Strategies for Enhancing Post-Conflict Parenting and Primary School Pupils Academic Achievements in Sigowet and Nyakach Sub Counties of Kenya

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Abstract: The objective of the study was to evaluate strategies for mitigating the impact of post-conflict parenting on primary school pupils' academic achievements in Sigowet and Nyakach sub counties of Western Kenya. The correlational research design was adopted. The target group was primary school pupils in Sigowet and Nyakach sub counties, parents, Education Quality Assurance Officers, NGOs and community leaders. The researcher used questionnaires, focus group discussions, key informant interviews and observation checklists in collection of primary data. The completed questionnaires were coded and entries made into the Statistical Package for social Sciences (SPSS 21). The research used both descriptive and inferential statistics in data analysis and interpretation. The conclusion is that although the Kenya government and humanitarian organizations had employed various interventions during and after emergencies to support victims of armed ethnic conflict, the humanitarian interventions have largely been limited to the emergence period. The study recommends that more needs to be done in the post-conflict period to mitigate the impact of conflict on parenting and pupils' academic achievements by; strengthening peace and security programs, setting up rehabilitation centers, establishing youth and women empowerment programs and provision of material support to the vulnerable groups.

Keywords: Strategies for enhancing, post-conflict parenting, Primary school pupils, academic achievements, Sigowet and Nyakach sub counties.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study:

Research on the impact of conflict on education is a widely documented topic. Many conflicts have left a trail of destruction in many countries in Asia, Africa and South America. In many of these conflicts, education has suffered severely as school infrastructure is destroyed, families displaced and teachers and pupils forced to flee. (UNESCO, 2012; World Bank, 2003). In Kenya, inter-ethnic conflicts have closely been associated with general elections in 1992, 1997 and 2007. In the 1992-1993 period, inter-ethnic conflicts in Kenya led to the deaths of over 1,500 people and displacement of about 300,000 (Kimani, 2009;Waki Commission, 2008). Following the 2008 Post-Election Violence in Kenya, over 1,550 people were killed and property worth millions of shillings destroyed. Parents were confronted with new parenting challenges as school going children were left with physical disabilities and emotional trauma due to the atrocities witnessed (Ngundo, 2014; Sichari, 2014; Waki Commission, 2008).

The inter-ethnic conflict in Sigowet and Nyakach sub counties of Western Kenya has followed the pattern of other conflicts in Kenya; largely being fuelled by political tensions due to elections, cattle rustling and boundary disputes

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(Saferworld, 2015). The conflict has led to death, displacement, closure of schools, and destruction of property and posed a grave challenge of post-conflict parenting. (Nyukuri 1997; Ngundo, 2014). Despite these grave consequences of conflict on education, little research has been done on strategies for mitigation of the impact of conflict on primary school pupils' academic achievements. The purpose of this research is to evaluate the strategies for mitigating the impact of ethnic conflict on post-conflict parenting and primary school pupils' academic achievements in Sigowet and Nyakach sub counties of Kenya.

1.2. Statement of the Problem:

The Sigowet/ Nyakach border has experienced devastating ethnic clashes between the two ethnic communities of Luo and Kalenjin in the past three decades. In the year 2014, some of the areas hard hit by the inter- ethnic clashes in Nyakach Sub County in Western Kenya were Sondu, Ngege, Cherwa, Asao, Holo, Ndori, and Oyuongo while some of the areas affected on the side of Sigowet Sub County in Western Kenya were Kaplelartet, Kapsitan, Tabaita and Kamolok. As a result of this conflict, dozens of people were killed and 2,816 people displaced. Many schools were closed and children and parents displaced to safer zones. (Red Cross, 2014; Oudia, 2014; Ondiek, *et al*, 2014). Conflict poses new challenges to parents with regard to providing discipline, providing school fees, purchasing learning materials and monitoring child safety and academic achievements. (Amir and Naylor, 2014; Justino, 2014; Shemyakina, 2006).

