RESEARCH ARTICLE

IMPACT OF VIOLENT CONFLICT ON SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS' WASTAGE IN MOUNT ELGON DISTRICT, KENYA

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to establish the impact of violent conflict on secondary school students' wastage in Mt Elgon District. It was guided by the production function model. The study adopted ex-post facto research design and its universe included 4873 secondary school students, 206 teachers, 28 B.OG Chairmen, 28 PTA Chairmen and 1 DEO, totaling to 5136 people. Stratified random sampling and purposive sampling techniques were employed to pick a sample of 358 respondents drawn from 15 out of the 28 secondary schools in the district. Various instruments: questionnaires, interview schedules, and document analysis schedules were used to collect data. Quantitative data were analyzed descriptively and inferentially while thematic approach was used to analyze qualitative data. The findings were merged for presentation. The study established that violent conflict adversely impacted on secondary school students' wastage which was manifested by very high nature and increasing trends of grade dropout rates, grade repeater rates, cohort wastage rates, and very low completer rates between the years 2005 and 2008. It emerged that Kopsiro Division which was the epicenter of violent conflict was the worst hit. It is recommended that the Government and other development partners should offer more sponsorship opportunities to surviving students from families impoverished by violent conflict in the district who risk dropping out of school. Most importantly, the government and community leaders should resolve the land dispute in Mt. Elgon District once and for all in order to avoid perennial disruptions to educational development of the people of Mt. Elgon District.

INTRODUCTION

Education is an indispensable tool for the continued existence and growth of any nation (Ajayi and Mbah, 2008). It creates a dynamic workforce and well-informed citizenry that is able to compete and cooperate globally, hence, opening doors to economic and social prosperity (Caruzo, 2004). More specifically, educationists consider Secondary Education as a gateway to social and economic advancement, mainly because of its placement between primary and tertiary education (Kamotho, 2005). Indeed, Secondary school education plays a key role in providing the learners with opportunities to acquire human capital that will enable them to pursue higher education and improve their skills leading to higher productivity (Ngware *et al.,* 2006). Despite this important role, in developing countries education systems have been found to be inefficient; it has been generally observed that such education systems have been ineffective in developing relevant skills needed for national development (World Bank, 1990; Ngware, 1994; Psacharopolous and Woodhall, 1985). Such systems have been unable to provide all school-age children with formal education and are characterized by high percentages of over-age learners at all levels and prone to high rates of repetition and dropouts (Abagi, 1997a; 1997b). For instance, Sub-Saharan Africa accounts for 44% of all children out of school worldwide. Not surprisingly, more than 60% of Sub-Saharan African countries have primary net enrolment rates (NER) below 80% and more than one-third are below 70%. These countries have the highest primary school repetition and dropout rates worldwide, and participation at secondary level remains low at less than 20% GER for many (Wright, 2008). Consequently, these handicap national efforts to build a human capital reservoir for development.

Studies by Fearon and Laitin (2003) and Stewart et al (2001a; 2001b) have established that there is a link between violent conflicts and student wastages in education systems in developing countries. For instance, more than a third of the 115 million primary age children not in school worldwide live in fragile states affected by armed conflict (Save the Children Alliance, 2006). Further, Oxfam Education Report states that two-thirds of countries in Africa that are experiencing or recovering from violent conflict have enrolment rates of less than 50% (Watkins, 2000). In Kenya and Mt. Elgon District in specific, although violent conflicts had been witnessed over the years since mid twentieth century (Achoka and Njeru, 2009: UNICEF, 2007), it had never been as severe as in the case of 2006/2007 between the Sabaot ethnic groups over

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allegations of unfair land allocation at Chebyuk settlement scheme (ibid). A number of armed terror gangs and extortionist groups such as Sabaot Lands Defence Force (SLDF) emerged. The militia gangs killed, raped, abducted and injured many civilians during their reign. They also imposed curfews, burnt and vandalized private and public property in the region. As a result, many families were displaced, infrastructure lay defunct and the populace impoverished (DFER, 2007; Ngetich and Kwalia, 2008). Caught in the mayhem were surviving school-going children, their teachers and parents whose dwelling units and learning resources were vandalized. Most of the victims were forced to flee to neighboring safer regions (Republic of Kenya, 2008).

Statement of the Problem

Regardless of the prevailing circumstances, education is internationally recognized as a basic human right for every living child (UNICEF, 2006). In Kenya for instance, the rights of the children are set forth in the Children's Act (Republic of Kenya, 2001), and augmented by government efforts to provide education for her people. Ideally, these efforts are appreciated as support stones for the fulfillment of greater targets such as Education For All (UNESCO, 2008), Kenya Vision 2030 (Republic of Kenya, 2008; 2006), and the Millennium Development Goals (Republic of Kenya, 2005). Be that as it may, each day, millions of children are denied their right to education because they live in countries that are suffering or emerging from violent conflicts. In such situations, opportunities for education often diminish or disappear (Toure, 2006; Fleshman, 2001) as education becomes a secondary issue to matters of life and death. Such misfortunes may contribute to wastage of valuable education resources. This study is an attempt to analyze and document the impact of violent conflict on secondary school students' wastage in Mt. Elgon District parse.

The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to establish the impact of violent conflict on secondary school students' wastage in Mt. Elgon District, Kenya

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study were to:

i.   Establish the impact of violent conflict on secondary school students' grade dropout rates between the years 2005 and 2008.
ii. Establish the impact of violent conflict on secondary school students' repeater rates between the years 2005 and 2008.
iii. Establish the impact of violent conflict on secondary school students' cohort wastage rates between the years 2005 and 2008
iv. Establish the impact of violent conflict on secondary school students' completer rates between the years 2005 and 2008

Theoretical Framework

This study was guided by production function model. It is generally believed that Philip Wicksteed (1894) was the first economist to algebraically formulate the relationship between output and inputs as $P = \int (x_1, x_2, \ldots x_m)$ although there are some evidences suggesting that Johann von Thünen first formulated it in the 1840's (Humphrey, 1997). Mitscherlich (1909) and Spillman (1924) rediscovered Von Thünen's exponential production function. Later, many other production functions such as Cobb-Duglas and Leontief production functions which were improvements of Von Thünen's exponential production function emerged (Shephard, 1970; Koutsoyiannis, 2003). Production function has been used as an important tool of economic analysis. In education sector, the education system can be viewed as a form of "production" which has three components: Inputs; Processes; and, Outputs/ Outcomes. According to Psacharopolous and Woodhall (1985), efficiency is a term used to describe the relationship between inputs and outputs. As such, measures of internal efficiency in an educational system can be expressed as a relationship between the quantity of inputs and the quantity of outputs. The relationship can be represented by an education production function model as:

$$Q = \int (Z_1, Z_2, \ldots Z_k : S_1, S_2, \ldots S_m)$$

Output, Q is determined by:

A set of endogenous input variables, $Z_1, Z_2, \ldots Z_k$, over which the school system has direct control. For instance, given sufficient funds, the school could hire better qualified teachers, buy more books, and install new laboratories, among others.

