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Teachers' lived experiences of insecurity: Implications for mental health and professional practice in bandit-prone areas of Baringo County, Kenya

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Abstract

Banditry remains a persistent security challenge in several parts of Kenya and continues to disrupt social, economic, and educational systems. In Baringo County, recurrent incidents of violence, displacement, and destruction of property have created difficult working conditions for teachers. This study investigated teachers' lived experiences of insecurity and examined the implications for their mental health and professional practice in bandit-prone areas of Baringo County, Kenya. Guided by the Frustration-Aggression Theory, the study adopted a constructivist paradigm and a phenomenological research design. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with teachers working in insecurity-prone areas and analysed thematically. The findings revealed that prolonged exposure to insecurity contributed to psychological distress characterized by persistent fear, anxiety, emotional exhaustion, traumatic experiences, and reduced professional morale. Participants also reported social disruption, family separation, loss of livelihoods, financial insecurity, and challenges in maintaining effective teaching and learning processes. These experiences negatively affected teacher wellbeing, instructional effectiveness, and educational continuity. Despite these challenges, some teachers demonstrated resilience through faith, social support networks, and adaptive coping strategies. The study concludes that persistent banditry adversely affects teachers' mental wellbeing and professional practice, thereby undermining the quality and continuity of education in affected areas. The study recommends strengthening security interventions, expanding access to psychosocial support services, enhancing teacher protection and welfare policies, and promoting community-based peacebuilding initiatives to support

educational recovery in conflict-affected settings.

Key terms: Banditry; Educational disruption; Mental health; Professional practice; Teacher wellbeing

Introduction and Background to the Study

Banditry has emerged as a major security challenge across several regions of Africa, undermining social stability, economic development, and access to essential public services, including education. Characterised by armed attacks, cattle rustling, kidnappings, property destruction, and forced displacement, banditry has become increasingly prevalent in fragile and marginalised communities where poverty, weak security structures, competition over natural resources, and the proliferation of illicit firearms persist (Birmati et al., 2023; Ansa, 2017). Beyond its immediate physical and economic consequences, banditry creates an environment of chronic fear and uncertainty that profoundly affects the wellbeing of individuals and communities.

In Kenya, banditry remains a significant challenge in several arid and semi-arid regions, particularly in parts of the North Rift, including Baringo County. Communities in these areas have experienced recurrent cycles of violence resulting in loss of lives, destruction of property, disruption of livelihoods, and displacement of families. The persistence of insecurity has adversely affected access to education, with schools frequently experiencing interruptions in learning, reduced learner attendance, teacher transfers, school closures, and difficulties in attracting and retaining qualified teachers. These challenges undermine educational quality and threaten the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 4, which advocates for inclusive and equitable quality education for all.

Teachers working in bandit-prone areas face unique professional and personal challenges. In addition to fulfilling their instructional responsibilities, they are often required to operate in environments characterized by insecurity, uncertainty, and exposure to traumatic events. Studies conducted in conflict-affected settings indicate that exposure to violence can negatively affect teachers' psychological wellbeing, resulting in heightened fear, anxiety, emotional exhaustion, stress, and reduced professional effectiveness (Akinyetun & Akinyetun, 2023; Alagbe, 2021). Such experiences may compromise concentration, motivation, classroom engagement, professional relationships, and overall teaching effectiveness. Similar concerns have been raised in Kenya, where growing levels of psychological distress among teachers have been identified as a threat to teacher wellbeing and the attainment of quality education (Waiyaki & Cherui, 2023). The World Health Organization (2024) identifies mental health as an integral element of wellbeing and productivity because it influences individuals' capacity to realize their potential, cope with life's challenges, work productively, and contribute to their communities. In Kenya, mental health has received growing policy attention through the Ministry of Health's Mental Health Policy 2015-2030, which seeks to strengthen mental health services and improve access to care across the country. Despite these efforts, access to psychosocial and mental health support remains limited in many insecurity-prone regions, leaving affected populations vulnerable to long-term psychological distress.