Despite these devastating effects of conflict on education, little research has been done on strategies for mitigating the impact of post-conflict parenting on pupils' academic achievements. While several researches have been done about the overall impact of conflict on education, the aspect of strategies for mitigating the impact of post-conflict parenting on pupils' academic achievements remains largely unexplored (Dryden Peterson, 2011; Sichari, 2014; Majanga, 2014). This research evaluated the strategies for mitigating the impact of ethnic conflict on post-conflict parenting and primary school pupils' academic achievements in the two neighboring sub counties of Sigowet and Sigowet which have experienced frequent intercommunity conflicts.

1.3. Research Objective:

The objective of this research was to evaluate the strategies for mitigating the impact of ethnic conflict on post-conflict parenting and primary school pupils' academic achievements in Sigowet and Nyakach sub counties of Western Kenya.

1.4. Research Question:

In this study, the main question seeking to be answered was; what strategies were employed by the government and humanitarian organizations in mitigating the impact of ethnic conflict on post-conflict parenting and primary school pupils' academic achievements in Sigowet and Nyakach sub counties of Western Kenya.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Globally, there have been devastating conflicts all over the world in the past three decades. Sub-Saharan Africa countries have witnessed civil conflicts, often of protracted nature in countries such as Sierra Leone, DRC Congo, Southern Sudan, Somalia and Uganda. (El Bashar, et al, (2009). During periods of conflict, education is mainly compromised by direct attacks on schools, destruction of property, killing and maiming of teachers, pupils and parents (Amir and Naylor, 2014; UNESCO, 2010). For example, more than two thirds of teachers in primary and secondary schools were killed or displaced as a result of the Rwandan genocide (Buckland, 2005).Cambodia and Somalia represent extreme cases. In the late 1970s, the Cambodian education system was left in ruins with virtually no trained or experienced teaching professionals (Buckland, 2005; UNESCO, 2010). State collapse in Somalia coupled with targeted attacks on the educational infrastructure ground the country's educational system to a halt (UNESCO, 2010).

Ethnic conflict also causes damage to schools and educational infrastructure. The World Bank (2005) report estimates that as a result of the conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 50% of its schools required repair and/or reconstruction. Similarly, 58% of primary schools in Mozambique had been destroyed as a result of its long standing civil war. The level of destruction of the education system was even higher in Iraq, at 85 % (Buckland, 2005). Ethnic conflict have grave consequences and pose a dilemma of parenting in the post conflict period due to loss of property, deaths and psychological trauma. The research gap in this literature review is that although much has been documented about the impact of conflict on education, the strategies for mitigating the impact of ethnic conflict on post conflict parenting and primary school pupils' academic achievements remains largely unexplored. The purpose of this research is to evaluate

strategies for mitigating the impact of ethnic conflict on post-conflict parenting and primary school pupils' academic achievements in Sigowet and Nyakach sub counties of Kenya.

2.1. Theoretical framework:

This research was guided by Burton (1990) theory and Epstein's theory on parenting. Burton (1990) in his human needs theory has explored the link between inter-group conflict and the realm of basic human needs, identity, recognition and survival. According to Epstein (1995) children grow up and learn through an overlapping sphere of influences that comprise of family, school and community. Thus all the three dimensions affect the academic performance of children

