

**EFFECT OF SCHOOL LEVIES ON LEARNER'S PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC  
ECDE CENTRES IN KISUMU WEST SUB-COUNTY KISUMU, KENYA**

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REQUIREMENT FOR THE AWARD OF DEGREE OF MASTER OF EDUCATION  
IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION OF MOUNT KENYA UNIVERSITY**

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# DECLARATION

## DECLARATION AND APPROVAL

### Declaration

This research project is my original work and has not been presented for any degree in any other university.

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### Approval

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## DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my family for their support and to Almighty God for providing the strength, wisdom, and ability throughout the research journey.



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The researcher acknowledges the contribution of various individuals who participated in one way or the other towards the production of the project. It may not be possible to mention all by name but the following deserves special mention.

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To all I say thank you and may the almighty God bless you.



## ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to establish the effect of school levies on learner's enrolment, retention and completion in public ECDE centers in Kisumu West Sub county Kisumu County Kenya. This study was to establish whether levies charged in ECDE centers affects either directly or indirectly learner's enrolment, retention and completion in the ECDE centers. The study was guided by the following objectives; to establish the school levies administered in public ECDE centers in Kisumu West sub-county, to find out how school levies affect learner's enrolment in public ECDE centers in Kisumu West sub-county, to find out how school levies influence learners retention and completion rate in public ECDE centers Kisumu West sub county, and finally to establish strategies that will help solve the effect of school levies in public ECDE centers in Kisumu West sub county. The study was guided by education theory of Plato, a Greek Philosopher and educationist. Survey was used as the main design. Conceptual frame work was used to demonstrate the relationship between the variables. The target population was 86 public ECDE centers in Kisumu West Sub county which has 86 ECDE managers, 86 head teachers, 5 ECDE supervisors and 174 ECDE teachers totaling to 351 respondents. 30% of the respondents was used to arrive at a sample population which constituted 26 ECDE centers, 26 ECDE managers, 26 head teachers 2 ECDE supervisors and 52 ECDE teachers totaling to 106 respondents through random sampling technique. Validity of the instrument was done through vetting of supervisors. Reliability was done using simple language and test- re test technique that is using 1% of the target population which included 1 ECDE manager, 1 head teacher and 2 ECDE teachers. Data was collected using questionnaires and interview schedule. Data analysis was done both qualitatively and quantitative. Qualitative data was analyzed by descriptive statistics (frequency, percentages and inferential statistics while qualitative data was analyzed through discussions, descriptions and explanations. The study found that public ECDE centers in Kisumu West Sub-County impose various fees, with limited financial support for low-income families, significantly reducing enrollment rates and contributing to high dropout rates. Strategies to mitigate these effects include reducing fees, government subsidies, and community support to improve accessibility, retention, and completion rates. The study concluded that School levies hinder enrollment, retention, and completion in Kisumu West ECDE centers; reducing fees and enhancing support can improve access. To enhance access and equity in early childhood education, local governments should implement transparent guidelines for school levies, provide financial support like subsidies for low-income families, and ensure clear communication about fee usage. Collaboration with communities and stakeholders is vital to build trust and enable all children to access quality education.

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

AIHO	-	African Institute for Health and Development
CBCCS	-	Community Based Child Care centers Services
CBO	-	Community Based Organization
DEO	-	District Education Officer
DICECE	-	District Centers for Early Childhood Education
ECD	-	Early Childhood Development
ECE	-	Early Childhood Education
ECEC	-	Early Childhood Education and Care
EFA	-	Education for All
ESSAPR	-	Education and Sport Sector Annual Performance Report
GDP	-	Growth and Development Policy
ICDS	-	Integrated Child Development Services
INGO	-	International Non-Governmental Organization
KESPRO	-	Kenya Special Projects Organization
KIE	-	Kenya Institute of Education
KMET	-	Kenya Medical Educational Training
LMIC	-	Lower and Middle income Countries
MBD	-	Millennium Based Organization
MCLR	-	Ministerial Committee on Learners retention
MDE	-	Millennium Development Education
MDGS	-	Millennium Development Goals
MEVT	-	Ministry of Education and Vocational Training
MOCDEC	-	Ministry of Community Development Gender and Children
MOE	-	Ministry of Education
MOPSE	-	Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education
MOSW	-	Ministry of Health and Social Welfare
NGO	-	Non Governmental Organization
NPA	-	National Policy Agency
OECD	-	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
PEDP	-	Primary Education Development Program

QUAS O	-	Quality Assurance and Standards Officer
SDG	-	Sustainable Development Goals
SSGF	-	Service Standard Guideline for Kenya
SSGF	-	Service Standard Guideline for Kenya
TECDEN	-	Tanzania Early Childhood Development Network
UNDP	-	United Nations Development Program
UNESCO	-	United Nation Education Support Organization
UNICEF	-	United Nations International Children Emergency Funding
UPE	-	Universal Primary Education
UPE	-	Universal Primary Education
ZALP	-	Zimbabwe Accelerated Learning Program me



Mount Kenya University

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.0 Introduction

This chapter presents a historical perspective on the assessment of school administrator's practices on management of student's discipline. The chapter examines the background of the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, objectives of the study, research question will be looked into, justification, significance of the study, scope of the study, limitations, delimitations, assumptions of the study as well as operational definition of terms.

### 1.1 Background to the Study

Early Childhood learning is a key factor in the welfare of a child. It is during these early years when the child develops curiosity and tries to make a sense of the world around him or her. Education of young children therefore has a great effect on a country's economy and the well being of its citizens. Education therefore is like a long journey. In a nut shell, investing in education is one of the ways through which the world can be improved. It is therefore worthwhile that all children have access to quality education so as to realize holistic development and to maximize their individual potential. This can be attained by ensuring that learners who enroll in ECD centers are retained and complete the learning process. This will call for parents and government involvement in supporting the learning process of young children, as reported by Encyclopedia on Early Childhood Development (2011) produced by Centre of excellence for Early Childhood in Montréal.

Plato an educationist in his theory of education quoted by (Sultan Muhammad, 2008), puts it clearly that education is like 'a key' for a society and stresses more on it. He goes to the extreme level and even removes children from the care of their parents and involves the state in caring for the children. According to him, he believes that the child belongs to the state and therefore its education is the state's responsibility. He demands that education must be compulsory for all children and State funds should be used to pay superintendents in charge of education.

Research conducted by Attanasio and Krutikova (2016) on the importance of investing in pre-school learning published in London school of Economics indicates that the importance of investing in ECDE is increasingly recognized by policy makers in both developed and developing world. This is also supported by Kamerman (2007) of Colombia University in USA on education policies which (Head Start) stipulated that ECEC in USA had expanded and have wide range of programs such as part-day, full school day which is conducted in different ways in private and public centers. According to the policy all children are required to access ECDE centers regardless of their economic background. In 2002, it is noted that 11.6 million children (63%) of the 18.5 million of children aged 5 were receiving care supported by the state in a regular basis (USA Census, 2005). Public preschools serve the children from families with low income while in private pre- schools parents pay fees.

More focus is put on the child than rather than providing support to the parents and again there is a law under the Early Childhood Education Act (2004) that offer comprehensive services that promotes equal opportunity to all children and to access high quality education. In a journal published by Palmer (2015) indicate that president Obama in his state address where he stated that most middle class parents cannot afford a few hundred bucks a week for private schools and for the poor children who need it most. The lack to access to a great preschool education can have impact of their entire lives and we will all pay a price for this indicated that the president concluded that early childhood education has tremendous impact on life outcomes of children yet 51% of 3 & 4 years old in the US are enrolled in full day care preprimary programs. This is an indicator that the state is fully concerned about enrolment, retention and completion of young children in ECDE centers.

According to the report on the implementation of ECE policies in Sweden (UN, 2005), Sweden has been ranked the best in the world. This is due to Swedish long standing policies of ensuring equity and quality Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC). ECDE has been given high priority and is considered to be one of the cornerstone of Swedish family policies. Also as reported by Nilson and Ferholt (2015) as they compare ECDE in Australia and Sweden, it is noted that Swedish EDUCARE Policy that considered a child as full human beings which uplift the rights of every child to receive the very best care, upbringing and education that the nation can provide to her children. This is also in line with the children Act 2001.

Due to the best policy, enrolment in ECDE centers has increased; that today 85% of Swedish children aged 1 to 6 years are in daycare and 95% of 3-6 years are in pre- school. Almost all (99%) Swedish children attend high quality leisure centers during non-school; this encourages retention since learners enjoy hour's pleasure activities. The childcare is provided through provision of different teaching learning activities of high quality to support and promote child's development and learning hence contribute to good condition for growth and development. Parents working especially mothers are empowered to pay levies to their children with ease. In terms of funding, Sweden has been ranked as one of the countries in the world that spend a lot of funds to support ECE of young children as indicated in the International Journal of Child Care and Education Policy (2015) in Sweden, the GDP allocation for ECEC is 14% compared to that in Britain that is only 0.4% that is used for the same purpose hence easing the burden of parents from paying levies to support the learning of their children thus promoting enrolment retention of learners in the centers. The Swedish policy is supported by Education theory of Plato which gives the state the responsibility of educating a child.

Research conducted by UNICEF (2010) in India on the progress of implementation of ECDE policies states that, the earliest years of a child's life are critical. It is during this time that children lays the foundation for his/ her learning ability and develop holistically, that is, they acquire psychomotor cognitive, emotional and social skills that help them succeed in life. The children should therefore be given proper attention through implementation of policies which impact positively to attendance, retention and completion of learning in ECDE centers up to higher level.

Census (2011) data collected in India indicated that out of 164.48 million children of 0-6 years of age only a small number have access to ECDE care services. Due to this a number of constitutional amendments were made to ensure quality preschool program to all children. The amendment made, introduced Article 21A which state that all children have the right to free and compulsory education that is 6-14 years old and it also urged the state to provide ECE to all children until age six. This was in line with Education Theory of Plato legal framework theory that stated that the state should take full responsibility to ensure quality education for all children.

Another policy that supported learner's enrolment was the children right to Free and Compulsory Education (Education Act, 2010) in India that guaranteed children their rights to quality elementary education that urged the state to offer quality and free pre- school education to children aged 3years and above. This led to the support of learner's enrolment by government and the National Childhood Care (ECCE) policy in 2013. The policy catered for all children under age 6 and was commitment to promote Universal access to quality early childhood education.

According to the study, in spite of the state considering the necessity of ECE, it was noted that still there were challenges in implementation. There was still significant dropout rate in the first two levels. Learning assessment also showed that literacy skills were very poor in early grades. This was a clear indication that when learners are enrolled in early childhood education centers and are not retained until completion, then it affects the learners learning ability in the successive years of higher learning. One of the major challenges that were noted to have affected enrolment was poor economic background. After the findings UNICEF came out with strategies that could help uplift ECE in India. The strategies were long term that could support Early Childhood Education for the years to come. They included the support to the unique ECE longitudinal study (2011-2016) which was aimed at generating Indian evidence and exploration of the sustained impact of quality programs in early primary grades, development of pictorial handbook on quality in ECCE to unpack quality standards. In 2014 UNICEF staff and government participated in a forum on investing in young children. This was to enhance opportunities and advocacy platform for increasing investment in ECCE. Lastly India county office also organized a meeting in South Asia that brought 6 countries to discuss ECD priorities' and programs that aimed at boosting ECD access in the region.

Zimbabwe as a developing country in the sub-Sahara also considers access to high quality education. A study conducted by Nhaka Foundation (2017) on the status of education and Early Childhood Development in Zimbabwe, revealed that relevant education for all children to be both a basic right and the foundation that underpins the cultural, social economic, and democratic growth of the nation. Education structure is 2-7-4-2 that is two years of early childhood education seven years of basic primary education and two years of senior secondary

schooling. By 2014, there has been no comprehensive ECD policy in Zimbabwe. Furthermore; the ECD sector is underfunded due to weak prevailing economic conditions. Most funds for education are allocated to salaries, leaving less than 30% for infrastructure and professional development. The ECD sector has about 427,800 learners taught by 4,000 teachers, with 5,800 more qualified teachers required (Nhaka, 2017). Only 21.6% of children age 36-59 months is attending an ECD program. This ratio is worrying. There is a need to build the capacity of educational officials to provide grounding in ECD philosophy, approaches, and methods; the ECD sector has inadequate age appropriate infrastructure and equipment.

The final Report by Ejuu (2015) on the status of implementation of the education sector, ECD, policy in Uganda indicate that Uganda being one of the developing country believe that one of the ways of eradicating inequality in the society is through use of Early Childhood Education programs which put children on equal footing prior to starting primary school regardless of their economic status. The notion is expressed in a number of international declarations and frameworks such as Millennium Development Goals (MDGS), Education for All (EFA) that supports the inclusion of ECD as priority area.

Uganda being one of the 155 nations that agreed on a joint plan on a conference in 1990 at Jomtien in Thailand believed on the attainment of EFA by 2015. Kyasanku of Makerere University Uganda (2017) on a study of the state of ECDE access in Uganda indicates that the education policy recognizes pre-primary as the first level of education in Uganda programs. Education Act (2008) however pronounces the management of pre-primary education under the management of the private sector which limits access of children since private school pays high levies.