Although existing studies have documented the socio-economic and educational consequences of insecurity, limited research has examined how prolonged exposure to banditry shapes teachers' lived experiences, mental wellbeing, and professional practice in the Kenyan context. Understanding these experiences is important for informing educational policy, teacher support systems, mental health interventions, and security responses in conflict-affected regions. This study therefore explored teachers' lived experiences of insecurity in bandit-prone areas of Baringo County and examined the implications of insecurity-related mental health challenges for their professional practice.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore teachers' lived experiences of insecurity in bandit-prone areas of

Baringo County, Kenya, and to examine the implications of insecurity-related mental health challenges for their professional practice. Specifically, the study sought to understand how prolonged exposure to banditry influences teachers' psychological wellbeing, professional relationships, classroom engagement, instructional effectiveness, and ability to fulfil their professional responsibilities.

Research Objective

To explore teachers' lived experiences of insecurity and examine the implications of insecurity-related mental health challenges for their professional practice in bandit-prone areas of Baringo County, Kenya.

Research Question

How do teachers' lived experiences of insecurity and insecurity-related mental health challenges influence their professional practice in bandit-prone areas of Baringo County, Kenya?

Literature Review

Banditry and Educational Disruption

Banditry has emerged as a major security challenge across several regions of Africa, particularly in areas characterized by weak security systems, socio-economic deprivation, competition over scarce resources, and the proliferation of illicit firearms (Ansa, 2017; Birmati et al., 2023). In many affected communities, bandit activities include cattle rustling, armed raids, kidnappings, destruction of property, and forced displacement, all of which disrupt essential social services, including education.

Evidence from conflict-affected regions indicates that insecurity undermines access to quality education by contributing to school closures, reduced learner attendance, destruction of educational infrastructure, and difficulties in attracting and retaining qualified teachers (Akinyetun & Akinyetun, 2023; Alhassan et al., 2022). Educational disruptions associated with violence are often prolonged because teachers and learners are forced to relocate or abandon normal academic activities due to fear for their safety. Consequently, learning outcomes, school attendance, and educational continuity are negatively affected.

In East Africa, recurring conflicts among pastoralist communities have frequently been linked to competition over natural resources, historical grievances, political interests, and easy access to firearms (Amutabi, 2010; Wamuyu, 2014). These conditions have contributed to persistent cycles of insecurity that continue to affect community wellbeing and educational development.

Banditry and Teacher Mental Health

Teachers working in insecurity-prone environments experience challenges that extend beyond instructional responsibilities. Exposure to violence, threats, displacement, and uncertainty has been associated with increased psychological distress, including anxiety, fear, emotional exhaustion, stress, and trauma-related symptoms (Alagbe, 2021; Haruna and Mayanchi, 2023). The persistent threat of attack and disruption of daily routines often creates chronic stress conditions that affect teachers' wellbeing and professional functioning.

Haruna and Mayanchi (2023), in their study of lecturers in Zamfara State, Nigeria, found that prolonged exposure to insecurity contributed to fear, anxiety, and psychological distress among educators. Similarly, Femi-Lawal et al. (2023) observed that concerns about personal safety and exposure to violent incidents increased levels of anxiety among education professionals. These findings suggest that insecurity not only affects educational institutions but also directly influences the mental wellbeing of educators responsible for maintaining learning continuity in challenging circumstances.

Mental health is a critical component of individual wellbeing and effective professional functioning. According to the World Health Organization (2023), good mental health enables individuals to cope with daily stresses, work productively, and contribute meaningfully to society. When mental wellbeing is compromised, professional performance, interpersonal relationships, and overall quality of life may be adversely affected.

Insecurity and Professional Practice

The wellbeing of teachers is closely linked to educational quality. Teachers experiencing psychological distress may encounter difficulties in concentration, classroom engagement, lesson preparation, learner support, and professional motivation (Kaura et al., 2021). Prolonged exposure to insecurity can also affect teacher retention, commitment to duty, and willingness to serve in conflict-affected regions.