3. MATERIALS AND METHODS

3.1. Research Design:

The purpose of the study was to evaluate strategies for mitigating the impact of ethnic conflict on post-conflict parenting and primary school pupils' academic achievements in Sigowet and Nyakach Sub Counties of Kenya. The Map of the study site is shown in Figure 1. The study used the correlation research design. This research utilized a number of sampling methods to get the sample. The first was multistage random sampling and the second was purposive sampling. The choice of schools to do research in was arrived at after stratifying the schools based on rural or urban, boarding or day and private or public.
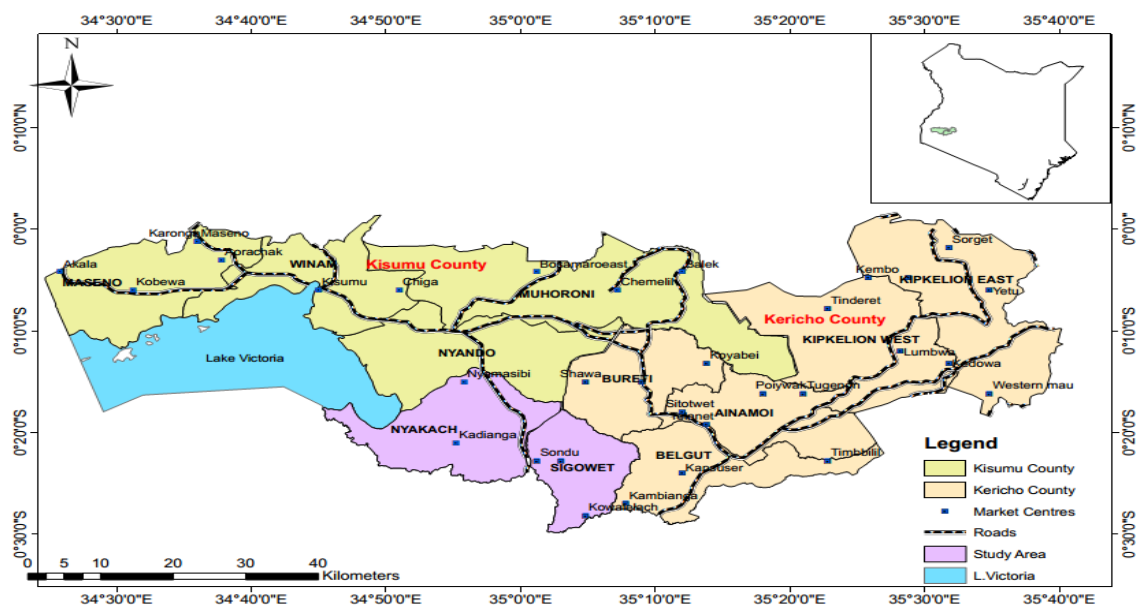
Source: researcher, 2015

Figure 1. Map of Sigowet and Nyakach Sub counties of Western Kenya

3.2 Research Instruments:

Two questionnaires were developed by the researcher and used to collect data. One questionnaire was used to collect data from 200 primary school pupils and the other from 200 parents. Key informant interviews were carried out between the researcher and key educational stakeholders such as teachers, head teachers, members of PTA, community leaders, Non-governmental Organization leaders, Ministry of Educational officials, and Faith Based Organizations. Focused Group Discussions (FGD) and observation checklists were also utilized. Secondary data was obtained from university library, public offices, offices of Non-Governmental Organizations and Faith based organizations.

3.3 Data Analysis and Presentation:

The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) computer package was used in data processing, analysis and interpretation. Data from FGD meetings and key informants was analyzed by both descriptive and inferential statistics. The data was presented in graphs, tables, and discussions. Inferences were done from results presented.

4. RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.1. Strategies for Enhancing Post-Conflict Parenting and Academic Achievements:

The study sought to evaluate strategies that can enhance post-conflict parenting and pupils' academic achievements in Sigowet and Nyakach sub counties of Western Kenya. This chapter discusses the role played by the local communities, NGOs and the government in assisting parents and pupils after the conflict. The study sought to evaluate strategies that can enhance post-conflict parenting and pupils' academic achievements which was the third objective of this study. Respondents in FGD meetings were asked to identify and rank what could be done to alleviate their suffering. The results are given in Table 1.

