*Non-local teachers are discriminated on the basis of dress code, religion, culture and language. They are perceived as immoral and sub-human by the locals whose religious ideals do not resonate with the Christianity. This brought sense of fear to teachers where some of them sought transfers to safer regions thereby leaving pre-schools in limbo...(FGD3).*

Fears of personal harm, crime and violence mated by *Askoris* (a group of gangs who harass, maim and steal from people) have heightened the sense of insecurity among residents. Securityfears included insecurity that children suffered from as they went to school, through the use of unsafe routes; insecurity that children felt at school; and the insecurity they suffered from around homes. Two parents in a FGD argued that:

*'Askoris' operates even daytimes targeting not only adults but also pre-schoolers. They snatch their bags scrutinize them and give them back. We have to escort them to school and sometimes avoid certain routes we deemed unsafe.....(FDG4).*

Moreover, parents argued that insecurity has led to destruction of schools and educational infrastructure, displacement, death of children and teachers, closure of schools for an indefinite period. This occurred especially during inter-clan conflicts where learning institutions also became retaliatory targets, thus, affecting accessibility to schools.

Teachers in this study also felt that learning was inconvenienced sometimes when displacement of people resulted in the use of school facilities as shelter and haven of safety. Consequently, teaching was not resumed in these institutions and children had to travel to schools elsewhere or drop-out of school completely.

In addition to the reaction above, insecurity had affected teacher-student ratio as some teachers had transferred to schools in safer regions. Insecurity orchestrated by acts of terror and/or inter-clan conflicts threatened children's security as they travel to or from school and while attending classes. As a result some parents had induced households to keep their children away from school or send them away to relatives in more secure places. For instance one parent in the FGD1 stated that:

*Insecurity has specific gender impacts. Girls are mostly affected since their parents fear they would be sexually assaulted along the way to school. These cases are rampant and swept under the carpet because they are adjudicated by community elders who are easily bribed by rape maniacs.....FGD1*

The age difference between non-local learners and their local counterparts was also a source of fear for the safety of children. This was because Muslim children are first taken for religious education before joining ECD classes for formal education. As a result they appeared older and more mature than Christian children and this complicated type of games they play and child development processes that are affected by the environment. Parents whose kids were kept on injured take them away from school and this limited their chances of acquiring basic pre-school education. The Garissa Sub-County ECDE Coordinator interviewed further added that:

*Children who have had extensive experience in group day care or other early childhood education programs may be more comfortable and better prepared to handle school than their age-mates who have had little experience in such settings....Garissa Sub-County ECDE Coordinator.*

Though educational intervention found in schools contributes more to children's cognitive competencies overall than does maturation and that relatively young children benefit from school as much as relatively older children. The point of difference emanates from outdoor games that result in younger children incurring a lot of injuries when they play with older children. Two parents narrated that:

*I transferred my children from Kazuku Primary to St. Mary School because every day they came with new injuries inflicted to them by Somali children who are much older than them. Learners in St. Mary School are their age-mates and pose less danger to them....(FGD2).*

A teacher also added that:

*...when these children play during study break we have to keep an eye on the younger kids not to be injured by their older colleagues. Some older ones even mount or jump on the younger ones with little or no care.....(FGD 3).*

This finding augur well with Omayio (2015)'s argument that most households that subscribe from Islamic faith prefer taking their kids to religious centers at the age that they ought to be attending ECDE institutions. Thus affecting negatively the endeavor of admitting kids to pre-school for child development and formal education. Beyond teaching religious education, at the mosque they are important in passing on messages that can either encourage or discourage school attendance.

Schools located in areas of instability and conflict-prone zones were disconnected from a larger school system within Garissa. Basic issues of school administration are irregular, poorly conceived and ineffectively carried out. The consequences of these included; poor school performance in the National Examinations, transfer of learners to other schools as well as attack of teachers by the community. The ripple effects had caused fear among ECDE teachers in pre-schools. Lack of composure and time to prepare for lessons have by extension led to unsuccessful lessons.