According to National Policy (2015) Report, 91% of Ugandan children are not accessing pre-primary education. Over 80% of the population cannot afford the fees charged for preschool primary education. Apart from fees there is uneven distribution of ECDE centers in Uganda. This is brought about by prevailing economic, social geographical and cultural beliefs about CEDE. It was also noted that areas whose population earns a higher income tend to attract the ECDE. The assumption being that the parents and guardians will afford levies. This pattern of

setting up ECDE centers has eliminated majority of the rural children from benefiting from ECDE programs hence reduced enrolment.

According to ESSAPR (2015) the ECDE enrolment in Uganda stood at 433.258 yet there were over 8 million children aged 3-4 years ,hence for every100 children of preschool (3-5 years) only 9 were enrolled, 90.5% wait until they are age 6 years to join primary education. In comparison to other East African countries Uganda' enrolment is far behind. Kenya is 35.5% and Rwanda is 25%.

ECDE in Kenya serves as the critical purpose of preparing young children for primary education (Nyanga, 2009). One of the major goal of education is the attainment of Universal Primary Education (UPE).This was first articulated in sessional paper No.10 of 1965 of the African socialism in which the Kenya government committed her to eradicate ignorance, poverty and diseases. To accelerate the attainment of UPE, the government of Kenya declared free primary education in 1974. This was supposed to start from classes one to four excluding the early childhood education. Later the report of the national committee in educational objectives and policies named the Gachathi Report of 1976 which proposed the extension of FPE from classes 5-8 by 1978.

According to Children's Act 2001, all children have a right to education. This responsibility is placed on the Kenyan government and parents or guardians. Thus education is a human right that every child must enjoy and has to be protected by law. Ministry of education strategic plan 2006-2011 was developed within the context of a global competition quality education system which is responsive to the educational needs of Kenyans and the labor requirements of the economy. The underpinning values are inclusion, participation and relevance to Kenyan needs. The plan is in line with the Sessional Paper No.1 of 2005 which placed the government priority in increased access to educational opportunities at all levels, particularly basic education. The successful implementation of the plan is hinged on the assumption that key stakeholders, who include, parents, communities, CBOS, NGOS, development partners, and the government itself, will play their respective roles effectively.

The introduction of FPE that abolished free payment in primary education promoted access to primary education and led to the increase in gross enrolment that scored to over 100% (UNESCO, 2006). However this was short lived as it was affected by the cost sharing policy that was introduced as part of the structural adjustment program due to the decline in the Kenya economic growth by 1980. The cost sharing later hindered many children especially from poor households from accessing the basic education hence infringing on their fundamental rights.

In her commitment to achieve the universal primary education, the Kenyan government re-introduced free primary education so as to attain the education for all by 2015 as was outlined in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) formerly called Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which outlined the main objectives as equal opportunities for both girls in matters concerning education (MOE, 2003). This policy however impacted negatively on ECDE centers especially those serving poor children. This was because some parents deliberately refused to pay the required levies for their children and thus skipped ECDE learning to take their children directly to primary one, this was according to the study done by the UNESCO (2004). Though the Ministry of Education currently manages some aspect of ECDE like training of pre-school teachers and development of the ECDE curriculum the enactment of the new constitution of 2010 has made ECDE to be a devolved function of the county government. Thus teacher recruitment and remuneration is done by the county government this however differs from county to another thus bringing some discrepancies in the provision of the ECDE services in Kenya.

UNESCO (2005) documents that; in North Eastern part of Kenya there has been a sharp decrease in ECDE enrolments since the implementation of FPE that there is a serious concern about the “collapse” of ECDE services. Besides, due to their nature of life style, moving from one place to the other it is not easy to gather the children in one place. This hinders access to early childhood education. Despite the government effort to achieve her policies concerning education for young children, it has been observed that young children do not access Early Childhood Education due to the fact that most parents cannot afford to pay the school levies and remain with their children at home waiting to join class one which is free (Kisumu County Strategic Plan Report, 2013-2017). According to legal framework on ECDE, all children are supposed to have access to free and compulsory education as articulated in the 2010

Constitution. Again according to Homabay speaker Mr. Ochilo in a statement during county assembly annual meeting in Kisumu County (2016) commented that all counties should have a uniform policy that cut across both ECDE and primary education to avoid confusion since each county manages their ECDE hence calling for more allocation of funds to enhance services in the sector This has caused a great concern to the researcher to go find out the effect of school levies on learners enrolment retention and completion in public ECDE centers in Kisumu West sub county Kisumu County. So as to urge the government to come in to implement the ECDE Education Act 2017 hence meet the needs of Vision 2030.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

The first years act as a foundation for the total life of an individual (Mwangi & Glaudia, 2009). The experience of these years continues to influence the individual through his or her entire life (EFA, 1990) Therefore, it is a paramount duty of the caregivers to enhance and not to inhibit one's realization of holistic development through stimulation. During early years of life, there is rapid growth and development which would only be observed in adolescence; hence the critical need to provide proper care and educational support is necessary so as to realize this. As mentioned earlier in Gachathi Report, the government plan to and concern to waiver primary school levies was a good idea, that should have been initiated right from ECDE to ensure that all children get a solid foundation and preparation for later school life, this would ensure holistic development of the children as they all get the good foundation for a better start. This is also supported by legal framework on ECDE which requires all children to access basic education. ECDE managers need finances to help them manage the services offered at the centre that is paying salaries since the ECDE teachers employed by the government are not enough on ECDE. In Kisumu West Sub-County, where approximately 35% of the population lives below the poverty line (County Government of Kisumu, 2023), school levies remain a major obstacle to accessing education. As a result, enrollment rates have seen a decline, with reports showing a 10% annual decrease in learner enrollment at some public ECDE centres in the last five years (County Government of Kisumu, 2023). Moreover, retention rates are significantly impacted, with a growing number of learners dropping out before completing their early childhood education due to the burden of levies. For example, a recent survey of 50 ECDE centres in Kisumu West Sub-County indicated that 30% of children enrolled in ECDE programmes drop out at least once within the first two years, primarily due to inability to pay

the levies (County Government of Kisumu, 2023). The report also revealed that the main financiers of these are the parents, and the levies are not paid promptly forcing the centre managers to send these children home while other children who can afford to pay the levies remain in school. Others also skip the levels so as to avoid paying levies. It was also noted that from the attendance register absenteeism rate was high and frequent reduction on enrolment causing reduction on completion rate this compromising on the quality of education on the early years of the children. The report showed that levies are necessary to the centers but did not clearly showed effect of levies on enrolment retention and completion in the centres. Through enquiry from the department of ECDE Kisumu County Office, there is a policy yet to be implemented on ECDE (Inquiry by the Researcher, 2023). This has prompted the researcher to conduct a study on effect of school levies on learner's enrolment retention and completion in public ECD centers in Kisumu west sub-county Kisumu County.

### **1.3 Purpose of the study**

The purpose of the study was to establish how school levies affect learner's enrolment, retention and completion in public ECDE centers in Kisumu west sub county Kenya.

### **1.4 Objectives of the study**

The study was guided by the following objectives;

- i. To establish school levies administered in public ECDE centers in Kisumu west –sub-county, Kisumu County.
- ii. To find out how school levies affect learners' enrolment in public ECDE centers in Kisumu west Sub-County.
- iii. To find out how school levies influence learners' retention and completion rate in public ECDE centers in Kisumu West Sub County.
- iv. To establish strategies that will help solve the effect of school levies in public ECDE centers in Kisumu West Sub – county Kisumu County.

### **1.5 Research question**

- i. What kinds of levies are administered in public ECDE centers in Kisumu west sub-county?
- ii. How does school levies affect learner's enrolment in public ECDE centers in Kisumu west sub-county?
- iii. How does school levies influence learner's retention and completion rate in public ECDE centers in Kisumu West sub –county?
- iv. What strategies can be established to help solve the effect of school levies in public ECDE centers in Kisumu West sub –county?

### **1.6 Significance of the study**

Just as Plato view education of young children as a key to the society, it is also the concern of the researcher that the research would have great benefit to the society, teachers, parents and policy makers. The findings would propose possible and suitable measures of providing uniform quality ECDE learning to all children irrespective of their economic status.

The government of Kenya/County government would realize the fact that the Universal and compulsory primary education which now has been extended by the government to secondary school (Star News Letter Dec 15, 2017) would never be advanced unless there is equality learning rights from ECDE centers. Every child would gain access to quality education foundation right from ECDE despite their background. Teachers both at ECDE and lower primary would interact with the learners fully right from ECDE to ensure the realization of quality education.

### **1.7 Justification of the study**

A report on Early Childhood Education Development in Arid and Semi Arid areas by UNESCO (2005), indicate that payment of school levies has been a thorny issue in the education system of Kenya. The government option of waiving fees in primary schools and now extended to secondary level is an idea that is welcomed, however ECDE as part of the basic education has not been considered fully and the parents are urged to come in to pay fee

for their children (Education Newspaper August 17, 2017) thus the study sought to clearly establish the effect of levies on learners enrolment retention and completion in public ECDE centers in Kisumu West.

### **1.8 Scope of the study**

The study on effect of school levies on learners' enrolment retention and completion was conducted in Kisumu west Sub County, Kenya. The sub county has a total of five zones with 86 public ECDE centers. Geographically the sub county is located in the western part of Kisumu city. The major part of the sub county is situated along the shore of Lake Victoria demarcating the southern part of Kisumu. The inhabitant are mainly Luos, though there are others language groups pull- pushed by socio economic factors. The economic activities ranges from fishing, subsistence farming, sand harvesting, making improved 'jikos' 'bodaboda' and small scale business.

The sub county has fairly good road network with the tarmacked road Kisumu-Bondo transversing through Kisian junction up to Paw-Akuche and also Kisumu-Busia road transversing through Kisian up to Maseno and lastly Kiboswa-Darajambili road transversing through Darajambili up to Maseno. The sub county is approximately 212.90 km<sup>2</sup>. The researcher targeted public ECDE centers in the sub county since they are attached to public primary schools (Service Standard Guideline For Kenya (SSGF-2006) thus helped the researcher to have direct link on the enrolment of ECDE and primary school, head teachers and teachers who were included in the sample since they have records for school enrolment. The researcher chose the area because being a teacher in the Sub County is quite familiar with the location of the ECDE centers. Also, the researcher was well conversant with the language (dholuo) and the official language (English and Kiswahili).

### **1.9 Study limitations**

Factors that might hinder the successful flow of and completion of the study are;

- i. Data for the study is collected through surveys and interviews with ECDE managers, headteachers, and teachers. These responses may be subject to social desirability bias, where respondents may underreport or overreport certain aspects of their experiences,

especially regarding financial constraints and the impact of school levies on learners. This bias could affect the accuracy of the findings.

- ii. Non-response was a challenge, as some of the targeted respondents, including ECDE managers, headteachers, and teachers, were unavailable or unwilling to participate, leading to incomplete data and potential bias in the sample, which affected the generalizability of the results. Moreover, the busy schedules of educational professionals limited their ability to allocate sufficient time for surveys or interviews, causing delays and incomplete responses.
- iii. Some participants were reluctant to disclose sensitive information regarding school levies and their impact on learner participation, citing concerns about confidentiality or fear of repercussions. This reluctance resulted in underreporting or biased responses. These limitations impacted the reliability and depth of the study's findings, despite efforts to ensure confidentiality and encourage participation.