Research in conflict and crisis settings demonstrates that emotionally supported educators are more likely to create positive learning environments and maintain instructional effectiveness despite difficult circumstances (Luke et al., 2016). Conversely, persistent fear, uncertainty, and work-related stress may reduce instructional effectiveness and compromise the quality of educational experiences available to learners.

In bandit-prone areas, teachers often operate under conditions that threaten both their personal safety and professional identity. Understanding how these experiences influence their practice is therefore essential for informing teacher support interventions, educational leadership strategies, and policy responses aimed at sustaining quality education in affected communities.

Research Gap

Existing studies have extensively documented the socio-economic, security, and educational consequences of banditry in Africa, particularly in Nigeria and other conflict-affected regions. However, limited empirical research has examined the lived experiences of teachers working in bandit-prone areas of Kenya and the implications of insecurity-related mental health challenges for their professional practice. Most available studies focus on the causes, prevalence, and security dimensions of banditry, with comparatively little attention given to teachers' personal experiences and psychological wellbeing. This study sought to address this gap by exploring teachers' lived experiences of insecurity in bandit-prone areas of Baringo County and examining how insecurity-related mental health challenges influence their professional practice.

This study was anchored in the Frustration-Aggression Theory, originally developed by Dollard et al. (1939) and later refined by subsequent scholars. The theory posits that frustration occurs when individuals encounter obstacles that hinder the achievement of desired goals or the satisfaction of important needs. Such frustrations may generate psychological tension, emotional distress, and, under certain circumstances, aggressive responses. However, contemporary interpretations acknowledge that frustration does not inevitably lead to aggression, as individual responses are influenced by personal characteristics, coping strategies, environmental factors, and available support systems.

The theory provides a useful framework for understanding the experiences of teachers working in bandit-prone areas of Baringo County. Persistent insecurity, threats to personal safety, displacement, school closures, disruption of teaching activities, and loss of livelihoods may obstruct teachers' professional goals and their ability to provide effective instruction. These challenges can generate feelings of frustration, fear, helplessness, uncertainty, and psychological distress.

Within this context, insecurity-related experiences may affect teachers' mental wellbeing and professional functioning by reducing motivation, impairing concentration, disrupting classroom

interactions, and limiting their capacity to fulfil professional responsibilities effectively. The theory therefore offers a lens for understanding the relationship between experiences of insecurity, mental health challenges, and professional practice among teachers in bandit-prone environments.

Furthermore, the theory acknowledges that individuals respond differently to stressful experiences. While some teachers may experience significant psychological distress, others may demonstrate resilience through adaptive coping mechanisms, social support networks, faith-based resources, and professional commitment. This perspective is consistent with the phenomenological orientation of the study, which sought to understand how teachers interpret and make meaning of their experiences of insecurity and its effects on their personal and professional lives.

Methodology

Research Paradigm and Design

This study was grounded in the constructivist paradigm and adopted a qualitative phenomenological research design. The constructivist paradigm assumes that individuals construct meaning from their experiences through interactions with their social, cultural, and professional environments. The paradigm was considered appropriate because teachers exposed to banditry-related insecurity may interpret and respond to their experiences differently depending on their personal histories, exposure to threats, coping mechanisms, social support systems, and school contexts. The phenomenological design enabled the study to explore and document teachers' lived experiences of insecurity, the meanings they attach to those experiences, and the perceived implications for their mental wellbeing and professional practice.

Study Area

The study was conducted in selected bandit-prone areas of Baringo County, Kenya, particularly in Tiaty East, Tiaty West, Marigat, and Baringo North sub-counties. Baringo County has experienced recurrent incidents of cattle rustling, armed attacks, displacement of communities, destruction of property, and disruption of educational activities. These conditions provided an appropriate context for investigating teachers' lived experiences of insecurity and their implications for professional practice.