The set of exogenous input variables, $S_1, S_2, \ldots S_m$, over which no direct control may be exercised by the school. As such, the various endogenous and exogenous factors act in combination to determine whether a pupil (raw material) will complete school cycle, repeat a grade within the cycle or drop out before completing the cycle. In this study, violent conflict is treated as an exogenous factor in education industry which affects the process of transforming input into finished products (successful graduates) through its impact on students' wastages.

Scope of the Study

This study focused on the impact of violent conflict on of secondary school students' wastage in Mt Elgon district. In this study, students' wastage was measured by students' grade dropout rates, grade repeater rates, cohort wastage rates and completer rates. Data collected covered a four year period between the years 2005 and 2008.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This section presents research methodology employed in this study under the following subsections: Research design, the study area, the target population, the sampling procedure, data collection instruments, and data analysis procedures.

Research Design

This study adopted ex-post facto research design (Oso and Onen, 2005; Gall et al, 1996). According to Kerlinger (1970), ex post facto is a research design in which the independent variable or variables have already occurred and in which the

researcher starts with the observation of a dependent variable or variables. He then studies the independent variable or variables in retrospect for their possible relationship to, and effects on, the dependent variable or variables. The design has an advantage because it meets an important need of the researcher where the rigorous experimental approach is not possible. The design was therefore the most suitable for this study because the research was carried out after the violent conflict had occurred in the district.

The Study Area

This study was conducted in Mt Elgon District of Western Province, Kenya. The district is located on the South Eastern slopes of Mt. Elgon at 1.11^0 North and 34.55^0 East. It borders Uganda to the West and North, Trans-Nzoia to the East and Bungoma to the South. Mt. Elgon district covers an area of 936.75 km sq. and has population of 154, 698 (Republic of Kenya, 1999). It is largely inhabited by the Sabaots (Soy, Mosop and Ndorobo), Luhyas and Kikuyus among others. The district has four administrative divisions, namely Kopsiro, Kaptma, Cheptais and Kapsokwony. Kopsiro division was the hardest hit by the recent violent conflict in the region since it is where the controversial Chebyuk settlement scheme is located.

Study Population

The universe of this study encompassed the District Education Officer (DEO) and all students, teachers, B.O.G and PTA Chairmen in the 28 public secondary schools of Mt. Elgon District. This population included 4873 secondary school students, 206 teachers, 28 B.OG Chairmen, 28 PTA Chairmen and 1 DEO, totaling to 5136 people in the 28 secondary schools in the District, see table 1.

Table 1: Study Population

Category	Male	Female	Total
Students	2780	2093	4873
Principals and Teachers	161	45	206
B.O.G Chairmen	28	0	28
P.T.A Chairmen	26	2	28
DEO	1	0	1
Total	2996	2140	5136

Source: Mt. Elgon District Education Office, 2009

Sample and Sampling Procedure

The study took into consideration the fact that the target population was not uniform since schools in different divisions of the district may not necessarily have had similar characteristics and experiences (Cresswell, 2003). As such, the target population could not be regarded as homogenous. Stratified random sampling technique was therefore used to ensure that the target population was divided into different homogenous strata and that each stratum was represented in the sample in proportion equivalent to its size in the accessed population (Oso and Onen, 2005). From the study population of 5136 people in the district, the desired sample size of 358 respondents was obtained using a formula recommended by Mugenda and Mugenda (1999). The formula is expressed as shown below.

$$nf = \frac{n}{1+n/N}$$

Where nf = the desired sample size (when the population is less than 10,000)

n = the desired sample size (when the population is more than 10,000)

N = the estimate of the population size.

In this study therefore, given n, as 384 (Mugenda and Mugenda, 1999) and population size, N, as 5136, the desired sample size of 358 was calculated as follows:

$$nf = \frac{384}{1 + \frac{384}{5136}}$$

=358 Respondents

This result was further confirmed with the aid of sample size calculator (Creative Research Systems, 2007) which produced the same findings, 358 respondents, at confidence level and confidence interval of 95% and 5% respectively. Since this sample comprised of District Education Officer (DEO), Chairmen of Board of Governors (B.O.G), Chairmen of Parents Teachers Associations (PTA), Secondary School Principals, Teachers and students, the number of respondents from each category was obtained by using a formula recommended by Kothari (1985). The formula is expressed as below:

$$n_i = np_i$$

Where, n_i is the number of elements selected from each stratum, p_i represents the proportion of population included in stratum i, and n represents the total sample size. In this study therefore, given a target population, n, of 5136, comprising of 2780 male students, 2095 female students, 206 teachers, 28 Chairmen of PTAs and 1 DEO, the number respondents from each category was calculated as follows:

Number of male students = $358 * \frac{2780}{5136}$ = 193 Boys

Number of female students = $358 * \frac{2093}{5136}$ =146 Girls

Number of teachers = $358 * \frac{206}{5136}$ =15 Teachers

Number of Chairmen of B.O.Gs = $358 * \frac{28}{5136}$ =2 People

Number of Chairmen of PTAs = $358 * \frac{28}{5136}$ = 2 People

Number of DEO = $358 * \frac{1}{5136}$ = 1 Person

According to Nsubuga (2000), a good sample must be as nearly representative of the entire population as possible. As such, the desired sample of 358 respondents were picked from 15 (54%) out of all the 28 secondary schools in Mt. Elgon District. The selected schools were picked on proportional basis as illustrated in Table 3.2. Accordingly, the schools in the district were stratified into four strata. The strata took the form of the four administrative divisions of Mt. Elgon District namely: Kapsokwony, Kaptma, Cheptais and Kopsiro. The

district has 28 secondary schools which are distributed across the four administrative divisions, see table 2.

Table 2: Secondary Schools by Division

Division	Number of Schools in the Division	Number of Selected Schools (Sample)
Kapsokwony	6	3
Kaptama	6	3
Cheptais	9	5
Kopsiros	7	4
Total	28	15

Source: Mt. Elgon District Education Office.