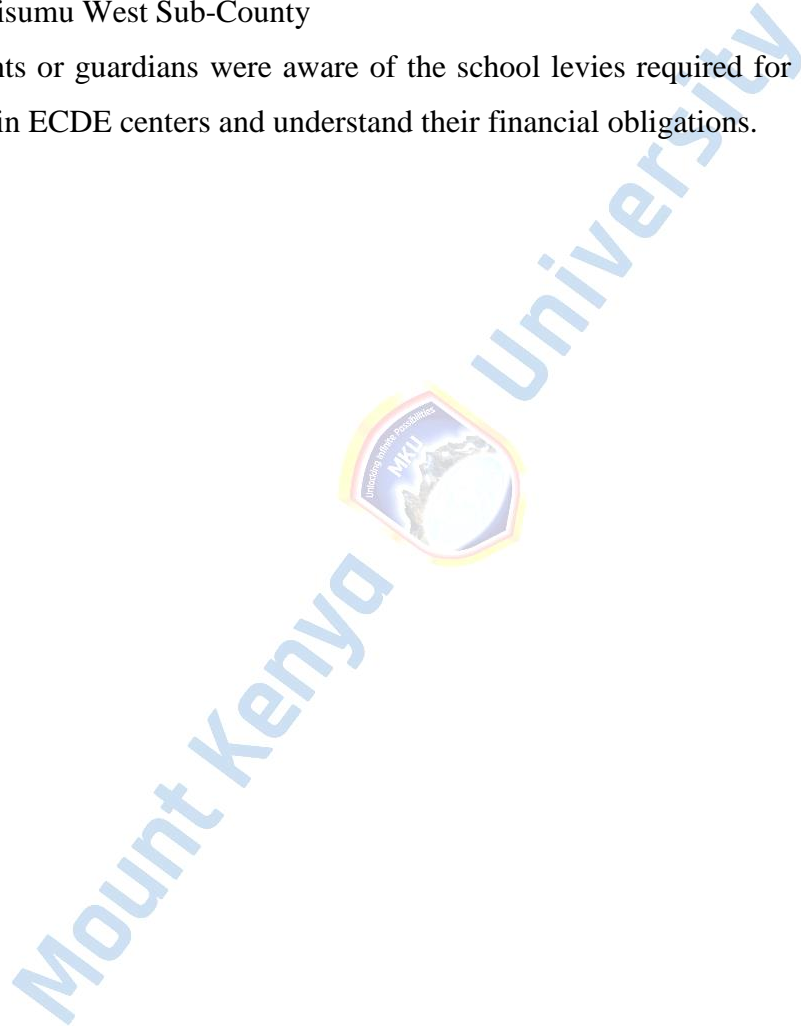
### **1.10 Delimitations of the Study**

The delimitations of this study were carefully set to establish clear boundaries regarding the scope of the investigation. The study focused exclusively on public ECDE centres within Kisumu West Sub-County, thus excluding private ECDE centres or centres in other parts of Kisumu County or beyond. The study targeted a specific population consisting of ECDE managers, headteachers, and teachers in these centres, excluding other educational staff or stakeholders such as parents, learners, or government officials. Learner participation was defined by enrollment, retention, and completion rates only, and other factors influencing participation, such as household income, parental involvement, and broader community support, were not included in the investigation. The research was also constrained by a cross-sectional design, meaning it focused on data collected at one point in time, without considering long-term changes or effects over multiple years. The study also did not explore the influence of other school-related fees or the broader economic policies affecting the education sector. Lastly, the sample size was limited to a small proportion of the total number of ECDE centres in Kisumu West Sub-County, which restricts the ability to generalize findings to a larger population. These boundaries were set to maintain focus on the specific impact of school levies on learner participation in the targeted geographical area.

### **1.11 Assumptions of the study**

In the study the researcher assumed that:

- i. The selected sample was representative of the target population of the study
- ii. The study respondents gave honest and accurate information during data collection
- iii. School levies had a similar impact on learner participation across various ECDE centers within Kisumu West Sub-County
- iv. All parents or guardians were aware of the school levies required for enrolling their children in ECDE centers and understand their financial obligations.



## 1.12 Operational Definition of Key terms

**Access** - Refers to learners who are able to successfully go through the Course

**Learning** - The process of acquiring desirable language, skills and positive attitudes.

**Completion** - The state of going successfully through a program up to destined end

**Retention** - The process of ensuring that learners who are enrolled in ECD centers attend all the learning sessions at all levels

**Adjusted Ratio:** A modified ratio that considers specific conditions to give a more accurate measure, like adjusting attendance rates to reflect certain age groups or socio-economic factors.

**Net Attendance Ratio (NAR):** The percentage of children of the correct age for early childhood education who are actually attending an ECDE program.

**Adjusted Net Attendance Ratio (ANAR):** Similar to the NAR but includes some children slightly older or younger than the official ECDE age, giving a broader view of attendance.

**Anchored in Primary Schools:** ECDE centers that are located within or managed by primary schools, sharing resources and helping children transition to primary education.

**Stand-alone Public ECDE:** ECDE centers that are separate from primary schools and have their own facilities and management, focusing only on early childhood education.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 Introduction

It is an in-depth review and analysis of literature done by other credited authors, researchers and publishers. This is obtained from materials like journals, books, sessional papers magazines, reports; encyclopedia and internet. The review is done in line with research objectives,

#### 2.2. School levies administered in public ECD centers

School levies are funds collected by learning institutions to help them run the day-to-day activities of the centres. A study conducted by Alabi and Waiya (2003) to establish funding strategies and the way forward in Nigeria indicated that funding is very crucial in achieving success in any public service.

In developed countries, the funding of pre-school education is given a prime place in the nation's budget as compared to developing countries. A document of the world Bank (2008) posted by Rebekka Grun, on financing early childhood development internationally indicated that there are a variety of options to finance Early Childhood Development (ECD) and nearly every country has designed their own ways to tackle the issue. Financing model differs depending on the demand and according to the role which public, private and voluntary sector partners play in financing the programs. The study reported captured five developed countries which are USA, France Sweden, England and New Zealand focusing on provision of pre-school for the 3-6 years old.

The report showed that the countries had different funding models and categorized them in Sweden the central government is involved in providing quality child care through EDUCARE policy. In France the Central public, the central government supplies child-directly by building and hiring staff while in Germany the government supply childcare by paying municipalities. Also in USA Public incentive based do financing. In this model, the central government pays providers for childcare, in block or by child. The reimbursement rates are tiered by the quality

achievement of the kindergarten, e.g. kindergarten achieves a higher national accreditation. This again different in England where there is mixed model and market making. The government stays out of ECD provision as far as possible and lets parents and NGO finance most of it, however, it provides supplementary services e.g. a bridge the information asymmetry, and to match open places with parents and lastly in NewZealand there is demand side public subsidy, that is private provision. The government gives generous means tested subsidies to parents (as voucher or entitles so they can pay private provider to be profitable.

The finding of the study was that the parents take the centre stage in ensuring high quality child care. They are also free to choose between the Centers and the funding rates. The study recommended that all the funding providers should know more about childcare so as to ensure uniform quality childcare everywhere. Though the study captured developed countries on how they fund ECDE activities, but it did not show how the research was conducted and the impact of financing on enrolment retention and completion. The researcher will try to show the instruments used clearly and establish funds administered in public ECDE centres.

Research conducted by Aga Khan Foundation (AKF) published by press centre publications and up dated in (2012) in Bihar, India that focuses on providing quality education to children from marginalized and disadvantaged communities. The research indicated that early childhood years are critical for physical, social, emotional cognitive and language development. The findings were that it is often difficult and a challenge for children from marginalized and disadvantaged communities to access quality early childhood programs due to lack of funds. They recommended that the government should come in to fund the ECD centers and other stakeholders to be in charge. The research did not show the in depth of the study by not establishing the methodology used in the study. It only focused on providing quality education but failed to indicate how to achieve the quality education. The researcher will try to establish the levies administered in public ECDE centres and importance of financing ECDE activities and outcome using clear methodology to arrive at the findings.

Another research conducted by Mvula and Zilo (2014) to establish how Community Based Childcare Centers (CBCCS) which are owned and managed by community members function in Malawi using data bases kept by the district social welfare officials from all the 28 districts in Malawi. The study used questionnaires to collect data from the head of the CBCC and care

giver and the activities that actually happened. Data collected was analyzed using a statistical package for social sciences.

From the study, the findings was that the communities provided structures supported care givers in terms of salary payment and buying resources to help implement learning activities in ECDE centers. It was concluded that despite the fact that most CBCC premises and structures fell short of the standard laid down by the CBCC profile, the activities and services provided were mostly geared towards holistic development of the child. The study recommended that the government of Malawi should face investment in ECD programmers as a priority the study did not show how the two teams compared their findings to arrive at their conclusion this could cause the findings to be in accurate. The researcher will ensure that the data collected will be tested to establish validity and self-administration of tools to ensure accuracy. Again the study focused on CBCC, the researcher will base the study on levies administered in public ECDE centres.

Research conducted by Wangila (2017) on the challenges facing the implementation of early childhood education policy in Bungoma County, Kenya. Using a mixed research design with targeted population of a QUAZ and 27 non-teaching staff in respective ECDE centers selected using simple random sampling stratified and purposive sampling. Data that was collected using questionnaires and analyzed using descriptive statistics identified a number of challenges that face the implementation of ECDE policies. They included; inadequacy of teaching and learning resources, financial constraints, and lack of government good will, poor training of ECDE teachers, insecurity high population teacher ratio, poor teacher remunerations and the introduction of FPE. The study recommended that the counties and central government should fund ECDE. The central government should hire ECDE teachers on permanent and pen sable terms. QUAS's should be facilitated to cover vast areas with ease and increase the number of visits to the ECDE Centers. The research done by Wangila was based on challenges facing the implementation of ECDE policy in Bungoma county and it was general. The researcher did not specify whether the challenges affect only public ECDE centres private or both. In this research the researcher will be specific on Public ECDE centres and try to establish the school levies administered in the centres in Kisumu west Sub-County.

Another research on financing ECD centers was conducted by Sitati, Buta and Diragu (2014) of Masinde Muliro University in Kakamega County. The focus was to investigate financing mechanism in early childhood Centers. Using descriptive survey design and a target population of 30% of ECE Centers, head teachers and ECDE teachers from each centre, the DEO and DICECE officers, it was found that parents were the main financiers of ECE programs. Hence making access to ECDE centre difficult since most parents could not pay the levies promptly. The study recommended that ECE should be streamlined within the policy of free primary education. Sitati and the group focused on the financial mechanism in ECDE centers in Kakamega Again they did not specify whether the financial mechanism was in private or Public ECDE centre this could make the findings not to be accurate. The searcher will focus on levies administered in public ECDE centers in Kisumu West Sub County so as to come up with a clear finding.

Apart from Bunguma and Kakamega, another study was conducted by Mukiti (2016) focusing the institutional factors influencing the implementation of ECD programs in public ECDE Centers in Matunguli sub-county, Kenya. The study adopted the descriptive research design with a sample population of 27 head teachers, 53 ECDE teachers and 4 QASOs. Questionnaires were used for data collection that was analyzed by use of descriptive statistics. From the study it was found that institutional based such as provision of physical facilities, teaching resources, teacher characteristics and supervision affected the implementation of ECDE programs. In order to implement the ECDE programs there must be funds administered in the centre to help facilitate the programs. Without proper policies regarding funding, then ECDE programs will be of low quality hence affecting holistic development of the child. The study recommended that a further study be done to investigate the home factors that influence the implementation of ECD programs. The study only focused on institutional factors influencing the implementation of ECDE programs in public ECDE centers in Matunguli and also mentioned that there must be funds administered in the centers to help facilitate the programs but did not try to find out the funds administered in public ECDE centers. This is what the researcher will try to find out in Kisumu west sub county Kisumu Kenya.

Nafungo (2015) in Kibera slums, Nairobi also focused on factors influencing the implementation of quality ECD program in Kenya informal settlement. The findings revealed

that poverty contributed to low implementation of many ECDE programs in low income communities in Kenya. The recommendation of the study was that the government should collaborate with the stakeholders care for poor parents to empower them and provide funds to help implement ECDE programs. Just like Mukiti, Nafugo also focused on the factors influencing the implementation of ECDE programs in Kibera slums and also mentioned that the government should collaborate with stakeholders to provide funds .This is what the researcher will try to find out, the funds established in public ECDE centres in Kisumu west sub county and discuss the impact of these funds in the centres.

In Kisumu central sub-county, Kisumu, Onyango (2015) also narrowed down to school factors influencing the implementation of ECD curriculum. The study was conducted using descriptive survey design. The sample size of the study comprised of 19 ECDE centers, 19 head teachers, 57 ECDE teachers, 190 ECDE learners and 4 DICECE officers. Qualitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistical analysis techniques as well as inferential statistics such as Pearson correlation. The findings disclosed several factors that affected proper implementation of ECDE curriculum in ECDE Centers. They included lack of essential teaching and learning materials such as ECDE syllabus, and teachers guide books, writing slates, charts, maps and pictures. The study recommended that the school administration, the government and parents should come in to examine various ways of ensuring provision of appropriate learning materials for ECDE centers in the sub-county, the parents also to develop positive attitude towards education and extend the same to the children so as to promote their school attendance.

From the study conducted in various parts of the world, there is a clear indication that implementation of ECDE programs has been a thorny issue in both developed and developing countries. In all cases, the government is called upon to implement policies that support funding of ECDE programs. This is in line with the education theory of Plato as stated earlier that, a child belongs to the state and therefore the state should be fully responsible for the development and learning of the children to ensure a “healthy society”. Though several studies have been done in several parts of the world on funding of ECDE centers or levies administered in ECDE centers, no such study has been done in Kisumu West sub-county Kisumu. That is

what called the researchers attention to conduct a study on the levies administered in ECDE centers in Kisumu west Sub County.

### **2.3 School levies on learners enrolment to the centers.**

According to journal published by Kille (2015) on the status of daycare and early childhood education in USA where pre-school were randomly assigned to an education program or a control group. The study found out that children enrolled in pre-school and complete the learning has long lasting benefits on academic performance, career development and health outcomes. From the same study it was found that funding promotes quality learning in pre-school programs. In the controlled group, there was a reduction on enrolment. It was concluded that funding pre-school programs led to expanded access. The study recommended that the state should budget and prioritize early learning program. The study was not clear on the methodology used to arrive to the findings. Again it is not clear whether the study was conducted in public or private centres. This could compromise the accuracy of the findings. The study also did not show clearly effect of levies/funds on learner's enrolment. The researcher will be clear on the methodology and focus the study on public ECDE centres in Kisumu west sub county and establish the effect of levies on enrolment.