## International Journal of Novel Research in Education and Learning

Vol. 5, Issue 4, pp: (60-74), Month: July - August 2018, Available at: [www.noveltyjournals.com](http://www.noveltyjournals.com)

The Sub-County ECDE Coordinator interviewed assessed that:

*Education processes in upper primary classes and that of pre-schools are intimately intertwined such that the spill-over effect of misfortunes: mismanagement, poor K.C.P.E performance and embezzlement of school's funds among others affect pre-school education services immensely. There is no way we can delink the two since they must go hand-in hand....Garissa Sub-County ECDE Coordinator*

Safety is therefore considered as an integral element in education processes without which education services cannot be carried out. Anna Kristin (2010) concurred with this sentiment and argued that education is the single most vital element in combating poverty, empowering women and promoting human rights and democracy. As a result, Kristin (2015) further assessed that the international legal framework protecting education in insecurity and armed conflict covers almost all forms of attacks on education. In June 2015, the Security Council adopted a resolution on Children in Armed Conflict in which it acknowledges that progress has been made on protecting children in armed conflict and welcomed the progress stemming from the "Children, Not Soldiers" campaign.

### Observable movements of security forces and apparatus:

This is the physical movements of police and military personnel who patrol the conflict zones with their armory. From the data collected it was revealed that the presence of security personnel even without combat cause fear to Garissa residents.

A parent in the FDG said that:

*...the presence of security officers exacerbated the learning process since parents were still scared to release their kids to go to school and they could not also have faith on these security forces because they had previous harassed some members of the public....FGD4*

The above findings partly concur with the study findings by Miguel and Roland, (2006) which was carried out in Palestinian. In the study it was revealed that children of school-age children in Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT) were unable to attend school on a regular basis during Israel's Operation Defensive Shield. The closure of schools had a particularly negative impact on girls. These effects included preventing children from attending school, leaving them filled with anxiety, bored and isolated. In this situation teachers too would feel it risky to go to schools or attend to learners in the learning centers.

The findings point at one thing: accessibility to learning centers were hampered by insecurity in the schools' environs more specifically when school infrastructures were destroyed and security personnel hover around the institutions. These caused psychological fear to learners and their parents who remain adamant to send their kids to schools.

Similar results were obtained by Amir and Naylor (2014) who investigated the quantitative impact of armed conflict on education. Results revealed that there is evidence that schools, learners and teachers are increasingly being targeted during conflict. Some insurgency groups are ideologically opposed to secular education; others attack schools as they are a highly visible extension of the government they are fighting, other schools are destroyed simply because they provide tactical bases for insurgency and government armed forces. It lead to drop out of learners from schools.

State imposition of curfews had also taken toll on teachers' endeavor to prepare for teaching in pre-schools. The presence of military forces and police instill fears on both teachers and learners and frustrate the education calendar. Three teachers explained that:

*The dawn to dusk curfews seriously affects our preparations for teaching because we have to leave earlier for our homes to avoid getting into problems with security forces some of who start patrolling way far before 6 p.m. some parents too do not send their kids to schools and this seriously hampered our teaching programmes.....FGD2*

According to the professional documents analyzed: class attendance registers, time tables and admission records from the Head Teachers' offices, it was found out that during the wake of terrorists attacks and clan conflicts learners' attendance rate dropped by 50%. Learners' admission records in 2015 and 2016 at the height of rampant terrorist attacks showed negative fluctuations of learners seeking pre-school educational services in pre-schools around Garissa. The unstable number of learners in classrooms affected preparations for teaching since it influences the nature and number of learning tools to avail for teaching such as flip charts, models among others. For example, one Head Teacher explained that:



*...the school almost closed down in the second term in 2015 following Garissa University attacks. The number of pre-schoolers was not viable enough to warrant procurement of teaching aids using TSC policies for the preparations for teaching, instead we procured them locally.... HT1*

One teacher further said that:

*It is difficult to find locally available materials that can be improvised in the preparation for teaching since most vendors have closed their premises during security crackdown. In such events we don't prepare enough for teaching. Worst still, learners destroyed these teaching aids that have been prepared hence they are not reserved for the next lessons.....FGD4*

During the insecurity conditions prompted by terrorist acts there were suspicions, lack of trust and incoherency among Christian and Muslim teachers in staffrooms. From that perspective, educational practices changed since teachers had no support they needed to make sense of new ideas and directives, bring them together in a meaningful way, and construct a coherent practice. Thus, sharing of teaching materials could not happen and this hampered the process of preparations for teaching in the pre-schools. Head Teacher interviewed added that:

*...some non-local teachers accused their counterparts for abating terrorism acts; at times the debate gets so violent and they become repulsive, hence avoid sharing of learning resources....HT2*

However, Fullan, (1996) in the study "Turning systemic reform on its head" has cautioned that school improvement will only be achieved when there is greater clarity and coherence in the minds of the majority of teachers.