Population and Sampling

The study targeted teachers serving in public primary, junior secondary, and secondary schools located in bandit-prone areas of Baringo County. Participants were selected purposively based on their direct experiences with insecurity and their ability to provide rich descriptions of these experiences.

To capture diverse experiences across varying levels of insecurity, participant screening was undertaken before selection for interviews. Teachers meeting the inclusion criteria were invited to participate in in-depth interviews. Sampling continued until data saturation was achieved, whereby additional interviews yielded no new information, themes, or insights relevant to the study objective.

Data Collection Procedures

Data were collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews using an interview guide developed from the study objectives and relevant literature. The interviews explored teachers' experiences of insecurity, perceived mental health challenges, coping mechanisms, and the influence of these experiences on professional practice. Interviews were conducted in secure and convenient locations and were supplemented by field notes that captured contextual observations and reflections.

Prior to the main study, the interview guide was pretested in Kacheliba Sub-County, West Pokot County,

to assess clarity, relevance, and suitability. Feedback from the pilot informed refinement of the interview questions and procedures.

Trustworthiness of the Study

Trustworthiness was established using the criteria proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985), namely credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Credibility was enhanced through prolonged engagement with participants, member checking, and triangulation of interview narratives and field notes. Transferability was supported through thick description of the research setting, participants, and study context. Dependability was ensured through maintenance of an audit trail that documented methodological decisions, coding processes, and analytical procedures. Confirmability was strengthened through reflexive journaling and careful documentation to minimize researcher bias and ensure that findings reflected participants' experiences.

Data Analysis

Interview recordings were transcribed verbatim and anonymised before analysis. The transcripts were read repeatedly to facilitate familiarisation with participants' experiences. Significant statements were identified and coded, and related codes were subsequently grouped into categories and themes.

Data were analysed using thematic phenomenological analysis, with particular attention to participants' descriptions of insecurity, mental wellbeing, coping strategies, and professional practice. NVivo software was used to support data organisation, coding, retrieval, and management. Interpretation of findings remained the responsibility of the researcher and was guided by the Frustration-Aggression Theory and the study objectives.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval for the study was obtained from Daystar University Ethics Review Board, while a research permit was secured from the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI). Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all participants before data collection. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained through the use of pseudonyms and secure storage of study data. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any stage without penalty.

Findings and Discussion

The study explored teachers' lived experiences of insecurity and examined the implications of insecurity-related mental health challenges for professional practice in bandit-prone areas of Baringo County, Kenya. Data analysis generated four interrelated themes: experiences of insecurity and violence, mental health consequences, implications for professional practice, and coping and resilience among teachers. These themes illustrate the complex relationship between insecurity, psychological wellbeing, and professional functioning among teachers working in bandit-prone areas of Baringo County. The themes are presented with illustrative participant narratives and discussed in relation to existing literature and the Frustration-Aggression Theory.

Experiences of Insecurity, Violence and Psychological Distress

Participants described insecurity as a persistent feature of everyday life rather than an occasional event. Their experiences included exposure to killings, armed attacks, displacement, destruction of property,

cattle raids, and prolonged uncertainty regarding personal safety. These experiences contributed significantly to emotional distress, fear, and perceptions of vulnerability.

Many teachers reported witnessing violent incidents involving learners, family members, community residents, and security personnel. For example, one participant stated,“I saw the bandits killing my learners in school where I was teaching” (Pat 036), while another reported,“Bandits came to the grazing field, shot my brother's leg and it was later amputated” (Pat 20). Others recounted witnessing attacks directed at learners and community members.