Table 1: Strategies for Enhancing Post-Conflict Parenting and Pupils' Academic Achievements in Nyakach and Sigowet Sub Counties of Western Kenya

Strategy	Rank 1	Rank 2	Rank 3	Rank 4
Enhancing peace and security programs	1	1	2	2
Provision of water to communities	2	2	1	1
Provision of support to parents	3	3	3	4
Establishing guidance/counseling	4	4	4	3
Setting up more educational facilities	5	5	5	6
Youth and women empowerment	6	6	7	5
Improvement of roads infrastructure	7	7	6	7

Note:
Rank 1 Sigowet FGD 1, Rank 2 Sigowet FGD 2; Rank 3 Nyakach FGD 1; and Rank 4 Nyakach
FGD2 in Sigowet and Nyakach Sub Counties in Western Kenya

The Spearman's rank order correlations were calculated between the ranks to establish similarities or differences in the rankings. The results are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2: Spearman's Rank Order Correlation Matrix of Strategies from FGDs in Sigowet and Nyakach Sub Counties in Western Kenya

	FGD 1	FGD 2	FGD 3	FGD 4
FGD 1	1			
FGD 2	$1\pm0.000^{*}$	1		
FGD 3	$0.93\pm0.051^{*}$	$093\pm0.051^{*}$	1	
FGD 4	$0.89\pm0.08^{*}$	$0.89\pm0.08^{*}$	0.14 ± 0.31^{NS}	1

*= correlation significant at $p=0.05$; NS= correlation not significant at $p=0.05$

±SE= standard error or correlation estimate.

From the results in Table 2, most of the FGDs had ranked strategies and results show significantly ($p< 0.05$) high correlation except for FGD 3 and FGD 4 which show low and non-significant ($p< 0.05$) between them. Thus, the Spearman's rank order correlations were similar in Sigowet and Nyakach sub counties. This means that priorities within the two sub counties are the same. In Sigowet sub county the correlations were positive meaning that the priorities for the residents are the same. However, the priorities in Nyakach differ completely. This is probably due to the two different settings in Nyakach Sub County where FGD 1 represented the urban setting in Sondu town while FGD 2 represented the rural setting of the sub county. The most displayed ranked strategies were: enhancing peace programs, provision of water to local communities and provision of support to parents. Residents also prioritized establishment of rehabilitation centers that can provide guidance and counselling to victims of conflict, establishment of more educational facilities, youth and women empowerment programs and improvement of roads infrastructure in the two sub counties of Sigowet and Nyakach.

4.2 Enhancing Peace and Security Programs:

This study revealed that the existing peace and security programs need to be strengthened. As confirmed in FGD meetings in the two sub counties of Sigowet and Nyakach, there is need to increase border patrols by security organs. FGD 1 and FGD 2 both ranked peace and security as their priority. FGD 3 and FGD 4 ranked peace and security as their second

priority. This means peace and security is a priority for the two sub counties. The Kenya Anti-stock Theft Police Unit needs to put up police posts along the Sigowet and Nyakach border in order to deal with the problem of cattle rustling. .Key informants pointed out that the National Cohesion and Integration Commission (NCIC) was yet to make serious efforts to address the root causes of conflict and to restore sustainable peace in the area. As pointed out by Saferworld Briefing (2015) there can be no lasting peace unless the issue of cattle rustling is addressed along this border. The Kenya government should also prioritize peace education in schools.

Lederach (2005) pointed out that attention should be given to education of citizenship, peace and security in post-conflict societies. Pupils in schools need peace programs in order for them to appreciate interethnic coexistence. Programs such as the Education for Peace Program, undertaken by the Lebanese Government, NGOS and UNICEF that target children in schools or the Student Palaver Conflict Management Program in Liberia, should be introduced (UNICEF, 2006). Enhanced peace will promote the status of education on the Sigowet/ Nyakach border and promote pupils academic achievements.