From each of the 15 selected secondary schools in the district, 1 teacher, 10 female students and 13 male students were picked. The school principals were purposefully picked to respond on behalf of the teachers because the data required had administrative connotations. The 10 girls and 13 boys from each of the 15 sampled schools were randomly picked amongst form four students because they were the ones who had been in the secondary school system for the entire period under investigation between the years 2005 and 2008. Further, 2 B.O.G Chairmen and 2 P.T.A chairmen, were randomly picked from schools in the two violent conflict hardest hit divisions of Kopsiro and Cheptais. Mt. Elgon DEO was also included in the study sample population.

Data Collection Instruments

Both Primary and secondary data (Oso and Onen, 2005) were obtained in this study. Primary data were obtained using questionnaires and interview schedules (Nsubuga, 2000). Secondary data on the other hand were obtained by use of document analysis schedules (ibid).

Data Analysis

Data collected from the respondents were examined, edited, coded and analyzed by the researcher with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 11.5. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as means, frequencies percentages, and cohort analysis with the view of summarizing information and to enable comparisons to be made. Further, Mann-Whitney U Test was employed to establish whether there was any significant difference between the findings from different categories of respondents. Cohort analysis such as grade repeater rates, dropout rates, cohort wastage rates and completer rates were used to measure student wastage in secondary schools of Mt. Elgon district. Qualitative data were analyzed using thematic approach (Strauss and Corbin, 1990; Anderson, 1988). Both qualitative and quantitative findings were merged by objectives and presented in chapter four descriptively and by the use of tables and charts.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section is divided into two parts. Demographic information on sampled schools forms the first section. Impact of violence conflict on secondary school students' wastage is presented in the second section.

Demographic Information on Sampled Schools

Data obtained from the sampled schools included average class size, number of teachers and student-teacher ratio for the

year 2008. These are important quantitative indicators of how efficient the limited resources are utilized in schools. The information is presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Schools' Demographic Information

School Code	School Size	Average Class Size	Number of Teachers	Student-Teacher Ratio
A	482	40	17	28
B	485	40	17	29
C	104	26	6	17
C	63	16	6	11
D	325	41	18	18
E	82	20	7	11
F	28	28	4	7
G	15	8	3	5
H	43	14	4	11
I	79	20	6	13
J	79	20	7	11
K	63	16	8	8
M	273	34	11	25
N	374	47	17	22
O	73	19	7	11

Source: Field Data

Table 3 show that schools A, B, D and N had large class sizes (40, 40, 41 and 47 respectively). Accordingly, these schools (A, B, D and N) were leading in student enrolments (school size) and number of teachers. This could probably be explained by the fact that the aforementioned schools were the only well established provincial boarding schools in the entire Mt. Elgon District. They were therefore steadier and attracted many students from the province and beyond. It can also be deduced from Table 3 that majority of the schools, 9 (60%), had student enrolment of less than 100 and teacher population of less than 10. Many of the schools, C, F, G, H, I, J and K were located in violent conflict worst hit divisions of Kopsiro and Cheptais. Interview data from the DEO, BoGs, Principals and PTA respondents revealed that a number of students and teachers were killed while the majority fled to escape the escalating violence. For instance, one of the principals observed:

We lost a good number of staff during the recent conflicts. Many sought transfers when the militia began killing teachers who did not cooperate with them. As a result, the district was left with fewer qualified teachers. This mishap necessitated the need for the BoGs to strive to hire new teachers among who some were not trained, in order to fill the gap. In such a situation, the teaching methods used by unqualified teachers may not be effective; hence little meaningful learning may be realized. These factors, may undoubtedly affect any school's internal efficiency.

Impact of Violent Conflict on Secondary School Wastage

In order to establish the impact of violent conflict on secondary school wastage, the nature and trends of secondary school wastage between the years 2005 and 2008 were established. Further, the respondents were asked to shed lights on how violent conflict impacted on secondary school wastage between the years 2005 and 2008. The findings were serialized respectively.

The Nature and Trends of Secondary School Wastage

To establish the nature and trends of secondary school wastage, data pertaining to the student enrolments and repeaters in the sampled schools between the years 2005 and 2008 were gathered using document analysis schedules. Secondary school students' flow rates by gender and division were used to calculate the various measures of internal efficiency. From the data collected, the following measures of school wastage were examined: Grade dropout rates; grade repeater rates; cohort wastage rates; and, average year per student/completer rates. These were computed by grade gender and administrative divisions. Interviews with the DEO, BoGs, Principals and PTA respondents also shed light on possible reasons for the nature and trends of school wastage in the district between the years 2005 and 2008.

The Nature and Trends of Grade Dropout Rates

Grade dropout rates and averages over the four year period (2005-2008) were computed and tabulated by grade, gender and division. Findings on the nature of grade dropout rates are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Nature of Grade Dropout Rates by Division, Gender and Grade

Division	Sex	Form/ Grade			Average
		2	3	4	
Kopsiro Division	Female	66.8	50.5	35.1	50.8
	Male	45.1	41.1	30.8	39.0
	Average	56.0	45.8	33.0	44.9
Cheptais Division	Female	17.9	16.9	15.8	16.9
	Male	13.5	12.9	10.6	12.3
	Average	10.5	14.9	8.8	11.4
Kapsokwony Division	Female	13.4	13.3	9.4	12.0
	Male	11.5	16.0	17.2	14.9
	Average	12.5	14.7	13.3	13.5
Kaptama Division	Female	9.6	12.3	18.9	13.6
	Male	13.2	17.9	13.9	15.0
	Average	11.4	15.1	16.4	14.3
District	Female	26.9	23.3	19.8	23.3
	Male	20.8	22.0	18.1	20.3
	Average	23.9	22.7	19.0	21.9

Source: Field Data

Accordingly, the data in Table 4 show that between the years 2005 and 2008, the average grade dropout rate in secondary schools in Mt. Elgon District was 21.9%. This is an indicator of great education wastage and suggestive of the existence of great internal inefficiency in the secondary schools in Mt. Elgon District. Notably, there were relatively more dropouts occurring among the girls, that is, 23.3%, than their male counterparts with 20.3% in the district. As well, data from a corresponding interview questions for the school administrators, that is, the DEO, BoGs, PTA and principals reaffirmed this point by noting that more girls withdrew from school during the recent violent conflict as they were more vulnerable in terms of violence. For instance, on one hand, a BoG chairman observed that:

> …the school girls were lost to the violence. Many of them who fled never came back. Some got married; others sought menial work as house helps and farm workers.

On the other hand, a principal reported that:

> More girls than boys dropped out of school. The resultant insecurity made it unbearable for many girls…they opted out of school.