These accounts demonstrate that insecurity extends beyond educational disruption and has substantial psychosocial consequences. Participants described living with persistent fear, grief, and uncertainty resulting from recurrent exposure to violence. Consistent with Haruna and Mayanchi (2024), exposure to insecurity contributed to psychological distress characterized by fear, anxiety, and concerns about personal safety. The findings further support the Frustration-Aggression Theory, which suggests that persistent barriers to safety, stability, and professional fulfilment can generate emotional distress and feelings of helplessness. ,

Forced Displacement, Loss of Property and Community Disruption

Participants described displacement and loss of property as recurring consequences of banditry. Homes were abandoned, families relocated, and educational activities disrupted because of insecurity. One participant observed that“Banditry in Baringo is not really banditry but a planned and organized move to displace people and settle in their land” (Pat 23), while another stated that“Since we lost our land and moved away, we have never gone back to that area” (Pat 41).

The findings indicate that displacement resulted in losses extending beyond material possessions. Participants reported losing social networks, community ties, and a sense of belonging. Similar observations have been reported in studies demonstrating that displacement contributes to chronic stress, uncertainty, and social fragmentation among affected populations. The destruction of schools, homes, and community infrastructure compounds psychological distress by removing important sources of stability and support.

Economic Insecurity and Psychological Burden

Economic loss emerged as another significant consequence of banditry. Participants frequently referred to cattle theft, destruction of livelihoods, loss of income, and growing economic uncertainty. Given the importance of livestock to local livelihoods, cattle raids were perceived not only as economic attacks but also as threats to family survival and social identity. One participant remarked,“Bandits steal cattle by force and drive them away” (Pat 167), while another observed that banditry“orchestrates criminal activity by stealing forcefully and maiming the lives and property of the people” (Pat 324).

These findings suggest that economic insecurity contributes substantially to psychological distress. Participants associated loss of livelihoods with anxiety, helplessness, financial strain, and uncertainty about the future. Consistent with previous studies on conflict-affected communities, economic deprivation appeared to intensify existing psychosocial burdens and reduce individual and community resilience.

Normalisation of Violence and Fear

Participants described a social environment in which violence had become normalised. Constant gunfire, visible firearms, and recurring attacks had become part of daily life. For some respondents, exposure to violence was so frequent that it was viewed as an ordinary feature of community life. One participant reported that“we always hear gunshots nearly every day” (Pat 67), while another explained that“people

have resorted to carrying guns everywhere" (Pat 69).

Although communities appeared to adapt to these conditions, participants indicated that such adaptation came at a psychological cost. Fear remained pervasive despite outward signs of adjustment. The findings suggest that prolonged exposure to insecurity may contribute to emotional exhaustion, hypervigilance, and reduced perceptions of safety, even when individuals continue functioning in their daily roles.

State Protection, Trust and Psychological Security

Participants expressed mixed perceptions regarding government security interventions. While some acknowledged the efforts of security agencies, others questioned the effectiveness of these responses given the persistence of attacks and continued loss of life. Teachers indicated that incidents involving attacks on security personnel increased fear because they undermined confidence in state protection. One participant noted,"I have seen the KDF shooting at the bandits" (Pat 98), whereas another stated that bandits had"ambushed the KDF lorry and killed some soldiers" (Pat 78).

These findings suggest that insecurity affects not only physical safety but also perceptions of institutional trust and psychological security. When communities perceive security systems as inadequate, feelings of vulnerability, abandonment, and uncertainty may intensify. Such experiences further contribute to emotional distress and weaken confidence in institutions established to provide protection.

Psychosocial and Mental Health Consequences of Banditry

The findings revealed that prolonged exposure to banditry had significant psychosocial and mental health consequences for teachers working in affected areas. Participants described living under persistent fear, uncertainty, and emotional strain resulting from repeated exposure to violence, displacement, loss of livelihoods, and disruption of community life. These experiences affected not only their personal wellbeing but also their ability to function effectively within their families, communities, and professional environments.