4.3. Provision of Water Services to Local Communities:

Interviews with key informants and FGD discussions revealed that residents of the two sub counties ranked provision of water as a priority to lasting peace. While FGD 1 and 2 in Sigowet ranked provision of water as their second priority, FGD 3 and 4 in Nyakach listed it as their number one priority. However in FGD 3 and 4 there was no correlation on the issue of provision of water as a priority in Nyakach Sub County. This is so because FGD 3 comprised residents of Sondu town which don't seem to experience the same level of water shortage with residents of FGD 4 which comprised members from the rural areas of Nyakach Sub County. Sigowet and Nyakach Sub counties are classified as Arid and Semi-Arid Areas in Kenya and communities do fight over water resources. This confirms previous studies that provision of water is key to resolving disputes between various ethnic communities in Kenya. (Catrina and Klos, 2015; Menkhaus, 2005)Interviews with key informants also confirmed that conflicts normally broke out during the dry season when the two communities of Luo in Nyakach and Kalenjiin Sigowet compete for water resources. Every drought season the communities will always use the slightest excuse to attack each other and fight against each other.

These findings also confirm Burton's theory (1990), which stated that conflict is deeply rooted in unmet or inadequately fulfilled basic human needs of the parties. Thus the fulfillment of basic needs like water is key to establishing lasting peace in Nyakach and Sigowet sub counties of Western Kenya. Both the national and the county governments in Sigowet and Nyakach sub counties and Non-Governmental Organizations should endeavor to solve the problem of water shortage by drilling boreholes and providing piped water. As pointed out during the FGD meetings, if residents got adequate clean water for their animals and domestic use, cases of conflict shall be minimized. This way, the education sector shall not suffer the adverse effects of conflict and pupils' academic performance shall be enhanced.

4.4. Provision of Support to Parents and Pupils:

During FGD meetings, residents in the two sub counties of Sigowet and Nyakach agreed on the issue of having more material and educational support given to the parents and the children. The main interventions by the Red Cross following conflict in Nyakach and Sigowet sub counties were; disaster preparedness where human and material resources were mobilized and coordinated through training Red Cross action teams and contingency planning (Red Cross Report, 2014). Stockpiling was carried out through pre-positioning of emergency items at the regional warehouses and other temporary convenient points within the affected area. With support from other partners such as World Vision, the Kenya Red Cross responded to the conflict by providing foodstuffs such as maize, beans, cooking oil, seeds and water as well as non-foodstuffs such as blankets, clothes, tents tarpaulins and mosquito nets.

The Kenya Red Cross therefore utilized its structures as channels through which it could tackle vulnerability and limit the adverse effects of hazards on vulnerable parents and pupils affected in the two sub counties of Nyakach and Sigowet in Kenya. (Kenya Red Cross, 2014).The local communities formed self-help groups to mitigate some of the common problems that were realized. However, the assistance was not adequate and not long term in nature as was evident during the FGD meetings. While all the four FGDs agreed on the issue of having more long term assistance given to the parents and children, there was no correlation on the issue in FGD 3 and 4. This implies that while residents of the two sub counties would like assistance given to them, some residents didn't see this as priority. This could be attributed to the cosmopolitan nature of Nyakach Sub County which has the rural area and Sondu town which is home to the urban

population which is not directly involved in the conflict pitting the two communities (Safer world Briefing, 2015). Although the county governments in the two sub counties and the CDF committees allocated some funds for bursaries for education, it was not adequate as the number of needy cases remains high due to ethnic conflict.

4.5. Establishment of Guidance and Counseling Centers:

Provision of guidance and counseling programs was the fourth ranked strategy in FGD 1, 2 and 3 and the third ranked strategy in FGD 4. There was general agreement in the two sub counties of Sigowet and Nyakach on the need to foster healing and reconciliation through initiation of guidance and counseling programs. Thus the need to establish guidance and counseling centers is critical to restoring normalcy and lasting peace. FGD meetings revealed that ethnic conflicts caused numerous psychological problems, body injury and sexual assault, loss of property and loss lives. The problems revealed in the questionnaire were confirmed through interviews schedules with stakeholders, opinion leaders and community leaders in Nyakach and Sigowet sub counties of Kenya. The experiences narrated in the FGD meetings need to be revisited and addressed.