These comments reflected the ones given earlier by DEO and PTA respondents who observed that many parents withdrew their children from school, particularly the girls because they were at greater risks during the violent conflict. These findings are in line with those of Shemnyakina (2006), who in the study of effects of armed conflict on accumulation of schooling in Tajikistan, study found that the probability of completing grades for girls were lower than for boys during the Tajik war. The computed grade dropout rates were further analyzed by grade with the view of establishing the nature of dropouts in the specific grades in secondary school cycle. Figure 1 is a graphical presentation of the findings.
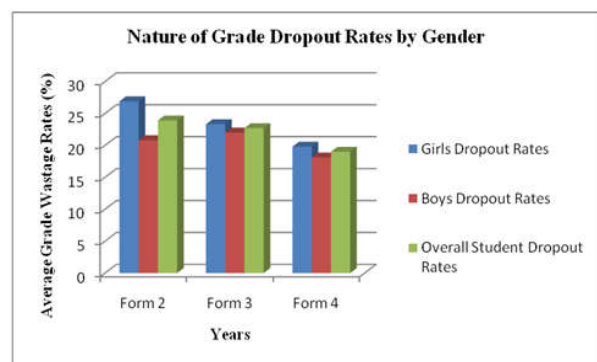

Figure 1: Nature of Grade Dropout Rates by Gender

Figure 1 indicates that the greatest average grade dropout rate for all the students, 23.9%, was posted in Form 2. Forms 3 and 4 took the second and third positions respectively with average grade dropout rates of 22.9% and 19.0%. These findings suggest that more students dropped out at lower grades than upper grades in secondary schools in Mt. Elgon District. There is need for education stakeholders to effectively address this phenomenon so that learners do not drop out of the school cycle without enough knowledge to enable them have quality life. The computed grade dropout rates were also analyzed by division to establish their nature in the four administrative divisions. The findings are presented in Figure 2.
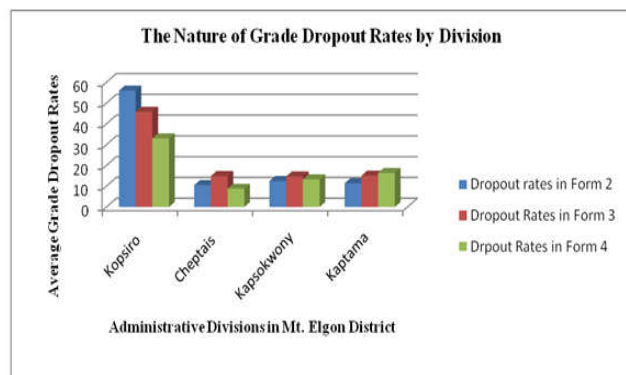

Figure 2: Nature of Grade Dropout Rates by Division

As can be deduced from Figure 2, the highest average grade dropout rates for Forms 2, 3 and 4 were posted in Kopsiro

Division. That is 56.0%, 45.8.0% and 33.0% for forms 2, 3 and 4 respectively. Kaptama Division followed with grade dropout rates of 11.4%, 15.1% and 16.4% in forms two, three and four in that order, while Kapsokwony Division came third with grade dropout rates of 12.5%, 14.7% and 13.3% for forms two, three and four respectively. The least grade dropout rates were posted in Cheptais division with rates of 10.5% in Form Two, 14.9% in Form Three and 8.8% in Form Four. In a nutshell, every grade in Mt. Elgon District experienced school dropout during the years 2005 to 2008. These findings vividly show that on average, Kopsiro Division posted highest, 44.9%, grade dropout rates compared to the other three divisions of Kaptama, Kapsokwony and Cheptais which posted average dropout rates of 14.3%, 13.5% and 11.4% respectively. As noted earlier, interviews with the DEO, BoGs, principals and PTA respondents revealed that Kopsiro Division was the worst hit by violent conflict and as such, many secondary school students in the division reportedly abandoned school and fled for safety. One principal of a school in Kopsiro for instance, recalled how he had to take refuge at Kopsiro Africa Inland church before he fled with some students for their safety. He said:

> …the situation got worse…we cheated death. Some students went as far as crossing the border to Uganda. Sadly, many of my students have not returned to school to date.

Therefore, from the administrator's remarks, one got the impression that the higher dropout rates that occurred in Kopsiro Division were as a result of the intense violent conflict that took place in the division. These findings are in line with those of Juliano (2006) in Philippines, whose study found out that over the period when the region experienced violent conflict, the overall dropout rates for hardest hit state of Mindanao were highest in the country compared to those in relatively safe states of Luzon and Visayas over the period when violent conflict took place. This study also endeavored to establish the trends of grade dropout rates in secondary schools in Mt. Elgon District between the years 2005 and 2008. Data pertaining to grade dropout rates were analyzed by gender and administrative divisions. Table 4.7 provides a summary of the findings.

Table 5: Trends in Grade Dropout Rates by Division and Gender

Division	Gender	Year			
		2005	2006	2007	2008
Kopsiro	Female	-	32.1	38.5	81.8
	Male	-	23.1	39.2	63.2
	Average	-	27.6	38.9	72.5
Cheptais	Female	-	15.3	15.0	20.4
	Male	-	16.4	10.9	9.8
	Average	-	15.9	13.0	15.1
Kapsokwony	Female	-	12.2	11.6	12.4
	Male	-	17.9	17.1	9.8
	Average	-	15.1	14.4	11.1
Kaptama	Female	-	14.2	12.3	14.4
	Male	-	16.3	13.0	15.7
	Average	-	15.3	12.7	15.1
District	Female	-	18.5	19.4	32.3
	Male	-	18.4	20.1	24.6
	Average	-	18.5	19.8	28.5

Source: Field Data

The data in Table 5 show that there was a steady rising trend in the average grade dropout rates of secondary school students in Mt. Elgon District between 2006 and 2008. For instance, the district posted average dropout rate of 18.5%, which increased to 19.8% in 2007, then sharply rose to 28.5% in the years 2008. This is an indicator that many students continued to leave school prematurely thereby contributed to education inefficiency in Mt. Elgon District. The computed data were further analyzed by gender to establish the trends of grade dropout rates among the boys and girls. Figure 3 is a graphical presentation of the findings.
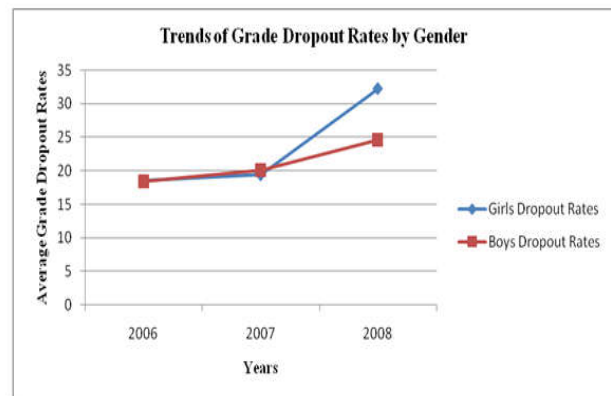