Canada just like other developed countries is still trying to implement early childhood education policies to enable the young children have quality care and education. According to Mahon (2015) of comparative family and social policy Base line School of international affairs and the faculty of social work reported that Canada's early childhood education and care policy still a laggard. The system has fared poorly in recent international comparisons. The report further indicated that implementation of ECD policies to promote access to Early Childhood Centers is still in its initial stages. Childcare and education are treated separately and coverage is low compared to the OECD countries. The study report recommended that funding should be done to the Centers to encourage high enrolment to promote development and learning of young children and also to help parents find a space of childcare and reduce high parent's fees to increase access. This study did not establish what made the learning to large behind. The researcher will use a proper methodology to establish the influence of school levies on learners enrolment in public ECDE centres in Kisumu west sub county.

A case study conducted in Nepal by evaluation team from UNICEF (2010) funded by Netherlands on how to promote access to Early childhood Development Education and increasing enrolment and performance indicated that as early as the 1990s, National and International Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs and INGOs), Nepal had been working to expand access to ECDE activities and services as a key strategy for improving primary school retention and performance. The evaluation team conducted a study in eight days in country. Data collection, including field visits to locations where ECD is implemented. Primary data sources included Key informant interview with UNICEF country office staff, officials from the staff key UNICEF partner organizations focus group discussions with parents, ECD facilitators, local ECD stakeholders and district and local government officials and observation of ECD centers. The team employed two main qualitative evaluation methods in analyzing case study data. According to the study, Nepal is ranked among the poorest countries in the world with a Human Development Index rating of 144 out of 182 countries (United Nations Development Program, 2009). Nearly 20% of population is under age 6 and half of these children fall within the age range of 2-6 years (UNESCO, 2008). The primary school net enrolment rate is 94%, however only 78% of children who start grade one will continue in school to reach grade 5 (MDE, 2009).

A comprehensive research report on early childhood development on challenges facing he childhood development reported by principle researcher Atmore (2012) in South Africa spelled out that majority of young children in South Africa has been negatively impacted by arrange of social and economic inequalities, apartheid and the resultant socio economic inequalities have created a childhood of a varsity for most African children including inadequate access to Centers hence undermining the development of young children. The goal of the report was to clearly describe the ECD sector enrolment rate and funding. The report used varied methodologies that included; desktop study of recent critical ECD documents, inputs from ECD stakeholders in South Africa and synthesis of credible relevant South African Studies and credible research papers. The information collected was analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively. Just like other countries in the world, South Africa also considered the rights of all children to quality education that will give the children a foundation for lifelong learning and economic opportunities. The report showed that South Africa had a high rate of school enrolment with 97% of 11.4 million of school going age children in grade 1-12 at an

educational facility (Statistic South Africa 2010). The report also revealed that in 2011, 67% of 5 years older were enrolled in grade R (5-6 years). This occurred due to government revised goal of universal access to grade R by 2014.

Another study was conducted by Dzombo (2015) on factors affecting the enrolment of primary school pupils in the era of free primary school in Kilifi County. The case study focused on looking at the factors that affect and influence enrolment, attendance and retention and sorted to answer questions such as, what is the enrolment trends, retention and attendance in Kilifi County. The study took a survey approach guided by Human capital theory and Robert Merton's goal means gap theory that targeted all school aged children who are in school and those not in schools the teachers in the school parents and education officials. Data that was collected from key informants guides; structured interview established that even with the introduction of free primary education, the schools were still charging levies that the parents were unable to pay due to poverty in the area. Other factors were truancy, deviancy, lack of knowledge on importance of education and lack of monitoring. It was concluded that parents were not involved in the implementation of FPE and the community had not internalized the importance of education. The study recommended that the levies charged should be looked at and parents be sensitized on the importance of education. Though the study is relevant to the current study but it touches only primary education. It has left ECDE which according to legal framework theory is also part of basic education that should be free. This is what has attracted the researcher to conduct another study on the effect of school levies on enrolment in public ECDE in Kisumu west sub county Kisumu.

A study conducted by Katwii (2016) on how parental characteristics influence the enrolment of pre-school children in Mwingi zone, Mwingi sub-county, Kitui county that targeted parents as the respondents that caused a lot of resistance since the parents were also the school leaders who formulate policies, head teachers and pre-school teachers. The study used a descriptive survey and used interview guides to collect data that was analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively using tables. The study found out that the level of children enrolling for pre-school education was low due to factors such as parental income, education level, and size of the family and marital status of the parents. The study recommended that the importance of pre-school education and the county government to increase financial support to ECD centers

and practice family planning. In this study Katwii, only based the argument on how parental behaviour influence enrolment .This could give in accurate result since some parents may not expose their weaknesses as the study reports that using parents as respondent was a challenge since the parents were also the school leaders who formulate policies .So to avoid the disappointment the researcher experienced the study will only look at the effect of levies on learners enrolment to public ECDE centres in Kisumu west sub county

A study conducted in Langata, Embakasi Constituencies in Nairobi County, Muranga and Nyeri counties, Kisumu and Siaya, Bungoma and Kakamega between 2011-2012 where the respondents who were residents of the selected counties aged 18 years and above, visitors and domestic workers were asked if they had children attending school, at the time of the survey. The finding was that enrolment and attendance of learners in public primary school was high in Langata (86%) followed by Bungoma (80.6%), Kisumu (80.2%), Siaya (75.9%) and Embakasi (68.75%), Muranga (68.5%). The study also showed that there was more established investment in private education infrastructure in the urban areas than the rural areas. The report also showed that the low enrolment experienced in some countries was contributed by levies that are paid to the institution despite government involvement to support free primary education. Although the study conducted gave an overview of enrolment trend at all levels that is from pre-school to secondary levels, the findings showed that levies paid in the public learning institution affected enrolment, This study left out key stakeholders that is the teachers and education officers who have enrolment of learners. The other stakeholders may have not given accurate information since most parents do not like exposing their weaknesses just as experienced by Katwi (2016) in Kitui. Again it doesn't have clear methodology that is how the data was collected and analyzed so as to arrive at the findings. This has called the researchers attention to conduct another study on the effect of levies on learners enrolment in public ECDE centres in Kisumu west Sub County. The study will include all the key stakeholders of ECDE and employ the best methodology to come up with accurate result.

#### **2.4 Influence of School Levies on Learners Participation in public ECDE centers**

A journal published by Smith (2014) on children's issues in New Zealand indicates that it is important to understand the genetic and environmental factors that can influence school

success, right from conception. The journal also establish programs and best practices that impact pre-school performance as this foster school completion and high academic achievement outcomes. According to smith PhD ECE contributes to achievement of educational potential, therefore all children should have the opportunity to participate, parents encouraged to access programs for their children and government should also invest highly in high quality ECE programs to ensure high completion rate. This sentiment is supported by theory of education by Pilate who believed that successful education of young children should be achieved on government support since a child belongs to the state.

Children success remains the main focus in all countries globally. Research studies reviewed by Barnett (2014) in US focusing on the outcomes of ECE for children in poverty, using experiments and quasi experiments revealed that grade retention and special education rates were lower for ECE intervention groups. The study showed that children in ECE programs who went through successfully were able to graduate from high school. This is an indicator that children who enroll in ECDE centers and complete their learning process successfully are high achievers as compared to these who dropped out. It is therefore necessary to ensure retention and completion rate of learners as this determine completion rate of learners and this determine their future life. The study revealed that the dropout was caused by low income earnings by the parents. It was recommended that the government should provide enough funds to facilitate ECDE programs, formulate policies that encourage wide spread participation in ECE by children from diverse background to ensure accessibility and affordability and recognize good ECE centres for their children.

Another study by high scope Perry pre-school audited latest (2017) in USA on the influence of high quality pre-school programs leads to high completion rate that determines the future outcomes of the child. The children were divided into a program group which received support of high quality pre-school program and those controlled The status of the two groups were assessed annually from ages 3 to 11 and at ages 14, 15, 19 and 27 and most recently at age 40. The findings indicated that children who received high levels of completion rate are higher achievers in later life. This outcome shows that funding of ECDE activities enhance retention

and completion hence success in life. High quality learning cannot be offered without proper funding therefore levies have a direct influence on retention and completion.

A study conducted by United Nations (2012) in Zimbabwe on millennium development progress, reported that in 2009, completion rates of early childhood education rates were 82.4%. This was realized as a result of improved economic situation that enabled children to stay in school. The rate of female (85%) rose to beyond that of educating the girls. The report revealed that completion rate was higher in urban centers (88.5%) than rural areas (80.4%) this disparity could be as a result of low income earnings in rural areas that most parents could not afford school levies. The report concluded that the increased completion was realized as a result of meeting the MOG target of 100% completion rate by 2015. The study did not show how economic ability influenced completion. This study will establish the influence of school levies on learners retention and completion in public ECDE centres.

In another study conducted by Namukwaya (2014) to investigate factors affecting primary school enrollment and retention of pupils in Kotido District Uganda was another evident that enrolment and retention of learners in learning institution is an issue that need to be addressed .The study investigated factors that affect enrolment and retention of pupils from primary one until primary seven, a total of 177 respondents were used where 108 (61%) were male while 69(39%) were female. Face to face interviews and focus group discussions were used to collect data. The result of the study showed that pastoral lifestyle, strong cultural values, negative attitude towards education and engagement in domestic work and social economic characteristics affected learners retention. Though the study did not attempt to analyses poverty or financial status of the parents since it was assumed that FPE is free it was noted or observed that most parents could not afford to buy for their children uniform and meet other additional cost in school .

Kago (2012) conducted a study on a school levies and their effects on access and retention since the introduction of subsidized secondary education in Nyandarua north District. He sought to establish how school levies charged in secondary school affected access and retention with the subsidized secondary education policy. Using a description survey as a

design targeting 24 secondary principals and 168 class teachers, the researcher collected data using questionnaire the study reveals that MOE fees guidelines felt short of addressing financial needs of secondary schools in Nyandarua District. Education cost was still high despite the government subsidy of Kshs 10265. There were variety of levies paid and this caused absenteeism and dropouts as the learners were sent to go look for the levies. The most affected were those coming from poor households.

A recent study done in Nyando sub county Kisumu county Kenya by Okewa (2017) was to establish the relationship between recruitment, training, remuneration, working conditions and performance of ECDE teachers in public ECDE centers. The study employed purposive sampling to select 21 heads of ECDE center, 21 ECDE teachers. Descriptive survey design was used and primary data obtained using questionnaire, observation schedules and interview guide. The findings were recruitment, training, remuneration attendance, and punctualities had impact on performance of teachers of ECDE centers. The study might not have a direct impact on retention and completion of learners in ECDE centers but on the other hand it could impact on enrolment retention and completion indirectly. That is to say, a teacher who is properly motivated through training and remunerated well will be attending his or her lessons and always be punctual on duty hence provides quality preschool learning. Learners will be motivated to attend school when their teachers have regular attendance since there is surety of learning hence promoting retention and completion.

From the studies conducted in most of areas both internationally and locally, the researcher realized that no studies has been conducted in Kisumu west sub-county on the influence of school levies on learners retention and completion in public ECDE centers. Most studies done only touches on other factors on retention and completion of public ECDE centers. Therefore the researcher felt it is necessary to conduct a study on the influence of school levies on retention and completion in public ECDE centers.

## **2.5 Strategies that will help solve the effect of school levies in public ECDE centers**

A strategy is a method or plan chosen to bring about a desired future such as achievement of a goal or solution to a problem. The importance of investing in children's pre-school years for their later life is increasingly being considered by policy makers around the world. A growing

number of Lower and Middle Income Countries (LMIC) are planning or implementing early childhood policies (Orazio, Sarah & Sonya, 2016). The recent rapid expansion of primary education across the development world has shown that a focus on increasing access can bring many more children to school, but it will have disappointing effects on their attainment if it is not accompanied by sufficient investment to sustain quality. According to Sayne et al, (2013) indicate that despite all the evidence on the benefits of ECD, no country in the developing world can boast of comprehensive programs that reach all children. Most programs catering for children are operated at small scale and usually through external donors or NGOs, but this too remain limited. A good example being the recent study by UNICEF (2013) supported by would bank in Canada found that the World Bank made only 2.1 billion of investments in ECD in the last 10 years equivalent to just a little over 3 percent of the overall portfolio of the human development network which totals some and 60 billion.

Another strategy that was laid was the early childhood education act that offered comprehensive service to ensure that all children have access to high quality in education. The greatest focus was put on early childhood education after president Obama presidential speech on improving early childhood systems (2015), the president emphasized on affordable ECDE programs. He proposed a fiscal year budget 2016 to support improve access to ECEC services. This was also to ensure increased duration of and funding for head start programs, supports. Universal preschool laid the ground work for preschool for all. Kagan (2015) the step made by president Obama made a boast to early childhood education in different states in US. This is in line with the theory of education of Plato a philosopher who believed that a child belong to the state and therefore the state should take full responsibility to ensure holistic development.

According to Nilsson and Ferholt (2015) in their cooperation of ECDE activities in Sweden and Australia noticed that Sweden had the best policies that elevated children's right to high quality education and care as stipulated in the Children's Act 2001. This was realized in Sweden as a result of laid strategies that encouraged access to ECDE services. The same sentiment encored in a publication by Nilsson, Ferholt and Alnerrik (2015) on why Swedish early learning is so much better than Australia. A very good strategy that puts Swedish a head of other countries is that the government combines education and care (Educare) meaning that

the state is responsible for the development of the child from birth and through the succeeding years of development.