These findings agree with   Sichari (2014) who affirmed that guidance and counseling was key to healing in a post conflict society and in helping pupils and parents to overcome trauma. Although effort was done to provide counselling by the NGOs and the Catholic Church, more needs to be done to alleviate the suffering of many conflict affected victims. Traumatized pupils, as was confirmed by FGDs, ended up performing poorly academically as revealed by document analysis from the two sub counties schools'. For example during the 2014 KCPE results, Tabaita Primary had a school mean score of 198 marks out of 500 and was ranked last in the whole of Sigowet/ Belgut Sub County.(Sigowet Sub County Educational Report, 2014; Nyakach Education Repot, 2014).

4.6. Setting up of More Educational Facilities:

Establishment of more educational institutions was ranked as strategy number five in FGD 1, 2 and 3 and as strategy number six in FGD 4. FGDs 1, 2, 3 and 4 showed strong correlation meaning that the residents were unanimous on the issue of having more educational institutions established. However, FGD 3 and 4 didn't show correlation meaning that residents in Nyakach were not fully in agreement on the issue of having more educational institutions established. This again could be attributed to the nature of the two FGDs where the third FGD represented Sondu town which relatively has a high presence of primary schools compared to the rural parts of the sub county. From the researchers own observation and interviews with key informants, primary schools on the side of Sigowet Sub County were sparsely populated and children walked long distances to access education. In Nyakach Sub County there were comparatively more primary schools though they frequently suffer from the ravages of ethnic conflict. Sometimes children are transported over long distances on motor bikes to school for lack of nearby schools. However tertiary institutions where primary school graduates can join are few as was evident during FGDs and from the researcher's own observation. Education levels in the area are low (Sigowet Educational Report, 2014).

Although the government through initiatives like the Constituency Development Funds (CDF) has set up schools in the two sub counties, they are still sparsely populated and some pupils have to travel long and dangerous distances to access education. There is need for more education institutions in this area to increase the level of literacy and reduce poverty. Education is a key liberator and good education can restore normalcy in conflict prone zone. (Menkhaus, 2005; Justino, 2014) FGDs confirmed that the schools are sparsely populated and children take long to reach there. Setting up more educational facilities is therefore key to ensuring access and enhancing good academic performance. Access to education is a key pillar in achieving the Universal Primary Education advocated for by the United Nations (UNHCR, 2010). The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child advocate for the right to education for all children, including children in emergencies. Access is a key pillar in achieving Education For All (EFA) goal as championed by the United Nations (UNESCO, 2012).

4.7. Youth and Women Empowerment:

During the FGD discourse it was clear that youth and women empowerment were critical issues that the two sub counties wanted addressed. There was high correlation between on the issue of youth and women employment in the four FGDs. Poverty and unemployment was noted as one issue that contributed to conflict in Sigowet and Nyakach sub counties in the FGDs and interviews. Efforts to combat these two vices were seen by residents as being key in addressing conflict. Basic

questions have to be asked here, for example; are government programs supported by the national and county policies able to recruit young people? What is the role of public policy in creating incentives that benefit youth employment through programs like Kenya government Uwezo Fund and Women Fund?

Ndamwe (2013) affirms that justice and reconciliation has to be transitional. This concerns the whole range of mechanisms and approaches of the government to youths that seek to transform, heal and transit a youth into an active participator in leadership and development. This enable them support the education of their children through fees payment and purchase of school requirements .The empowerment of youth is likely to contribute to decline in negative social behaviors such as gang formation, violence and crime. Empowerment of women through programs like access to credit to restart farming or businesses is likely to enhance their livelihoods (Stella Tino *et al*, 2015)