#### **Number of children in school:**

The register was used to check regular attendance of the learners. From the findings recorded there were fluctuations in the number of children who came to school for the last one year. For instance, one pre-school that had a total of 120 children that spanned from baby class to class three in 2016 has seen the number reduce to 92 in 2017. The reasons for this reduction in learners' number was that at the point of transition from pre-unit to class one some parents transferred their children to private schools to take advantage of better education facilities and qualified teachers. One Head Teacher explained that:

*Some children are too young to study away from their parents, for safety reasons they are taken to pre-schools near their homestead but later as they mature up they are transferred to private schools where transport is offered and have got better facilities than public schools. Pre-school teachers in public schools in Garissa keep on fleeing every time there was insecurity scare and this disrupts children's studies. Hence parents take them away (HT3).*

Parents in the focus group discussion said that:

*Pre-school teachers in public schools do not take care of our kids. Sometimes they return with bruises they get from dangerous playing styles because they are not guided. We transferred some of them to private schools where teachers closely monitored children when in or out of class (FDG4).*

In addition to reasons provided by parents for taking their children to private schools, UNESCO, (2005) further adds that the cases of job insecurity in preschools are on the rise especially in poor areas. The reduced number of enrolments in preschool brought about by free primary education has been a blow to teachers whose salary was meagre and unstable already before the introduction of free primary education. UNESCO, (2000) indicated that illiteracy level is very high in Kenya and Africa at large where 142 million adults are illiterate. This has negatively influenced access to education programs especially ECE.

Teachers in the focus group discuss felt that due to low level of education amongst the locals, children had no reference point to emulate as a source of their academic aspiration. Psacharopoulos and Woodhall (1985) concurred with this finding that the fathers' education, occupation and income level determines children access to school. Children of educated women are much more likely to go to school and the more schooling women have received, the higher the chances their children will from their education (UNICEF, 2004). Educated parents will be a role model to their children and will cultivate a positive attitude towards school in their children from an early age. They will encourage their children to develop interest in schooling unlike uneducated parents who may have less influence on the education of their children UNICEF (2004).

**Number of children out of children:**

Samples of five class attendance registers that were scrutinized suggested that during the inter-clan conflicts near Dujis within Garissa Township constituency class attendance dropped by 50%. This was because parents did not allow their kids to go to school for fear of being attacked by members of other clans. Similarly, some teachers fled especially the Christians. FGD1 explained that:

*...the fight was between Abduwak and Auliyahan clans over grazing lands. Majority of Auliyahan clan resides in Lagdera constituency while Abduwak clan resides in Balambala constituency but the spill-over effects are felt everywhere in Garissa County where the two clans stay and/or work or study...FGD4*

The negative ECD teachers' perception on learner's ability to access ECDE centres in Garissa Township Sub-County were also supported by most Head teachers and buttressed by records that showed the declining number of non-local learners in Muslim-dominated schools as well as ECDE institutions in the outskirts of Garissa Town. The reasons being the consistent attacks on schools by terrorists who perceive western education as immoral and designed to water down Islamic doctrines. Apart from teachers who had been severely attacked and kidnapped learning institutions had not also been spared from vandalism and destructions by enemies of western education. Thus, non-local learners tended to avoid institutions in the interior of the constituency. For instance one of three Head teachers said that:

*...all aspects of life among locals in Northern Kenya revolve around religion. The levels of religious engagements differ between the moderates and conservative Muslims. Moderate Muslims are those who can compromise their beliefs and most of which have lived and/or went to school in Christian majority regions of Kenya; conservative Muslims strictly follow sharia law and all Islamic doctrines and are ready to frown at any issue that would dilute that including western education that they dislike.....(HT4).*

A teacher in the focus group discussion said that illiteracy level among local parents is high therefore some of them did not see the need to take their kids to schools. Even the ones with kids in pre-schools took them out to attend to livestock.

The above findings concur with the study findings by Children Advocacy (2008), which was carried out in Mwingi Sub-County. In the study it was revealed that parental characteristics included and are not limited to illiteracy levels, poverty, and single parenthood either by choice, divorce or death of the spouse. These characteristics could have far reaching effects on parenting styles and ultimately lead to adverse effects on the child going to school. Children's enrolment in preschools was majorly determined by these characteristics, for instance a parent may opt to take the child to preschool owing to poverty or the fact that they did not go to school hence they do not see the need for the same.