Psychological Distress and Emotional Strain

A dominant theme emerging from the data was persistent psychological distress characterized by fear, anxiety, emotional exhaustion, and feelings of hopelessness. Many participants reported living in constant anticipation of attacks and expressed concerns about their personal safety and that of their families. One participant stated,"I am traumatized since the day I witnessed bandits shooting a vehicle I was in while ferrying national examinations" (Pat 22), while another observed,"Every time I hear a bang, I think it is a gunshot" (Pat 232).

These narratives suggest that insecurity extends beyond immediate violent incidents and continues to influence teachers' emotional wellbeing long after attacks have occurred. Participants described recurring fear, intrusive memories, sleep disturbances, and heightened alertness, indicating the enduring psychological burden associated with living and working in insecurity-prone environments. Similar findings have been reported in studies showing that prolonged exposure to violence contributes to sustained emotional distress and reduced psychological well-being among educators working in conflict-affected settings.

Family Disruption and Social Isolation

The findings further revealed that banditry disrupted family relationships and weakened important social support systems. Participants described displacement, prolonged separation from family members, loss of loved ones, and increased concern for the safety of children. One participant reported, "My family is

displaced and we cannot settle in the new place since we were used to our home" (Pat 212), while another stated,"My children are constantly living in fear" (Pat 174).

Participants also reported reduced social interaction and declining trust within communities affected by insecurity. Fear and uncertainty led many individuals to withdraw from social relationships and community activities. As one participant explained,"Social interaction has become hard on me. I cannot make friends because I trust no one" (Pat 54). Such experiences suggest that banditry not only affects individual wellbeing but also erodes social cohesion and access to emotional support, thereby increasing vulnerability to psychological distress. These findings support previous research demonstrating that social isolation and weakened community networks often intensify the psychological effects of conflict and insecurity.

Economic Loss and Mental Wellbeing

Participants consistently linked economic losses arising from banditry to increased stress and emotional strain. Loss of livestock, destruction of property, restricted economic activity, and displacement disrupted household livelihoods and created financial uncertainty. One participant stated,"Bandit activities have made me poor because they have stolen my cattle which was my other source of livelihood" (Pat 73), while another reported,"I lost all my property" (Pat 254).

The findings indicate that financial insecurity compounded the psychological effects of violence and displacement. Participants described feelings of frustration, anxiety, helplessness, and uncertainty regarding their future. Consistent with the Frustration-Aggression Theory, the inability to maintain livelihoods, achieve personal goals, or provide for family needs contributed to emotional distress and reduced psychological wellbeing. Economic loss therefore emerged as both a material and psychosocial consequence of banditry.

Physical Health and Psychosocial Wellbeing

A number of participants highlighted the interaction between psychological distress and physical health challenges. Respondents reported stress-related health concerns, sleep difficulties, fatigue, and deteriorating general wellbeing. One participant explained,"Banditry has caused me to have health problems such as high blood pressure" (Pat 222), while another stated,"I get sick due to stress, we do not eat well because of trauma and lack of sleep" (Pat 201).

These findings suggest that the effects of insecurity cannot be understood solely in psychological terms because emotional distress often manifests through physical health challenges. The close relationship between mental and physical wellbeing underscores the need for integrated support interventions that address both psychosocial and health-related needs among teachers working in high-risk environments.

Implications for Teacher Wellbeing

Overall, the findings demonstrate that banditry has created a sustained psychosocial burden for teachers in Baringo County. Psychological distress, family disruption, social isolation, economic insecurity, and stress-related health concerns collectively undermine teachers' wellbeing and resilience. While participants adopted various coping strategies, including faith, family support, and community networks, these mechanisms were often insufficient to offset the effects of prolonged insecurity. The findings therefore reinforce the need for accessible psychosocial support services, trauma-informed educational leadership, strengthened teacher welfare programs, and community-based interventions to support teacher wellbeing in conflict-affected areas. Consistent with previous studies on educators working in insecure contexts, teacher wellbeing emerged as a critical prerequisite for educational continuity,

professional effectiveness, and the attainment of quality education.