Figure 3: Trends in Grade Dropout Rates by Gender

It can also be deduced from Figure 3 that grade dropout rates for both boys and girls increased steadily for the entire three year period between 2006 and 2008. However, the rising trend of grade dropout rates was steeper for girls than for boys between the years 2007 and 2008. For instance, where as grade dropout rate for girls sharply rose from 19.4 % in 2007 to 32.3% in 2008, those for boys increased from 20.1% in 2007 to 24.6% in 2008. The steady increasing trends in grade dropout rates among the boys and girls of secondary schools could be attributed to the adverse impacts of violent conflict on basic education in Mt. Elgon District. Interviews with the DEO, BoGs principal, and PTA respondents revealed that during the mayhem, lives and property were lost, as parents, students and teachers fled the district. In addition, learning and teaching resources were either vandalized and or stolen. This left the schools, especially in Kopsiro Division with defunct and or meager facilities. As such, many students reportedly dropped out of the school system. One may only suspect that many boys dropouts joined the militia. One PTA chairman interviewee observed that:

> The militia gang came to our homes and forcefully recruited our sons into the militia…some joined voluntarily. Sadly many of them lost their lives in the war while the surviving ones fled to other regions for fear of being arrested by the government security forces.

Other boy students, it was noted, fled to safer areas. Even among those who didn't fee, some stayed out of school due to economic pressures occasioned by impoverishment due to violent conflict in Mt. Elgon District. For instance, another PTA chairman explained:
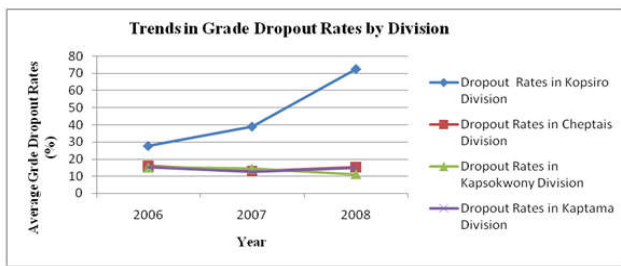
Figure 4: Trends in Grade Dropout Rates by Division

Table 6: The Nature of Repeater Rates by Form, Gender and Division

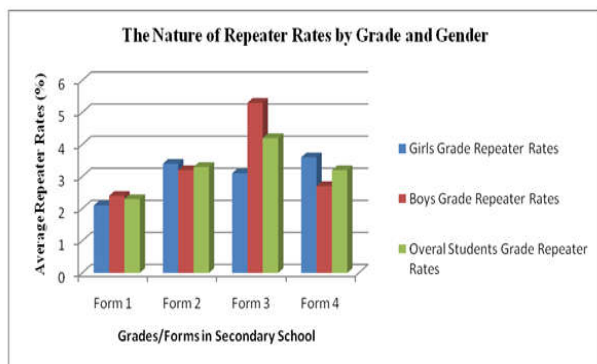| Division	Sex	Form/ Grade				Average
		1	2	3	4	
Kopsiro	Female	4.2	7.1	4.2	0	3.9
Division	Male	7.3	6.7	11.7	0	6.4
	Average	5.8	6.9	8.0	0	5.2
Cheptais	Female	0	0	0.5	1.9	0.6
Division	Male	0	0.5	1.3	2.5	1.1
	Average	0	0.3	0.9	2.2	0.9
Kapsokwony	Female	2.9	2.8	2.3	2.3	2.6
Division	Male	1.1	1.4	2.2	1.0	1.4
	Average	2.0	2.1	2.3	1.7	2.0
Kaptama	Female	1.3	3.6	5.2	10.1	5.1
Division	Male	1.0	4.3	5.8	7.1	4.6
	Average	1.2	4.0	5.5	8.6	4.9
District	Female	2.1	3.4	3.1	3.6	3.1
	Male	2.4	3.2	5.3	2.7	3.4
	Average	2.3	3.3	4.2	3.2	3.3

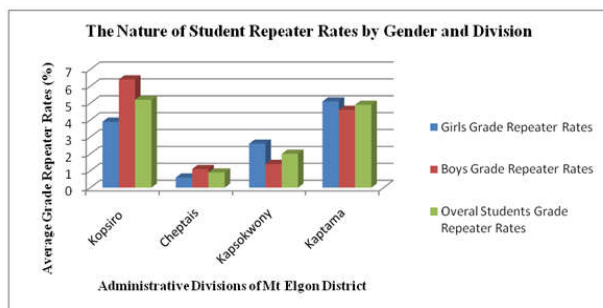**Figure 5: Nature of Repeater Rates by Grade and Gender**

Figure 6: Nature of Student Repeater Rates by Division

The militia gang extorted thousands of shillings from us, failure to which you would be maimed…our homes and the farms were reduced to rubble. Consequently, we could not feed our children let alone taking them to school. Therefore, the PTA chairman's comments created an impression that the impoverished parents could not sustain their children in schools. As a result, there was high wastage of secondary school students in Mt. Elgon District. Further, the computed data were analyzed by division with the view of establishing the trends of grade dropout rates by administrative division. The findings are presented in Figure 4.

The data in Figure 4 show that, on one hand, grade dropout rates of secondary school students in Kopsiro Division steadily increased between the years 2006 and 2008. That is, from 27.6% in 2006 to 38.9% in 2007 and then 72.5% in 2008. On the other hand, Cheptais and Kaptama Divisions witnessed fluctuating grade dropout rates over the years. In Cheptais Division for instance, dropout rates fluctuated from 15.9% in 2006 to13.4% in 2007 and then rose to 15.1% in 2008. In Kaptama Division, grade dropout rates fluctuated from 15.3% in 2006 to 12.7% in 2007, and then rose to 15.1% in 2008. While in Kapsokwony Division, grade dropout rates declined from 15.1% in 2006 to 14.40% in 2007 then declined to 11.1% in 2008. The findings suggest that as the years went by, many secondary school students especially in conflict worst hit Kopsiro Division continued to drop out of school. This is an indicator that the schools became less and less internally efficient as the years went by. These findings are in line with those of Mudege et al, (2008) which established that threat to personal and physical security made children dropout of school. The study further revealed that parents sometimes withdraw their children from school for fear that the children might be raped on their way to school.