Another boost to ECD centers was in 2014 when UNICEF staff and government of India participated in a forum on investing in young children, the forum was to ensure or enhance opportunities and advocacy platform for increasing investment to young children. Zimbabwe as a developing county also has had challenges in supporting early childhood education as reported by Nhaka (2017) only 21.6% of children aged 36-59 months are attending an ECD program. According to the report the ratio is 'worrying'. This made the government to put some measures in place to promote preschool programs.

A case study conducted by UNICEF (2015) states that different schools due to a number of challenges facing the country, Zimbabwe's education system once considered a model for other African countries, had been steadily declining over the last decades therefore there was a need for the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MOPSE) to strengthen support to those learners with greatest need to initiate 'catch-up' and second chance education programmers. The cause of decline in education was identified as widespread poverty economic crisis, limited financing of education sector, school fees and levies that parents and guardians struggle to afford. These had brought a significant barriers both to enrolment and to regular school attendance for this matter, the government realized that if nothing is done on the decline in education, enrolment and retention will be affected therefore the country is at risk of not achieving the goal of Education For All (EFA) or meeting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGS), which targets Universal Primary Education (UPE) by 2015. Zimbabwe Accelerated Learning Program (ZALP) was formed to help the government curb the problem by ensuring that all children remain in school.

Zimbabwe government to increase access and solve the issues of levies integrated of ECD into education system to enable the government to support education of learners to primary level (Whaka Foundation, 2017). As mentioned earlier on UNICEF activities in Zambia (2011-2015) on Early Childhood Development Standards it was indicated that the concept of ECD centers was still relatively new in Zambia and a such limited importance was given to sending children to the centers. The government of Zambia developed strategies to help improve ECD

access. The strategies included; development of ECD policies, early learning and development standard and curriculum and assessment frameworks, building systems and institutional capacity to support the coordination mandate of ECD within the Ministry of Education, and supporting the establishment of community-base ECD sites for the most vulnerable learners.

Again in Rwanda, UNICEF annual report 2015 indicated that Rwanda had made significant achievements in the areas of human development and one of the countries to have achieved all the millennium development Goals. The survey showed that the country had successfully narrowed equity gaps in a number of key essential services for the most vulnerable that includes early childhood development and education. This achievement was realized as a result of the government working together with UNICEF to lay strategies in 2015 including ECD. UNICEF Rwanda supported the delivery of ECD services through the temporary spaces and the distribution of ECD kits: What motivated the government to join hand with UNICEF was the preschool costing study indicated that fees present the most significant barrier to increase access; this led to increased budget and advocacy to increased investment in pre-primary education.

There was also another UNICEF activity realized in Tanzania, that is 2011 evaluation of UNICEF's early childhood development program with focus on government of Netherland funding (2008-2010). A case study report carried out in selected districts in Tanzania indicated that Tanzania was one of the poorest countries in the world; 89 percent of the population lives on less than 1.25 dollars a day. Poverty is heavily concentrated in rural areas affecting early childhood development activities. This made UNICEF to come in to work together with the Ministry of Community Development Gender and Children (MOCDEC), Ministry of Education and Vocational Training (MEVT) and Ministry of Health and Social Welfare (MOSW) and with the Tanzania Early Childhood Development Network (TECDEW) to advocate for and provide financial and technical support in the development of policies and plans for ECD services. A boost to ECD was the advocacy for the inclusion of ECD in the Primary Education Development Program me (PEDP).The case study analyzed ECD in Tanzania by focusing the core set of UNICEF, government and partners activities, prioritize investment of the government funds. The study concluded that the role of government funding is essential in strengthening and catalyzing new and ongoing ECD activities. The evaluation

team conducted nine days of in country data collection including field visits, interviews with the members of the UNICEF co staff .This was to ensure that set of ECD activities that received support from the government funding is implemented .These strategy promoted access to ECD in Tanzania.

As reported earlier by Ejuu (2015) on the status of implementation of education sector ECD, policy in Uganda states that one of the ways of eradicating poverty and in equality in the society is through use of early childhood education program which puts children on equal footing prior to starting primary education. MOEST (2014) on how to ensure quality of pre-school education access in Uganda be achieved universally reports that pre-primary is considered to have the highest rate of economic returns of all levels of education. Uganda being one of the countries that agreed to implement the 1990Jontiem Thailand joint plan that aimed at attainment of EFA by 2015 ,did not want to large behind. The government of Uganda through MOEST working together with UNICEF (2013) made strategies to help increased access to ECD services/programs. The strategies included:-increase public investment in ECD by exploring different sources of both public and private funds.

The county of Nyeri development plan 2013-2015 report that the gross enrolment rate for the county stands at 59.2 percent indicating that there is a large number of children who are not in school despite having a total of 758 centers. According to the report, low enrolment can only be attributed to the fact that there are charges levied to the parents in institutions. The country is silent on the strategies to uplift ECD activities in the country and how to help the parents who are overburdened by levies paid at the centers. This is what has called the researcher to have a study on strategies that will help solve the problem of school levies in public ECDE centers

In Nakuru County projection for 2012 shows that pre-school enrolment is at 53,415 County strategic plan 2013-2017 indicate that education in the county faces a number of challenges which include school dropouts, low transition rates and high cost of education. According to the county government strategic plan, the county is to provide a good foundation for children, ensure and safeguard rights and welfare of all children and provide quality and integrated services for holistic development of children. The county is not clear on how to deal with the problem of ECD levies in public ECD centers.

Homabay County is also struggling with the same issue of ECD. According to strategic plan 2013-2017 only 76 percent of children aged 3-5 years are attending ECD centers and therefore effort must be made to shore up enrolments and attendance at ECD levels. There are also a number of problems that face CDE education in the County, they included; high teacher learner ratio, poor remuneration of teachers, lack of leadership on ECD issues and lack of co-ordinating body. The county laid strategies to curb the issues according to the report, the county was to ensure that a policy document is in place and be followed and also to establish a working body to regulate ECD and employ ECD teachers.

Early childhood education is alarming according to Kisumu county strategic plan 2013-2017 report, only 27.6 percent of children aged 3-5 years attend pre-school education there are 25,344 learners in the 997 ECD centers with a teacher ratio of 1:28. According to the report the county focus on community and other stakeholders and participation on education programme. These include UNICEF faith based organizations and donors like world bank. Though the activities of early childhood education is not a priority yet holistic early childhood development is the foundation of good education and a healthy social development (global family village, 2014).

## **2.6 Theoretical Framework**

This is an examination of existing or self formulated in relation to the research objectives or a set of intercalated variables, definitions or propositions that present a systematic view of a phenomenon by specifying relations among variables with the purpose of explaining phenomenon (Oso & Onen, 2008). The research will be guided by two theories that is Theory of Education by Plato quoted by Muhammad (2008).

### **2.6.1 Education Theory**

Education theory whose proponent is Pierre Bourdieu in 1977 by Plato quoted by Mohammed (2008) shows that Plato was the earliest education thinker. He thinks that education is a key for a society. He goes to the extreme level and even removing the child from their mothers and raise them by the state according to him, he believe on the child developing skills though proper education this could enable the child to become a suitable member of the society and

fulfill their duty in the society. He doesn't believe that talents belong to a particular class therefore the stresses on education for all so that talented children get the opportunity to shine. According to Plato he wants all children be educated regardless of their sex. He recommends state education that is education should be provided by the government. This has been the dream of every government as seen earlier in the background. It is seen as a thorny issue especially in the developing countries but they should borrow ideas that are worthwhile and be implemented so as to achieve the education goals. The state should come in fully to provide quality education for all.

The Education Theory supports the variables of the study, school levies and learner participation—by emphasizing the role of access to quality education in fostering inclusive participation and educational outcomes. Education theory, particularly socioeconomic theory of education (such as those proposed by Pierre Bourdieu in 1977), highlights that external factors such as financial barriers (e.g., school levies) directly impact learner engagement, enrollment, retention, and completion rates. According to this theory, financial constraints create disparities in access to education, limiting participation among learners from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. School levies, in this context, become a barrier to equal educational opportunity.

By linking this theory to the variables of school levies and learner participation (enrollment, retention, and completion) can be understood through the lens of the theory, which posits that education systems need to be designed in a way that removes financial barriers to enhance social inclusion and ensure equal access for all students. As school levies increase, learners from financially constrained families may face obstacles to full participation in educational activities, affecting both short-term and long-term educational outcomes (Bourdieu, 2017). Thus, Education Theory supports the premise of by suggesting that economic barriers, like school levies, directly influence learners' ability to participate in ECDE programmes, ultimately affecting educational equity and social mobility. These concepts are central to the research, as the study investigates how these levies impact learner participation in Kisumu West Sub-County.

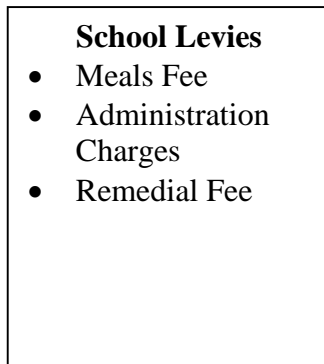
## 2.7 Conceptual Frame work

This is a scheme of concepts or variables which the researcher will operationalize in order to achieve set objectives (Oso & Onen, 2008). From the conceptual framework bellow it can be inferred that the independent variable, that is the presence or absence of school levies, can have direct influence on learner's enrolment in ECDE centers. This can result in high or low enrolment among the ECDE learners. Moreover, this consequently impacts on the attitude of learners towards school hence improved attendance which leads to high completion and retention hence learners become high achievers in their later life as stated by Smith (2014).

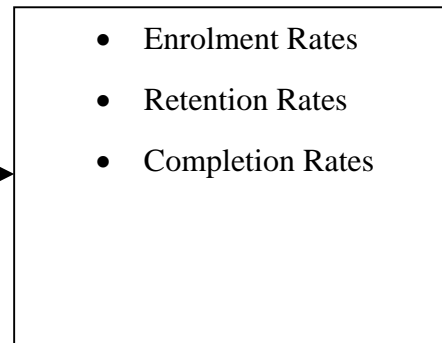
It is believed that there is a correlation between the payment of school levies and learners enrolment, attendant, retention and completion rates in ECDE centres. It may however be hypothetical that the charging of school levies would inhibit or promote enrolment. This is because some may not be able to pay or may feel to get assistance from either government or NGOs. On the contrary, quality services at the centers would be pegged in the availability of resources which in this shall be from the parents. On the contrary parents would be very much willing to go to centres with good quality materials and quality teachers which are a product of good sponsorship or payment of levies hence the paradox.

There are however other intervening variables that may influence the way in which these two main variables affect one another. These are parental earnings or level of income, education level, culture, security, geographical factors and distance from school. Furthermore these are controlled by government policies put in place; the key one being ECDE being a function of county government not national government. This could cause some disparities with regard to the provision of these services from one county to another.

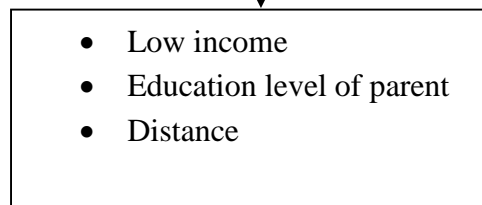
### Independent Variable



### Dependent Variables



### Moderating Variable



**Figure 1: Conceptual Framework**

## 2.8 Recap of literature review and Literature Gaps

This is done according to the stated objectives. Just as stated earlier by Plato that early childhood education is a key to the society it is necessary to give attention to all children to enable them acquire the necessary skills that will help them become responsible members of the society. This can only be achieved by ensuring that children who enroll in ECDE centers are retained in the centers till completion. From different studies conducted globally, ECDE is the backbone of every society that should be supported. Each state has a duty to support all children for a solid foundation for the outcome of their entire life. This calls for funding of ECDE activities. Funding of ECDE activities encourages enrolment of children in the centers hence promote holistic development of the learners. A very conducive environment for learning promotes retention since the centers act as a second home for the learners and therefore go through the learning process successfully hence high retention and completion rates in the centers. From all the studies conducted on the development of ECDE the government is called upon to support or prioritize funding of ECDE programs. Therefore for successful enrolment, retention and completion it is necessary for the government to lay necessary strategies that will support the learner's holistic development.

Existing studies often explore the impact of school levies on primary or secondary education (Nguyen, 2019; Mutisya & Wambua, 2020), but the impact on Early Childhood Development and Education (ECDE) remains under-explored, especially in the context of public ECDE centres in Kenya. As early childhood education is a critical foundation for lifelong learning, understanding how financial barriers, like school levies, influence enrollment, retention, and completion rates is essential. Your study will bridge this gap by focusing specifically on public ECDE centres in Kisumu West Sub-County. By examining how levies affect learners' participation, your research will provide valuable insights for policymakers seeking to improve early childhood education accessibility in marginalized communities (Njiru, 2022).