Conclusions

The findings support the assumptions of Frustration–Aggression Theory by demonstrating how recurrent insecurity, disruption of professional goals, threats to personal safety, and loss of livelihoods generated frustration, fear, helplessness, and psychological distress among teachers. While the theory traditionally associates frustration with aggressive responses, the present study suggests that prolonged insecurity more frequently resulted in anxiety, emotional withdrawal, hypervigilance, and professional exhaustion. The findings therefore extend the theory by illustrating how frustration may manifest through psychological strain and diminished professional functioning within educational settings affected by insecurity.

This study explored teachers' lived experiences of insecurity and examined the implications of insecurity-related mental health challenges for professional practice in bandit-prone areas of Baringo County, Kenya. The findings demonstrate that banditry is not merely a security concern but a multidimensional challenge with significant educational, psychosocial, and professional consequences. Teachers reported experiences of violence, displacement, economic loss, social disruption, and persistent insecurity that adversely affected their wellbeing and professional functioning.

The study further revealed that prolonged exposure to insecurity contributes to psychological distress characterized by fear, anxiety, emotional exhaustion, and reduced professional morale. These experiences negatively influence classroom engagement, instructional effectiveness, learner support, and overall educational continuity. Insecurity also contributes to school disruptions, learner absenteeism, displacement, and reduced participation in educational activities.

Despite these challenges, some teachers demonstrated resilience through faith, social support networks, personal perseverance, and commitment to their professional responsibilities. However, resilience alone is insufficient to address the broader structural and psychosocial challenges associated with banditry. The study concludes that improving educational outcomes in conflict-affected regions requires interventions that simultaneously strengthen security, support teacher wellbeing, and promote sustainable educational recovery. Protecting teachers' physical safety, mental wellbeing, and professional capacity is essential for sustaining quality education and advancing the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4).

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are proposed:

The Government of Kenya should strengthen security interventions in bandit-prone areas through sustained multi-agency operations, improved security infrastructure, and enhanced protection of schools and surrounding communities.The Teachers Service Commission (TSC), in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, should establish structured psychosocial support programmes, including professional counselling, trauma-informed interventions, and mental health awareness initiatives for teachers serving in bandit-prone areas

School leaders should adopt supportive leadership practices that promote teacher wellbeing, create safe and supportive working environments, and facilitate access to psychosocial support services.

The Teachers Service Commission should review teacher deployment, retention, and welfare policies for teachers serving in high-risk environments, including consideration of hardship support mechanisms and enhanced welfare programmes.

National and county governments should collaborate with local communities, civil society organizations,

faith-based organizations, and security agencies to strengthen peacebuilding initiatives and reduce recurrent conflict in affected areas.

Educational stakeholders should implement educational recovery programmes aimed at addressing learning disruptions, supporting affected learners, and strengthening the resilience of schools operating in conflict-affected environments.

Limitations of the Study

This study was conducted using a qualitative phenomenological design and therefore focused on participants' subjective experiences and perceptions of insecurity and its implications. Consequently, the findings reflect lived experiences rather than clinically verified mental health conditions.

The study was conducted in selected bandit-prone areas of Baringo County and involved teachers who were actively serving in these contexts at the time of data collection. As a result, the findings may not be fully transferable to other conflict-affected regions with different social, cultural, or security conditions.

Additionally, the study did not include teachers who had transferred, resigned, retired, or left the teaching profession because of insecurity. Their experiences may have provided additional insights into the longer-term effects of banditry on teacher wellbeing and professional practice.

Suggestions for Further Research

Future studies may examine the effectiveness of psychosocial support interventions for teachers working in insecurity-prone areas. Comparative studies involving different conflict-affected regions of Kenya could also provide a broader understanding of the relationship between insecurity, teacher wellbeing, and professional practice. In addition, mixed-methods studies incorporating standardized mental health assessment tools may complement qualitative findings and provide deeper insights into the psychological effects of prolonged insecurity on educators.

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