4.8. Improvement of Roads Infrastructure:

While the FGDs in the two sub counties were unanimous on the issue of improvement of roads infrastructure, FGD 3 and 4 didn't prioritize roads infrastructure in Nyakach sub County. This may partly be because of the nature of the two FGDs where FGD 3 represented Sondu town and FGD 4 represented the rural areas of Nyakach. Being a cosmopolitan in nature the residents who live and work there or engage in business activities may not necessarily share the same sentiments with members of the Luo community in other parts of Nyakach. However as a whole, FGDs demonstrated that residents of Nyakach and Sigowet agree that the roads infrastructure should be improved. Burton (1990) stated in his human needs theory on conflict that human needs are vital and cannot be negotiated. Key informants interviews with Education Quality Assuarance Officers (EQUASO) confirmed that they could not inspect schools as frequently as possible due to inaccessibility of the area. This contributed to poor academic performance. Improvement of infrastructure is therefore key to restoring normalcy and sustaining lasting peace. According to Sinclair (2003), improving infrastructure is a key towards ensuring peace and prosperity in post-conflict societies. Thus this should be a priority for both the national and county governments in the two sub counties of Sigowet and Nyakach in Western Kenya.

5.   SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The objective of the study was to evaluate humanitarian mitigation strategies put in place by the government and the humanitarian agencies to enhance post conflict parenting and primary school pupils' academic achievements in Sigowet and Nyakach sub counties of Western Kenya. The study did reveal that some humanitarian programs were initiated like guidance and counseling, peace building, provision of material support, provision of water, construction of education facilities and improvement of infrastructure. However, more needs to be done to normalize the lives of the victims as most conflict affected victims have not been incorporated in the programs. This objective is therefore not yet achieved.

Interviews and focus groups discussions revealed that interethnic conflict contributed to low academic performance in the two sub counties. Adverse effects of conflict such as   displacement, destruction of property, death or injury of caregivers limits their capacity to pay fees, buy learning materials and monitor academic progress was compromised thus leading to poor academic achievement of pupils. High academic performance came from children who reported having not been adversely affected by conflict. FGDs confirmed that the level of academic performance in schools in the sub county were lower than other areas in the country. This findings confirm Epstein's theory (1995) which postulates that without good parenting which involves strong partnerships between the parents, the community and schools, pupils cannot achieve good academic performance. Thus, parents should be assisted to embrace good parenting styles in the post-conflict period in order to enhance pupils' academic achievements. The findings of the study will therefore enlighten the public and in particular the people of Nyakach and Sigowet sub counties on the need to adopt measures that will mitigate the impact of ethnic conflict on parenting and enhance pupils' academic achievements in primary schools.

6.   CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study aimed at evaluating strategies for enhancing post-conflict parenting and primary school pupils' academic performance in Sigowet and Nyakach sub counties of Western Kenya. This was done by analyzing the strategies for enhancing post-conflict parenting such as initiating peace and cohesion programs, guidance and counseling programs, provision of water to local communities, providing material support to parents, initiating youth and women empowerment, establishment of more educational facilities and improvement of roads infrastructure. The conclusion is that more needs to be done by the government and humanitarian organizations in order to foster peaceful coexistence, promote better post-conflict parenting practices and enhance pupils' academic achievements.

The study recommends that intervention programs by both government and humanitarian organizations should engage more closely with the households affected by conflict to alleviate their suffering and facilitate the process of conflict recovery. This can be done by mobilizing the civil society and private businesses as partners which enables both humanitarian and development organizations to broaden their capacity of conflict recovery. There is urgent need to put in place mechanisms that will not only empower the parents both socially and economically but also target the education of the children affected by conflict. Both the national and county governments should come up with proactive policies on how to support the education of children in emergencies. The national government, county governments and NGOs should modify their operational approaches to ensure greater complementarity between humanitarian and development interventions. Although humanitarian agencies offer immediate needs during emergencies, long term programs which foster peaceful coexistence and development and mitigate the negative impact of post-conflict parenting on pupils' academic performance should be initiated in the post conflict period.

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