The Nature and Trends of Grade Repeater Rates

Grade repeater rates were computed from data in the sampled schools and their averages tabulated by grade, gender and administrative division between the years 2006 and 2008. The findings are presented in Table 6. From Table 6, the data show that between the years 2006 and 2008, the average grade repeater rate in secondary schools in Mt. Elgon District was 3.3%. Further, the data reveal that slightly more boys, 3.4%, than girls, 3.1%, repeated grades in the district. These findings are suggestive of the point that on average, few secondary school students repeated grades over the three year period (2006 and 2008). In some cases however, low rates of repetition merely reflected policies or practices of automatic promotion to subsequent grade. Ordinarily, only students who pass and satisfy the board of examiners are allowed to proceed to the subsequent grade. However, those who fail in their academic examinations are requested to repeat to improve their grades.

Response from the interview with the DEO revealed that over the period during which violent conflict occurred, majority of the schools were less particular on repetition of students on the grounds of academic performance. As such, even weak students were allowed to proceed. He said:

> What was urgent then was to retain learners in school. Those who repeated did so on their own

volition may be because they had stayed away to complete the syllabus and needed to complete the syllabus content that was covered in their absence. However, the government policy is that no student should be forced to repeat a grade whatsoever.

Therefore according to the DEOs observations, violent conflict contributed to high repetition of students in secondary schools in the district. The findings are in line with those of Abagi (1997) whose study found out that education systems in developing world, especially in conflict ravaged Sub Saharan Africa, are prone to high rates of repetition The computed grade repeater rates were further analyzed by grade to establish the nature of repeater rates in the specific grades (Forms 1, 2, 3 and 4). Figure 5 is a graphical presentation of the findings. Figure 5 indicates that over the period between 2006 and 2008, on average the severest repetition for both genders, 4.2%, occurred in Form Three. This was followed by forms Two and Four which posted average grade repeater rates of 3.3% and 3.2% respectively. The least repetition rates, 2.3%, occurred in Form 1. These findings suggest that more repetition occurred in forms two and three compared to forms one and four. High rates of repetition reveal problems of internal efficiency (wastage of resources) and possibly reflect a low level of instruction. The computed grade repeater rates were further analyzed by division in order to establish the nature of grade repeater rates in the four specific administrative divisions of Kopsiro, Cheptais, Kapsokwony and Kaptama. The findings are presented in Figure 6

It can be deduced from Figure 6 that the highest average grade repeater rate, 5.2%, was posted in Kopsiro Division, followed by Kaptama Division with 4.9%. Cheptais Division posted the least rate of 0.9%, while Kapsokwony Division had 2.0%. These findings suggest that more wastage occurred in Kopsiro and Kaptama Divisions than Cheptais and Kapsokwony Divisions. As well, data from corresponding interview question for the administrators, that is, the DEO, BoGs, principals and PTA reaffirmed this by noting that that more students repeated grades in Kopsiro Division after being away from school for as long as the violent conflict in the division lasted. For instance, on one hand, one principal observed that:

> Many of our students stayed out of school for a long time. Schools were therefore closed…some as long as two years. When they (students) came back, some especially in forms two and three opted to repeat.

On the other hand, another principal reported that:

> Some displaced parents from Kopsiro Division opted to enroll their children in schools in relatively safer divisions like Kaptama…the students were however asked to repeat the grades whey were in when violent conflict began.

These comments gave an impression that violent conflict contributed to the high grade dropout rates in Kopsiro and Kaptama Divisions. This study also endeavored to establish the trends of grade repeater rates in secondary schools in Mt. Elgon District between the years 2006 and 2008. Data pertaining to grade repeaters were analyzed by gender and

administrative divisions. Table 7 provides a summary of the findings.

Table 7: Trends of Grade Repeater Rates by Gender and Division

DIVISION		YEAR			
		2005	2006	2007	2008
Cheptais	Male		0.6	1.8	0.8
	Female	-	0.4	0.9	0.5
	Average	-	0.5	1.4	0.7
Kopsiro	Male	-	2.5	5.8	11.0
	Female	-	0.7	4.2	6.8
	Average	-	1.6	5.0	8.9
Kapsokwony	Male	-	2.5	1.3	0.5
	Female	-	2.7	2.4	2.6
	Average	-	2.6	1.9	1.6
Kaptama	Male	-	3.8	3.8	6.0
	Female	-	4.6	5.0	5.5
	Average	-	4.2	4.4	5.8
Average	Male	-	1.9	3.2	4.6
	Female	-	2.1	3.1	3.9
Total Average		-	2.0	3.2	4.3

Data in Table 7 show that there was a steady rise in the overall grade repeater rates of secondary school students in Mt. Elgon District throughout the entire period between the years 2006 and 2008. On average, the district posted increasing grade repeater rates of 2.0%, 3.2% and 4.3% in the years 2006, 2007 and 2008 respectively. These findings indicate that more and more students in Mt. Elgon District repeated grades meaning the schools became less and less internally efficient as years went by. The computed grade repeater rates were further analyzed by gender with the view to establish the trends in grade repeater rates by gender. Figure 7 is a graphical presentation of the findings.
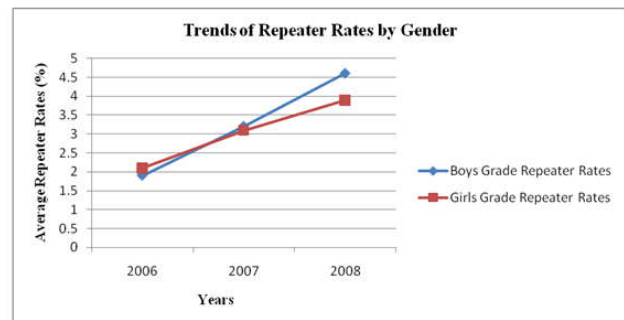

Figure 7: Trends of Repeater Rates by Gender

It can be deduced from Figure 4.10 that grade repeater rates for both boys and girls steadily increased between the years 2006 and 2008. For instance, in 2007, the district posted average repeater rate of 3.1% for girls, an increase from 2.1% in the previous year, 2006. This rate further rose to 3.9% in 2008. Grade repeater rates for boys rose from 1.9% in 2006 to 3.2% in 2007 then finally increased to 4.6% in 2008. These findings suggest that more boys than girls repeated grades in secondary schools in Mt. Elgon. As well, data from a corresponding interview question for the DEO, BoGs, and PTA and school principals reaffirmed thus point by noting that more boys than girls affected by violent conflict had opportunity to go back to school and probably repeat a grade. For instance, one PTA chairman revealed that:

Many parents opted only to readmit to school their sons at the expense of the daughters when they realized that they (parents) did not have enough cash to educate both genders.