A significant limitation in existing studies is their focus on urban or national-level data. For instance, while national data may provide an overview of school levies' effects, these studies often fail to account for regional disparities in rural and peri-urban areas (Musa, 2021). Kisumu West Sub-County, a relatively under-researched area, presents unique socio-economic challenges that affect education access, including poverty, lack of infrastructure, and socio-cultural factors. By focusing on this specific region, your study will fill a gap in the literature concerning how school levies affect learner participation in rural Kenya. Additionally, this localized focus allows for a more detailed understanding of regional dynamics that may not be captured in broader studies.

Many studies acknowledge the impact of financial constraints on education but often address the issue in broad terms, without isolating the effects of school levies on early education outcomes (Mwangi, 2018; Mutisya & Wambua, 2020). These studies tend to lump various financial barriers together, making it difficult to assess the specific role of levies in shaping enrollment and retention rates in early childhood education. Your study narrows this focus to examine how school levies in particular contribute to the challenges faced by families in Kisumu West Sub-County. This focused approach will offer deeper insights into how school levies alone create barriers to equitable participation in early childhood education, which is not adequately addressed in current literature (Tinto, 1993).

While enrollment rates are commonly studied, there is limited research on how school levies impact learner retention and completion rates, especially in early childhood settings. For

example, many studies, such as those by Mwangi (2018) and Njiru (2022), focus mainly on enrollment without considering how financial barriers such as levies contribute to learners dropping out or failing to complete their early childhood education. Your study will examine both retention and completion rates, exploring how school levies impact the continuation of education beyond the initial enrollment phase. By addressing this gap, the study will provide a more comprehensive view of how levies undermine long-term participation in ECDE programs, which is crucial for understanding the full scope of the issue.



## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.0 Introduction**

The chapter deals with the research methodology. It discusses in details various sub sections of the chapter which includes; research design, study area, target population, sample size and sampling techniques, instruments of data collection, data collection procedure and methods of data analysis (Kombo & Delno, 2006). The study tried to find out the effect of school levies on learners enrolment retention and completion in public ECDE centers in Kisumu West Sub County.

#### **3.1 Research Methodology**

The study employed a mixed-method approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative methods to investigate the impact of school levies on learner participation in public ECDE centres in Kisumu West Sub-County. The quantitative data were collected through structured questionnaires administered to ECDE managers, headteachers, and teachers. These questionnaires focused on enrollment, retention, and completion rates, and the data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and inferential statistics. The qualitative data were gathered through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, providing richer insights into the personal experiences of educators and administrators regarding the effects of school levies. This approach allowed for triangulation, offering both broad statistical insights and detailed, contextual information, which enhanced the overall reliability and depth of the findings. The mixed-method design was justified as it provided a comprehensive understanding of the research problem (Creswell, 2014; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010).

#### **3.2 Research Design**

Research design is the structure within which research is conducted. It constitutes the blue print for the collection, measurement and analysis of data (Kothari, 2004). Due to the nature of the topic and the type of data required the study used descriptive survey design as the main design. Using a descriptive survey design, the study collected and described data from a sample of participants to understand the current situation regarding school levies and their impact on learner participation in ECDE centers. This approach identified patterns, trends, and

relationships within the data, providing a detailed view of how school levies influenced attendance and participation without manipulating any variables.

### **3.3 Study Area**

This study was conducted in Kisumu West sub-county. The sub- County cover an area of approximately 212.9 km<sup>2</sup>. It lies between latitude 0° to 2°S of the equator and a longitude of 34°E to 35°E. It has a population of 131,246. It borders Vihiga sub-county to the north, Seme sub-county to the west, Kisumu East sub-county to the East and Lake Victoria to the South (County physical planning report, 2015). The sub-county is found in the peri-urban areas of Kisumu town of Kisumu-Busia road and extending along the southern part Kisumu Bondo road off Kisian junction to Paw Akuche, the other side extends through Maseno and Kiboswa. The sub-county has one University, one national technical college, two private secondary schools, 86 public primary schools, 10 adult education centers, four non-formal centre, six special needs units and 86 ECDE centers. It has five zones. The population is relatively sparse as compared to Kisumu East and Vihiga sub- counties.

A part from the two tarmacked roads transverse through the sub-county the area has a fair distribution of social amenities such as dispensaries, hospitals, water, electricity and churches. Most of the inhabitants are luos though are other groups who have been pull pushed by the socio-economic activities like fishing, sand harvesting and bodaboda operators. The researcher chose this area because of being a practitioner in this area and therefore would find it convenient due to the familiarity with the area and proximity to the working station.

The selection of Kisumu West Sub-County in Kisumu County for this study was based on its unique socio-economic context, which is characterized by significant financial constraints that affect access to education. The region is largely rural, with a high proportion of families facing economic challenges that limit their ability to afford school levies, making it an ideal setting to explore how such levies impact learner participation in public ECDE centres. This includes its effects on enrollment, retention, and completion rates, which are often influenced by financial barriers (Njiru, 2022; Musa, 2021). Kisumu West Sub-County is also facing challenges related to infrastructure and resource limitations, which exacerbate the impact of financial barriers on education (Njeru & Orodho, 2014). The study location is, therefore, highly

relevant, as it provides insights into the educational dynamics of a region where school levies are a critical factor influencing early childhood education participation.

### 3.4 Target population

According to Mbwesa (2008) target population is the entire group of people, things or events the researcher wishes to investigate. The same is supported by Mugenda and Mugenda (2003). The study targeted 9 stand-alone public ECD centres and 102 ECDE centers anchored in Primary Schools in Kisumu West Sub County. Each School has two ECDE teachers and those anchored in Primary Schools are managed by respective headteachers. Therefore, the study targeted 222 teachers, 9 ECDE managers and 102 headteachers. The distribution of 333 respondents is as shown in Table 1:

**Table 1: Target Population**

	<b>Anchored in Primary Schools</b>	<b>in Stand-alone public ECD</b>	<b>Total</b>
ECDE Teachers	204	18	<b>222</b>
ECDE Managers	0	9	<b>9</b>
Primary Headteacher	102	0	<b>102</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>306</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>333</b>

**Source: Department of Education, ICT and Human Resource Development, Kisumu County (2024)**

### 3.5 Sample size and sampling procedure

Sampling technique is a description of the strategies which the researcher uses to select representative respondents from the target population (Oso & Onen, 2005). The researcher used public ECDE centers, the sample shall consist of 30% of the target population this shall be 100 respondents comprising of 66 teachers, 3 managers and 31 Head teachers as shown in Table 2.

**Table 2: Sample Size**

	<b>Anchored in Primary Schools</b>	<b>Stand-alone public ECD</b>	<b>Total</b>
ECDE Teachers	61	5	<b>66</b>
ECD Managers	0	3	<b>3</b>
Primary Headteacher	31	0	<b>31</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>100</b>

The study employed stratified random sampling technique as this would give the researcher an opportunity to identify sub-groups in the population and their proportions so as to select an appropriate number from each sub-group to form a sample. This ensured that all the group characteristics are represented in the study so as to give a conclusive data (Oso & Onen, 2005). The centers were stratified based on the enrolment; that is high and low enrolment where from each stratum 30% shall be randomly sampled.

### **3.6 Data Collection Instruments**

The researcher collected data by use of different instruments to suit various sample respondents. For this study the researcher used interview guide and questionnaires.

#### **3.6.1 Questionnaires**

This is a set of questions that respondents are asked as a way of getting answers or information about what is going on or what the respondents think or do generally (Creswell, 2014). These questionnaires were used because they are easy to administer to a larger population (Gray, 2004), in this study were hand delivered to the respondents. They consisted of open-ended questions as they gave respondents opportunity to give their views, opinions, feelings and suggestions freely as they shall be anonymous (Oso & Onen, 2005). ECDE teachers were given semi-structured questionnaires to gather data on how school levies affected learner participation, focusing on retention and completion rates. Their insights were valuable in understanding the challenges learners face in maintaining enrollment and progressing through early childhood education due to financial barriers.

### **3.6.2 Interview guide**

Interview is a two-person conversation initiated by the interviewer with the main intention of obtaining relevant information to answer specific research questions (Beck, 2006), through interview the researcher is able to get detailed information because probing can be done to get further clarification on ideas not well understood (Kombo & Delno, 2006), besides it gives respondents opportunity to give their true feelings and opinions (Oso & Onen, 2005). The head teachers and managers were subjected to interviews being that they have a busy schedule and may not get adequate time for answering the questionnaires. They were asked on the enrolment, parents' attitude towards payment of ECDE levies and this impact on the learning outcome in the ECDE centres.

### **3.6.3 Document Analysis**

In this study, document analysis served as a key data collection method for gathering quantitative data on attendance, enrollment, retention, and completion rates, as well as fee payment frequency and balance status in public ECDE centers. This approach involved the systematic review of official school documents, including attendance registers, enrollment records, and financial statements maintained by the ECDE centers. The analysis aimed to identify trends and potential correlations between school levies and learner participation, specifically in terms of regular attendance, sustained enrollment, and successful completion of the ECDE program. Records of fee payment frequency and outstanding balances were reviewed to understand how often parents paid school levies and the extent of unpaid fees. These data helped to assess financial challenges faced by families and their impact on retention and completion rates within ECDE centers. By analyzing historical records alongside current data, this method provided an objective perspective, validating findings from interviews and questionnaires while offering concrete, context-based insights into how school levies influenced learner participation over time.

### **3.7 Data collection procedure**

After the development of the proposal and formulating the instruments, this was checked by the supervisors the necessary adjustment made before the defense by the study at various

levels. Later the instruments were developed and approved using different set of the population but with similar characteristics as the sample population. The researcher then obtained an introductory letter from the director of post graduate studies of Mount Kenya University before seeking for permission from the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI). Thereafter using the NACOSTI research permit, researcher sought for permission from County commissioner, county director of education and then to the sub-county director of education. The researcher then proceeded to the sampled ECDE centers and respondents using these authorization permits. The researcher briefed the respondents and explained to them the purpose of the study and sought for their participation from an informed position and voluntarily. The instruments were then administered and later the questionnaires collected for quantitative analysis while the interviews were analyzed qualitatively.

### **3.8 Validity and Reliability of instruments**

This was enhanced by ensuring that all prior preparations are thoroughly done before the data collection process. The research instruments were first piloted to enhance this then followed with necessary adjustments to send the study objectives. All the materials were also prepared and availed in good time. This ensured consistent accurate detailed data collection as much as possible. The use of multiple instruments for data collection also ensured that any piece of data was not left out. There was also continuous consultation with the supervisor throughout the study period to minimizing of gaps and lapses.

#### **3.8.1 Validity Test**

Ensuring the validity and reliability of research instruments is fundamental for producing credible and consistent data. Validity refers to the degree to which an instrument accurately measures what it is designed to measure. Several forms of validity are crucial to assess: content validity, which checks whether the instrument comprehensively covers the construct it intends to measure; construct validity, which assesses whether the instrument measures the theoretical concept it is supposed to; and criterion validity, which compares the instrument's results with those of other established measures to ensure accuracy. Criterion validity itself can be divided into convergent validity, which ensures that similar constructs correlate, and predictive

validity, which tests whether the instrument can forecast future outcomes related to the measured construct (Heale & Twycross, 2015).

The validity of the instrument used in this study was ensured through a vetting process by supervisors. This method aligns with content validity, which is a crucial step in confirming that the instrument comprehensively covers all relevant aspects of the construct being studied (Heale & Twycross, 2015). By having experts or supervisors with experience in the subject matter review the instrument, you are confirming that the questions are both relevant and representative of the topic, in this case, the effect of school levies on learner participation. This expert feedback helps to refine the instrument, ensuring that it accurately captures the intended phenomenon and covers all important aspects of the topic.

### **3.8.2 Reliability Test**

On the other hand, reliability measures the consistency of the instrument's results over time and across different contexts. It includes test-retest reliability, where the same instrument is administered to the same participants at different times to test consistency; inter-rater reliability, which ensures that different evaluators score the instrument in a similar way; and internal consistency, which checks whether the items within an instrument produce consistent results. Cronbach's alpha is often used to assess internal consistency, with values above 0.7 considered acceptable. Together, these methods help ensure that an instrument is both reliable and valid, which is critical for the quality and generalizability of research findings (Mind the Graph, 2023).

The test-retest method is one of the most common ways to assess reliability (Heale & Twycross, 2015). In this case, the instrument was administered to a small sample of the target population, which included 1 ECDE manager, 1 head teacher, and 2 ECDE teachers. This approach helps to assess the stability of the instrument over time. By administering the instrument to the same group at different times, you can compare the results to check for consistency. A high correlation between the first and second administration indicates that the instrument is reliable. While using a 1% sample of the population for the test-retest method is small, it is still effective for providing an initial check on the instrument's stability, particularly when the focus is on ensuring that it works consistently in a real-world educational setting.

### **3.9 Data analysis Techniques and procedure**

For conclusive study and data collection the researcher employed both qualitative and quantitative research approaches. Quantitative research approach involved the gathering of numerical data since it was easy in giving the true picture of the occurrences Quantitative data was analyzed by descriptive statistics (frequency, percentages). This was augmented by qualitative approaches which involved discussions, description and explanation. Qualitative approach was appropriate as the researcher also used multiple sources of data collection methods in order to get in-depth information.