Sub-County ECD Coordinator further said that:

*The government has done a lot of sensitization programs on the importance of education, but still some community members do not heed. They engage their kids on domestic chores and this denies them the fundamental right to education.*

His views have been confirmed by Natalie (2004) who conducted a study in Kitui County. He found out that there are parents who consider preschools as being extended day cares with it being optional, that is it can be dropped easily. They at times take their children to school since they do not have someone to look after their children but if they have someone who can take care of them they will hence not enroll their children.

**Number of learners who go up to completion of a course:**

Two documents were scrutinized to establish whether learners who joined baby class have completed class three. The documents used in this area were class attendance register and admission registers and records that were in the custody of the School Head Teacher.

Admission registers and records were used to find out the number of learners admitted in the school in the past 3 years. From the contents perused it was found out that in 2015 the total number of learners in class one was approximately 1600 across all 53 public ECD centers in Garissa Township. These learners are expected to be in class four by 2018; however, the findings revealed that around 750 out of the original number completed ECD education.

The reasons given for the whereabouts of 850 learners were related to security issues in Garissa. The Head Teacher said that:

*Following the Garissa University terrorist attack in 2015 and the resultant curfews and tensions in Garissa, majority of non-locals flee together with their children to safer areas outside Garissa. Even teachers who had their children in these schools relocated to their home area for safety. Since then there had been a dramatic decline in learners' populations in the entire school. HT5*

## 5. SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 5.1 Summary of findings related teacher's perception on learner's ability to access ECDE centres in Garissa Sub-County:

Insecurity has reduced expected returns to early childhood schooling in Garissa since education is unlikely to be viewed as a value-enhancing commodity in a conflict-prone area as well as problems in harmonization of school calendars. Moreover, insecurity has led to destruction of schools and educational infrastructure, displacement, death of children and teachers, closure of schools for an indefinite period. This occurs especially during inter-clan conflicts where learning institutions also become retaliatory targets, thus, affecting accessibility to schools. Teachers also feel that learning is inconvenienced sometimes when displacement of people resulted in the use of school facilities as shelter and haven of safety. Consequently, teaching is not resumed in these institutions and children have to travel to schools elsewhere or drop-out of school completely.

Insecurity has affected teacher-student ratio as some teachers have transferred to schools in safer regions. Insecurity facilitated by acts of terror and inter-clan conflicts threatened children's security as they travelled to or from school and while attending classes. As a result some parents have induced households to keep their children away from school or send them away to relatives in more secure places. Apart from teachers who have been severally attacked and kidnapped learning institutions have not also been spared from vandalism and destructions by enemies of western education. Thus, non-local learners tend to avoid institutions in the interior on the constituency.

The age difference between non-local learners and their local counterparts was problematic in ECD education. This was because Muslim children are first taken for religious education before joining ECD classes for formal education. As a result they appeared older and more mature than Christian children and this complicated type of games they play and child development processes that are affected by the environment. Parents whose kids are kept on injured take them away from school and this limit their chances of acquiring basic pre-school education.

Fears of personal harm, crime and violence mated by Askoris (a group of gangs who harass, maim and still from people) have heightened the sense of insecurity among residents. Securityfears included insecurity that children suffered from as they go to school, through the use of unsafe routes; insecurity that children feel at school; and the insecurity they suffer from around homes.

### 5.2 Conclusion of the study related to teachers perception on effects of insecurity of learners in Access to ECDE centres:

The study concludes that accessibility to pre-school education is still a problem in Garissa. Efforts have not been directed at the safety of pre-schoolers by both the National and County Governments, instead the safety of these learners have been left in the mercy of their parents and teachers who have no capability to guarantee security. Religious and cultural differences have been ignored in designing pre-school education set-ups including infrastructures, transfers, deployment and decision making processes by the education stakeholders in Garissa. This is because safety of learners and teaches are a function of religious and cultural values among other aspects whatsoever. As a result, these young children have found institutions inaccessible.

### 5.3 Recommendations of the study:

The study recommends that through sensitization, the Somali community should be educated to shun such practices that undermine pre-school education such as condemning western education. The study further recommends that the government should construct more schools so that the children should access schools without traveling long distances whose routes are unsafe. This may be done through the Constituency Development Fund and other donor interventions.

## International Journal of Novel Research in Education and Learning

Vol. 5, Issue 4, pp: (60-74), Month: July - August 2018, Available at: [www.noveltyjournals.com](http://www.noveltyjournals.com)

### 5.4 Suggestions for Further Research:

- i) A research should be conducted on the implementation of security and guidelines in preschools in ASAL regions.
- ii) Research should be conducted on the impact of implementation of Safety Standards and Guidelines on the outcomes and quality of learning in preschools.

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