This finding is yet another pointer to the fact that the risks associated with violent conflict increases for adolescent boys but multiplies for adolescent girls (UNFPA, 2002). The grade repeater rates were further analyzed by administrative divisions and graphs computed with the view of establishing their nature. The findings are presented in Figure 8.
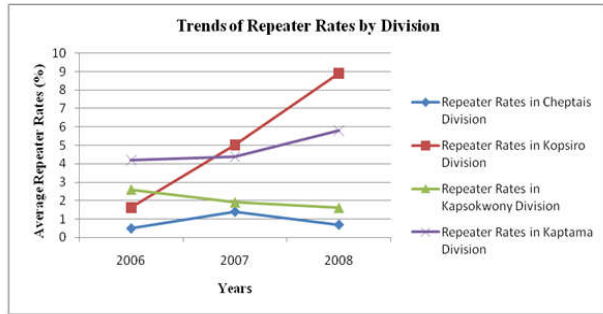

Figure 8: Trends of Repeater Rates by Division

Therefore, Figure 8 shows that grade repeater rates in Kopsiro and Kaptama Divisions sharply and steadily increased between the years 2006 and 2008. In Kopsiro for example, the grade repeater rates rose from 1.6% in 2006 to 5.0% in 2007, then to 8.9% in 2008. While in Kaptama the grade repeater rates increased from 4.2% to 4.4% then further to 5.85 in the years 2006, 2007 and 2008 respectively. Kapsokwony Division witnessed steady declining grade repeater rates in the three year period between 2006 and 2008. That is, the grade repeater rates declined from 2.6% to 1.9% and further to 1.6% in the years 2006, 2007 and 2008 respectively. Grade repeater rates in Cheptais Division also increased amid fluctuats from 0.5% in 2006 to 1.4% in 2007 and 0.7% in 2008. These findings are suggestive of the pointer that although the problem of grade repetition in secondary schools was evidently increasing in all the administrative divisions in Mt. Elgon District except for Kapsokwony Division, the severest hit divisions were Kopsiro and Kaptama.

Nature of Cohort Wastage Rates

The data used in this study were for the cohort of 2005-2008. This was the group of students who joined form one in 2005 and were supposed to complete form four in 2008. Cohort wastage rates were then computed by gender and administrative division in order to establish its nature .The findings are summarized in Table 8.

Table 8: The Nature of Cohort Wastage Rates

Cohort Wastage Rates by gender and Division (2005- 2008 Cohort)			
Division	Boys	Girls	Average
Kopsiro	89.3	97.3	93.3
Cheptais	33.5	42.3	37.9
Kapsokwony	36.4	34.2	35.3
Kaptama	32.9	38.2	35.6
Average	48.0	53.0	50.5

According to the data in Table 8, the majority of the students in Mt. Elgon District, 50.5%, who enrolled in grade one in 2005, did not make it to the final grade (Form Four) in 2008 as expected. This implies that more than half the number of enrolled students in 2005 cohort either repeated or dropped out of the system along the way, thus could not be accounted for in 2008 in the grade where they were supposed to be. This is a very high rate of internal inefficiency in the district since it is expected that all students who enroll in grade one should timely and successfully complete the last grade in the education cycle. Moreover, this finding is consistent with the finding that the district posted high rates of grade dropout and grade repeater rates. Such high student wastages negate Kenya's government policy on Education For All (EFA) (Republic of Kenya, 2005) and the right of the child (Republic of Kenya, 2001). Evidently, the district posted relatively higher average cohort wastage rates, 53.0%, among the girls than the boys, 48.0%. This finding is yet another pointer to the suggestion that violent conflict in Mt. Elgon District impacted negatively more on girls than boys as noted earlier.

From Table 8, it is evident that the highest average cohort wastage rate, 93.3%, occurred in Kopsiro Division, followed by Cheptais Division with 37.9%. Kapsokwony Division posted the least cohort wastage rates, that is, 35.3% while Kaptama Division had 35.6%. Interviews held with the DEO, BoGs, principals and PTA respondents revealed that many families fled from the district to other safer neighboring districts at the height of violent conflict. This point was emphasized by members of the sample who were interviewed. In response to the question on the impact of violent conflict on cohort wastage rates, the DEO observed:

> Very many students dropped out without completing the entire secondary school cycle. In specific, Kopsiro and Cheptais Divisions lost more than half of the students in the 2005-2008 cohort as a result of violence (violent conflict).

A BoG chairman on his part noted that:

> It is regrettable that many students never made it to the final grade due to the harsh atmosphere courtesy of violence (violent conflict) in the district. We have lost valuable human capital…something has to be done urgently.

It was also pointed out that many schools especially in Chebyuk settlement scheme in Kopsiro Division were closed for as long as two years, as this was the epicenter of the violent conflict in the district. Accordingly, the very high cohort wastage rates, especially in violent conflict worst hit Kopsiro Division therefore are suggestive of the point that many students either transferred to schools in other safer neighboring regions or dropped out altogether. The above findings are in line with those of Save Children Alliance (2006) whose study found out that majority of students enrolled in grade one in states that are affected by or recovering from violent conflicts do not survive and complete the last grade of the system. Further, the broader pressures people affected by violent conflicts encounter may also inhibit schooling. For instance, affected children from the most

economically disadvantaged backgrounds are usually discouraged from attending school due to expenses (Tuore, 2001). Even when education is made free as is the case in Kenya (Republic of Kenya, 2005), hidden costs such as cost of uniforms, food and transport and survival pressures may cause children to be removed from school and set to productive work; girls may be married off earlier than usual, or parents may be forced to exclude one child from school for the sake of the education of the other (Chenge and Sifuna, 2006).

The Nature of Average Year per Student/ Completer Rates

The data used in this study were for the cohort of 2005-2008. As noted earlier, this was the group of students who joined form one in 2005 and were supposed to complete form four in 2008. Average years per student (completer rates) were then computed by gender and administrative division in order to establish its nature. The findings are summarized in Table 9.