To establish the school levies administered in public ECDE centers in Kisumu West Sub-County, semi-structured questionnaires were distributed to ECDE managers and headteachers to gather information on the types, amounts, and frequency of levies charged. The data were then analyzed using descriptive statistics, such as frequencies, percentages, and mean values, to summarize the levies across the different centers. Additionally, document analysis of fee structures and payment records was conducted to verify the information gathered from the questionnaires.

To explore how school levies affect learners' enrollment, the study used semi-structured questionnaires with ECDE managers and headteachers, which focused on how school levies influenced enrollment rates. The quantitative data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics to detect any significant patterns or trends in enrollment before and after the introduction of levies. Inferential statistics, including correlation and regression analysis, were employed to examine the relationship between school levies and enrollment rates. Furthermore, interviews with ECDE teachers were conducted to gain qualitative insights on how levies affected enrollment from the perspective of the educators.

For the objective of understanding how school levies influence learners' retention and completion rates, semi-structured questionnaires were again distributed to ECDE managers and teachers to gather data on retention and completion patterns. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to identify trends in retention and completion rates in relation to school levies. Comparative analysis was used to compare these rates across ECDE centers with varying levy structures. Document analysis was also performed on student records and

completion data. Interviews with headteachers provided additional qualitative insights into how levies influenced learners' retention and completion rates.

Lastly, to establish strategies that could address the effects of school levies, interviews were conducted with ECDE managers, headteachers, and teachers using semi-structured interview guides. These interviews focused on identifying existing or proposed strategies to mitigate the impact of school levies on learner participation. The responses were analyzed thematically, and the study also drew on document analysis of relevant policy documents, reports, and strategies to offer a broader understanding of potential solutions.

### **3.10 Ethical considerations**

Ethics is a branch of philosophy which deals with one's conduct and serves as a guide to one's behavior they include, informed consent, privacy and confidentiality, anonymity and researcher's responsibility (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2008) The researcher ensured that the respondents are well informed of the purpose and the expected duration. They also assured of confidentiality in giving private information The researcher tried to be open minded to and be sensitive to respondents dignity and open intentions

The respondents were briefed in order to seek their informed consent and voluntary participation. The researcher maintained high degree of professionalism during the study by ensuring that the comments of other participants are not shared during the data collection process (Lochmiller & Lester, 2017). The research respondents were also treated with dignity by honoring their schedule and sought their opinion when they were able to spare some time for the study; Moreover they were given full information in the study and opportunity to opt out of the study when they feel disinterested, which the researcher would not wish to open anyway. The findings also not raised unnecessary expectations from the participants so as to entice their participation in the study.

The research informants were treated with dignity, moreover they were given full information of the study hence participate voluntarily from an informed position and equally withdraw from the study when they feel disinterested. The researcher also did not falsify the findings neither raise unnecessary expectations from the participants. The study was done

comprehensively and all matters attended to in details to ensure that the findings are of high quality and communicated and or disseminated honestly to all the concerned stakeholders. Besides, data collected was saved in the laptop with a pass word while hard copies were saved in a lockable cupboard for security and safety.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

#### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on presenting the empirical results of the study (preliminary findings of the characteristics of the study sample and data collected, the descriptive results from semi-structured questionnaires and interviews.

#### 4.2 Response Rate

The researcher distributed a total number of 66 questionnaires to ECDE teachers, ECD Managers and Primary Headteachers. Table 3 shows the response rate results.

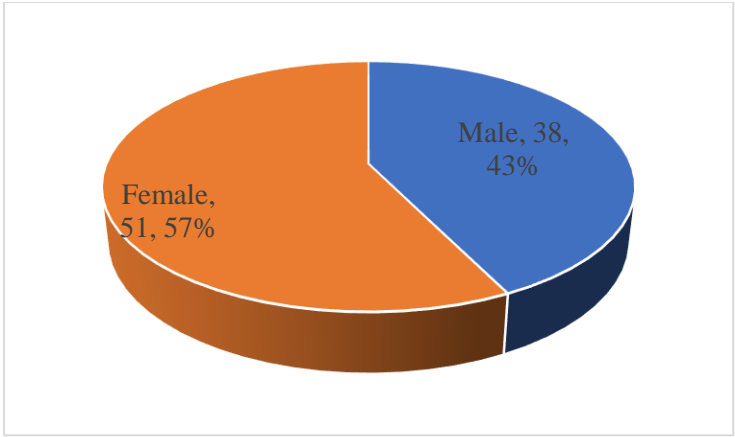
**Table 3: Response rate**

<b>Respondents</b>	<b>Sample size</b>	<b>Participants</b>	<b>Return rate (%)</b>
ECDE Teachers	66	61	92.4
ECD Managers	3	3	100.0
Primary Headteachers	31	25	80.7
<b>Total sample</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>91.02</b>

A total of 61 surveys were filled out and returned, for a response rate of 92.4% for teachers and 100% for ECD managers and 80.7% for primary head teachers. Baruch and Holtom (2008) state that a response rate of at least 52.7% is considered satisfactory, with rates exceeding 70% being considered exceptional. This study's response rate of 91.0% was thus sufficient for drawing conclusions.

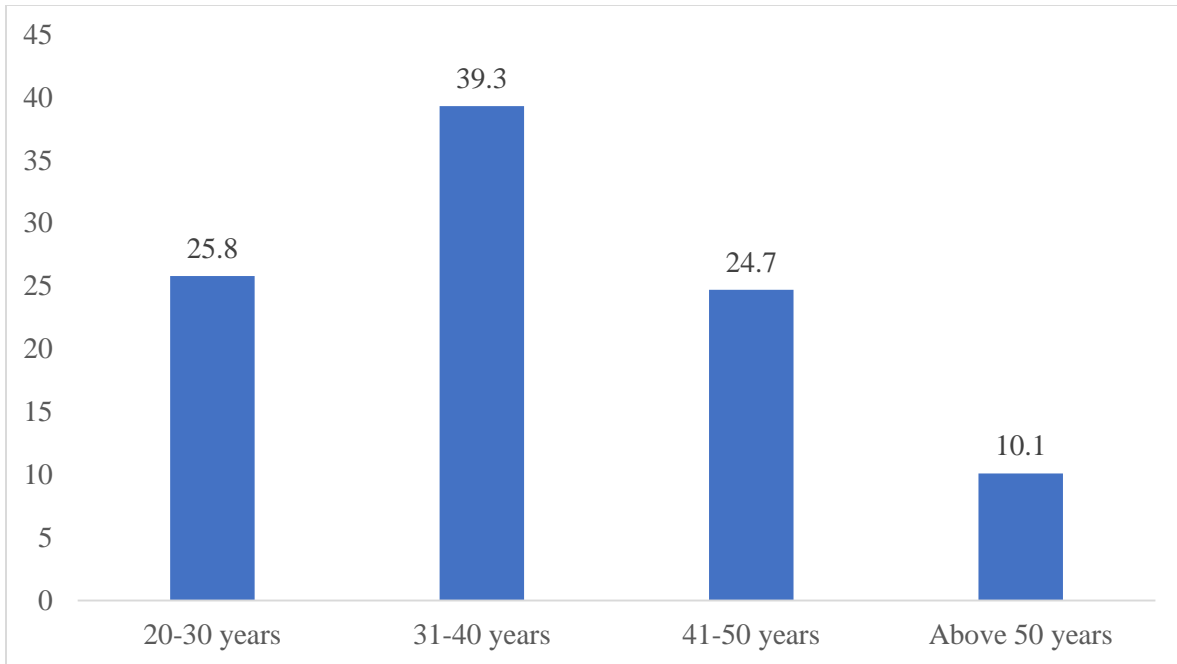
#### 4.3 Demographic Characteristics

The respondents were asked to indicate their age, the results are as shown in Figure 2



**Figure 2: Gender of the Respondents**

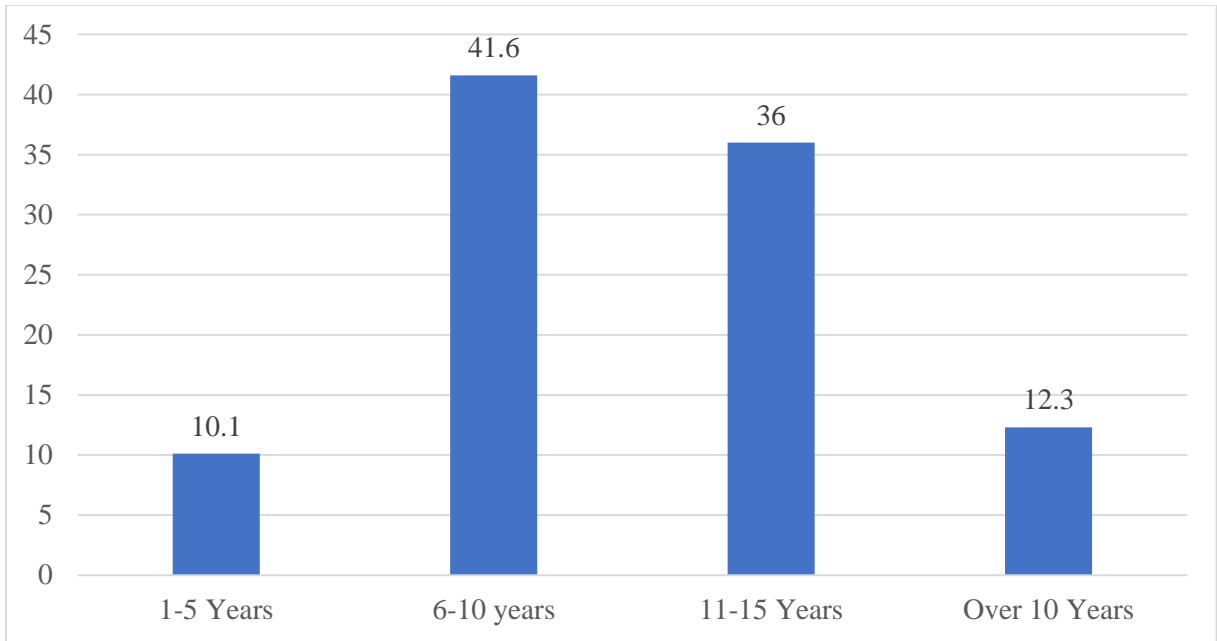
The survey conducted among teachers in Early Childhood Development and Education (ECDE) centers in Kisumu West Sub-County comprised a total of 89 respondents. Among these, 38 were male, accounting for approximately 42.70% of the total sample, while 51 were female, representing about 57.30%. The higher percentage of female teachers in this sample may reflect broader trends in the early childhood education workforce, where women often comprise a significant majority. This gender distribution is crucial for understanding the perspectives and experiences shared by educators in the context of ECDE in Kisumu West Sub-County. The insights gathered from these teachers can provide valuable information on the challenges and opportunities within early childhood education, especially in relation to school levies, enrollment, and retention rates. Overall, recognizing the gender dynamics among educators is essential for interpreting the findings and developing targeted strategies to enhance educational outcomes in the region.



**Figure 3: Age of the Respondents**

The age distribution of respondents in the survey conducted among teachers in Early Childhood Development and Education (ECDE) centers in Kisumu West Sub-County revealed that among the total of 89 participants, 23 individuals, or approximately 25.84%, fell within the age range of 20 to 30 years. The largest group was teachers aged between 31 and 40 years, comprising 35 respondents, which accounts for about 39.33% of the sample. Additionally, 22 respondents, representing 24.72%, were aged between 41 and 50 years. Lastly, 9 teachers, or 10.11%, were over 50 years old.

This age distribution indicates a predominance of younger educators, particularly those in the 31 to 40 age range, suggesting a relatively youthful workforce in the ECDE sector in this region. Understanding the age demographics of these teachers can provide valuable insights into their experiences, teaching practices, and potential challenges faced in early childhood education. It also highlights the importance of professional development and support tailored to the varying needs of educators at different career stages, ultimately contributing to improved educational outcomes for young children in Kisumu West Sub-County.