Table 9: Nature of Average Year per Student/Completer Rates

Average Year per Student/Completer Rates by gender and Region (2005- 2008 Cohort)			
Division	Boys	Girls	Average
Kopsiro	20.0	64.5	42.3
Cheptais	4.7	5.3	5.0
Kapsokwony	5.1	4.8	5.0
Kaptama	4.8	5.0	4.9
Average	4.9	5.0	5.0

The data in Table 9 indicate that on average, a student took 5 years as opposed to the recommended 4 years to complete secondary education in Mt. Elgon District. This finding is an indicator of internal inefficiency of the secondary education system in the district since additional resources for the extra year are required to enable the students to complete secondary education.

Likewise, data from a corresponding interview question for the DEO, BoGs, principals and PTA respondents reaffirmed this point by noting that the district posted lower completer rates because a number of students abandoned school and fled to safer regions for some time and only managed to come back when there was relative peace in the region. The respondents' comments created an impression that the relocation of displaced families interfered with the students' academic progress and movements from one grade to another as they picked up from where they had left. Table 9 also shows that on average, girls posted lower completer rates than the boys. That is 5 years for girls against boys' 4.9 years. This finding is yet another pointer to the suggestion that violent conflict in Mt. Elgon District impacted negatively more on girls than boys. From Table 9 it is also evident that the highest completer rates, 4.9 years, occurred in Kaptama Division, followed by Cheptais and Kasokwony Divisions with 5 years each. Data in Table 9 also show that male and female students in Kopsiro Division unusually required 20 and 64 years respectively to complete secondary education. Data from interview with DEO and principals revealed that many schools in Kopsiro Division which were closed only reopened in 2008 but began with new admissions of only form one students. For instance, one of the principals noted that:

Our school was destroyed and we had no option but to close for two years. When we reopened, we began on a fresh plate by admitting only form one students so as to give us more time to reconstruct the damaged facilities. In the end, we lost all the students we previously had.

The above observations implied that the affected schools lost entirely all their students in 2005-2008 cohort, hence, the very high rates of average year per student in the division.Moreover, the very low completer rates are consistent with the findings that the district posted very high grade dropout rates and cohort wastage rates, especially in Kopsiro Division. Importantly, because of their very extreme nature, the completer rates in Kopsiro Division were not factored in the computation of completer rates for the district. evertheless, the findings of this study strongly suggest that violent conflict adversely impacted on the period students needed to complete secondary education in Mt. Elgon District. These findings concur with those of Malapit et al (2003), which postulated that only one out of ten children was likely to complete high school on time in violent conflict rocked state of Mindanao, Philippines.

Respondents' Ratings for Impact of Violent Conflict on students' Wastage

The students and school principals were asked to indicate their level of agreement to two listed items using a ranked scale in the questionnaire. The items were:

1. Violent conflict had adverse impact on secondary school girls' wastage rates in Mt. Elgon District.
2. Violent conflict had adverse impact on secondary school boys' wastage rates in Mt. Elgon District.

The data for the two items were analyzed and the findings are summarized in Tables 10.

Table 10: Ratings for Impact of Violent Conflict on Wastage Rates

Category of Respondents	Respondents' Rating	Impact of violent conflict on girls' Wastage	Impact of violent conflict on boys wastage
Students	Agree	270 (79.6%)	261 (77.0%)
	Undecided	21 (6.2%)	17 (5.0%)
	Decided	48 (14.2%)	61 (17.8%)
Principals	Agree	13 (86.7%)	11 (73.3%)
	Undecided	1 (6.7%)	2 (13.3)
	Decided	1 (6.7%)	2 (13.3)
Total Number of Respondents		354	354
p-value (2 tailed)		0.478	0.864

From the data in Table 10, it is evident that majority of the students, 270 (79.6%), and 13 (86.7%) principals, agreed that violent conflict adversely impacted on girls wastage rates in Mt. Elgon District between the years 2005 and 2008. Only a few students, 48 (14.2%), and 1 (6.7%) principal, disagreed. Only 21 (6.2%) students, and 1 (6.7%) principal, were undecided. The high level of agreement of the principals and students that violent conflict adversely impacted on girls' wastage rates could reaffirm the high rates and increasing

trend of grade dropout rates for girls in the secondary schools between the years 2005 and 2008, see also Table 5 and Fig. 3.

Just as the case for girls, majority of students, 261 (77.0%) and 11 (73.3%) principals, agreed that violent conflict adversely impacted on wastage rates of boys in secondary schools. However, a number of the respondents, 61 (17.8%) students and 2 (13.3%) principals disagreed. Only 17 (5%) students and 2 (13.3) principals were undecided. Just like in the case of girls' wastage rates, the high level of agreement of the principals and students provide possible explanation for the high rates and increasing trend in grade wastage for boys in the secondary schools between the years 2005 and 2008. A Mann-Whitney U Test was carried out to determine whether there were any significant difference between the views of student respondents and principal respondents on the impact of violent conflict on wastage for both girls and boys. The results of the Mann-Whitney U test were 0.478 and 0.864 for views on impact girls and boys respectively. This implied that there was no significant differences between the views of student respondents and those for principals since the two *p-values* for views on girls and boys were greater than 0.05 (*p>0.05*). The findings therefore suggest that violent conflict adversely impacted on student wastage in the district. These findings reflected the ones given earlier by the DEO, BoGs, principals and PTA respondents during interview sessions who observed that the recent violent conflict adversely impacted on the secondary school students' wastage rates.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Violent conflict in Mt. Elgon District adversely impacted on secondary school student wastages. The study established that the district posted very high nature increasing trends of grade dropout rates, grade repeater rates, cohort wastage rates, and very low completer rates between the years 2005 and 2008. In particular, relatively more wastage occurred in the upper grades and among the girls than the boys. The impact was more severe in Kopsiro Division which posted extremely high wastage rates for both boys and girls. The findings were corroborated by responses of the DEO, PTA representatives and school principals who alluded to the fact that the recent violent conflict disrupted normal life, forced many families to flee their homes, separated children from their families, reduced schools to rubble and impoverished the populace. As such, survival pressures caused children to be removed from school and set to productive work, married off earlier than usual or just lay idle.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of the study.

1) There is need for more sensitization of the Mt. Elgon district community to enroll their children in secondary schools, especially the girl child.
2) There is need for the Government and other development partners to offer more sponsorship opportunities to students from families impoverished by violent conflict in the district who risk dropping out of school for lack of financial muscles to carter for hidden costs of 'free' education such as costs for uniforms, personal effects, books, meals and transport
3) There is need for the government and community leaders to resolve the land dispute in Mt. Elgon District once and for all so that stakeholders can initiate peace building and put in place sound conflict resolution mechanism.

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