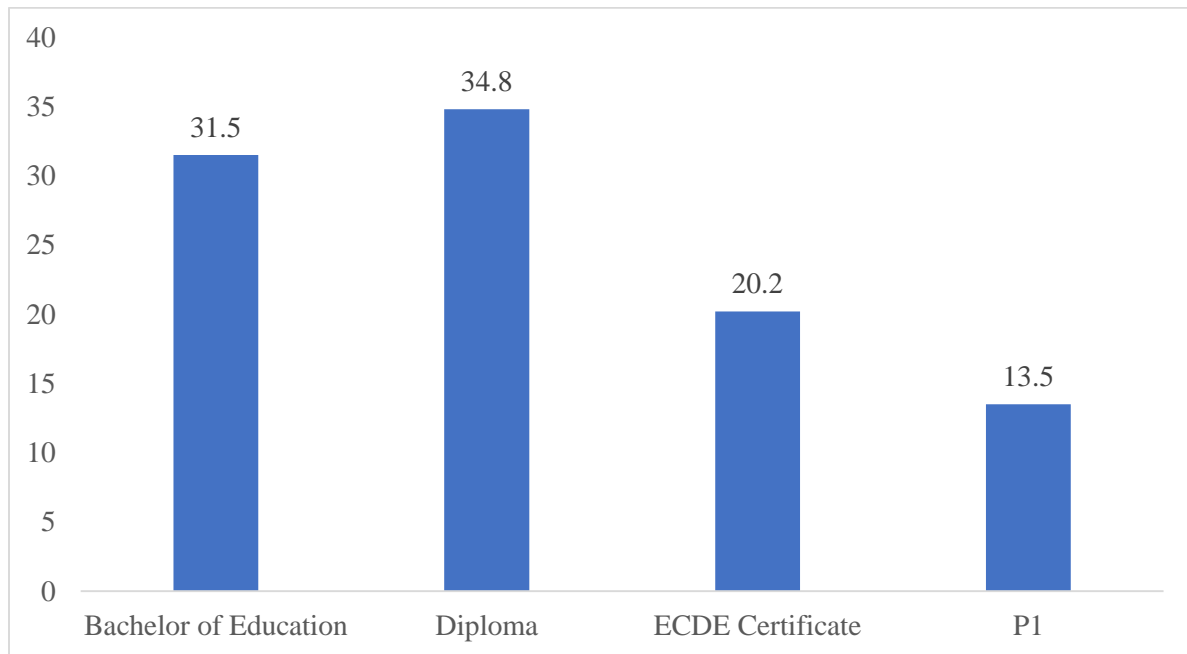


**Figure 4: Working Experience**

The survey conducted among teachers in Early Childhood Development and Education (ECDE) centers in Kisumu West Sub-County provided valuable insights into their working and teaching experience. Out of a total of 89 respondents, the distribution of teaching experience revealed that 9 teachers, or approximately 10.11%, had between one and five years of experience. The largest group consisted of 37 teachers, accounting for about 41.57% of the sample, who had between six and ten years of teaching experience. Additionally, 32 teachers, making up 35.96%, reported having eleven to fifteen years of experience in the field. Lastly, 11 teachers, or 12.36%, had more than fifteen years of teaching experience.

This distribution highlights a predominantly experienced workforce within the ECDE centers, with a significant proportion of teachers possessing a solid foundation in their teaching practice. The majority of educators with six to ten years of experience suggests that they are likely to have developed effective teaching strategies and an understanding of the challenges in early childhood education. Furthermore, the presence of teachers across various experience levels, from relatively new educators to those with over fifteen years in the field, presents opportunities for mentorship and collaboration. Such dynamics can foster professional growth and enhance teaching practices, ultimately contributing to better educational outcomes for

young children in Kisumu West Sub-County. Understanding the experience levels of these teachers is crucial for developing targeted training and support programs that address their specific needs and challenges within the early childhood education landscape.



**Figure 5: Highest Level of Education**

The survey conducted among teachers in Early Childhood Development and Education (ECDE) centers in Kisumu West Sub-County revealed important information regarding their educational qualifications. Out of a total of 89 respondents, 28 teachers, or approximately 31.46%, held a Bachelor of Education degree. The largest group consisted of 31 teachers, accounting for about 34.83%, who possessed a diploma in education. Additionally, 18 respondents, representing 20.22%, held an ECDE certificate, while 12 teachers, or 13.48%, had a P1 qualification.

This distribution indicates a diverse range of educational qualifications among the teachers, with a notable proportion holding diplomas and bachelor's degrees. The predominance of diploma holders highlights the importance of practical training in early childhood education, which is crucial for effectively addressing the developmental needs of young learners. The presence of teachers with various qualifications, including ECDE certificates and P1

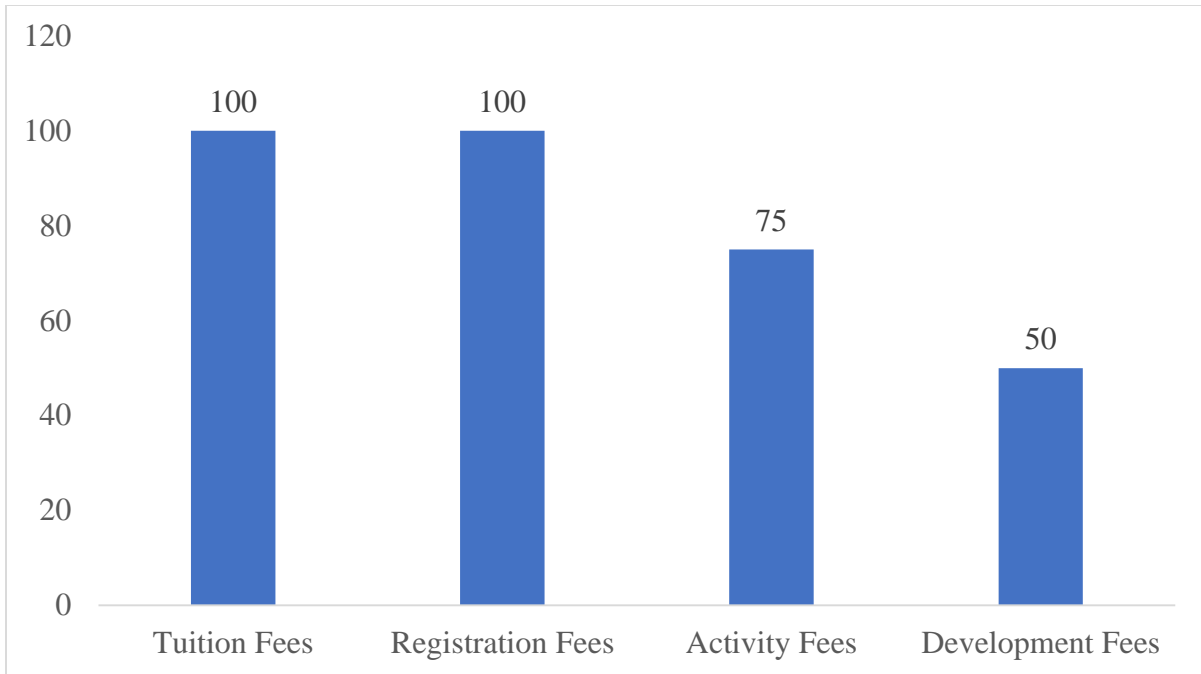
qualifications, suggests a mix of theoretical knowledge and practical experience within the workforce. This diversity can be beneficial for fostering collaborative learning environments, as educators with different backgrounds can share their unique insights and teaching strategies. Overall, understanding the educational qualifications of these teachers is essential for identifying areas for professional development and ensuring that all educators are equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to provide high-quality education in ECDE settings.

#### **4.4 School Levies Administered in Public ECDE Centers**

The first objective of the study was to establish school levies administered in public ECDE centers in Kisumu west –sub-county, Kisumu County. This was achieved by inquiring Types of fees are charged to parents at the ECDE center, How often are the levies collected (e.g., monthly, termly, annually), Average Amount of Levies Collected per Child per Term, Discounts Or Exemptions Available For School Levies, Are parents or guardians informed about the amount and purpose of school levies? And Are there any guidelines or regulations governing the collection and use of school levies?

##### **4.4.1 Types of fees are charged to parents at your ECDE center**

The study found that most ECDE centers charge multiple types of fees as shown in Figure 6.



**Figure 6: Types of fees are charged to parents at your ECDE center**

The Figure 6 presents data on the types of fees charged to parents at public Early Childhood Development and Education (ECDE) centers in Kisumu West Sub-county. All 61 ECDE centers charge both tuition and registration fees, indicating that these fees are mandatory for enrollment. Tuition fees are standard in most educational settings as they cover the basic cost of instruction. Registration fees are typically charged annually or upon initial enrollment and often cover administrative costs. Approximately 75% of centers charge activity fees, which suggests a strong emphasis on extracurricular activities as part of the curriculum. Activity fees likely cover the cost of various events, sports, and creative programs that support holistic child development.

Half of the centers charge development fees, which may be used for infrastructure improvements, purchasing learning materials, or facility maintenance. This indicates a need for additional funding beyond what is provided by tuition, reflecting challenges in funding allocation for ECDE infrastructure. A smaller proportion of centers (16%) charge fees for educational trips, which might be due to logistical and financial constraints. Field trips provide experiential learning opportunities but are often not a priority due to the associated costs. Only

11% of the centers charge for stationery. This low percentage suggests that most centers may provide basic learning materials or parents may be required to procure them separately.

The universal charging of tuition and registration fees aligns with studies that highlight financial barriers as significant impediments to accessing ECDE in many regions. According to UNESCO, compulsory fees at early childhood education centers can exclude children from disadvantaged backgrounds, undermining the goal of universal access to early education.

The high percentage of centers charging activity fees reflects an understanding of the importance of holistic development, as supported by research from the World Bank, which emphasizes that play-based and extracurricular activities are critical for cognitive, social, and emotional development in early childhood. Imposition of development fees in over half of the centers indicates a reliance on parental contributions for facility improvements. This finding is consistent with reports by UNICEF, which have noted that many ECDE centers, particularly in low-resource settings, depend on additional parental contributions due to insufficient government funding.

The relatively low percentage of centers charging for educational trips may reflect logistical challenges or prioritization of other costs. Research in early childhood education underscores the value of experiential learning through field trips, which can enhance children's understanding of their environment and support practical learning. However, the costs associated with these trips often limit their frequency and accessibility.

The low frequency of centers charging for stationery suggests that either these materials are not standardized or parents are expected to provide them independently. This finding is corroborated by studies indicating that the lack of basic learning materials is a common issue in ECDE centers, which can affect the quality of education delivered.

The data reveals that while some fees are universally charged, there is variability in additional charges such as development fees, activity fees, and fees for educational trips. This indicates differing capacities and priorities among ECDE centers. The implications of these fees on access and equity in early childhood education are significant, as they can either support or hinder the participation of children from low-income families. Addressing these disparities

requires targeted policies that subsidize or eliminate fees to promote inclusive and equitable access to early childhood education.

During interview session, the common types of fees charged include tuition fees, registration fees and meals. Tuition fees are the primary charge in ECDE centers and are used to cover the general operational costs, including teacher salaries, learning materials, and basic school maintenance. Most ECDE centers require a one-time registration fee when enrolling a new student. This fee typically covers administrative costs and is payable at the start of the academic year. *"We charge a registration fee of KES 500 for new students. This helps cover the costs of setting up their records and initial supplies."* — Head Teacher 7. *"The registration fee is a small amount, but it's necessary for the initial administrative work."* — Head Teacher 17. In some ECDE centers, additional fees are charged for meals. These are often optional and depend on the needs of the parents and the services provided by the school. *"Parents can opt to pay for school meals, which is about KES 5,000 per term or in kind. It's optional but convenient for working parents."* — Head Teacher 14. Further, another headteacher said that:

*"We charge a registration fee of KES 500 when a new child joins. This helps us cover the initial administrative work and ensures we can provide the basic supplies needed for each child to start their education journey here. However, for some parents, even this small fee can be a hurdle, especially when they have more than one child or when they are joining mid-term."* — Head Teacher 7

The registration fee, though relatively small, serves as an essential source of funds for covering administrative costs and basic supplies for new students. However, the head teacher recognizes that for families in low-income communities, even this initial cost can be prohibitive, particularly when they have multiple children to enroll or are attempting to join mid-term. This indicates that financial barriers begin at the very point of entry into the education system, potentially delaying or even preventing children's access to early childhood education.

#### **4.4.2. Frequency of Fees Collection**

The majority of the ECDE centers (70%) collect levies on a termly basis, while 20% collect them annually. A small percentage (10%) reported collecting levies monthly.

**Table 4: Frequency of Levy Collection**

Collection Frequency	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Monthly	49	80.3
Termly	10	16.4
Annually	2	3.3

The table 4 illustrate the frequency of levy collection in public Early Childhood Development and Education (ECDE) teachers in Kisumu West Sub-county. The majority of the teacher. (49 out of 61) collect levies on a monthly basis. This high percentage indicates a preference for spreading out the financial burden on parents, making it easier to manage compared to lump sum payments. Monthly collection can help maintain a steady cash flow for the teachers, which is essential for meeting ongoing operational costs. However, frequent payments can also be challenging for families with irregular or limited income, potentially affecting learner retention.

A smaller proportion (10 out of 61 teachers) collects levies termly. This frequency, occurring typically three times a year, may be suitable for parents who receive income periodically, such as through seasonal work or small businesses. Termly collection allows for more substantial payments at once, which might be difficult for some families but reduces the hassle of frequent transactions.

Only 2 teachers out of 61 collect levies annually, representing the least common practice. Annual collection can be convenient as it involves a single transaction, but it may pose a significant financial strain on parents at one point in the year, especially if they are unable to save up for the entire amount.

Studies have shown that the frequency of fee collection can significantly impact enrollment and retention rates in educational institutions. Monthly fees, while manageable, can create ongoing financial stress, potentially leading to intermittent attendance or dropout. Research by the Global Partnership for Education indicates that irregular or burdensome fee structures are a barrier to consistent attendance in early childhood education settings, particularly in low-income communities.

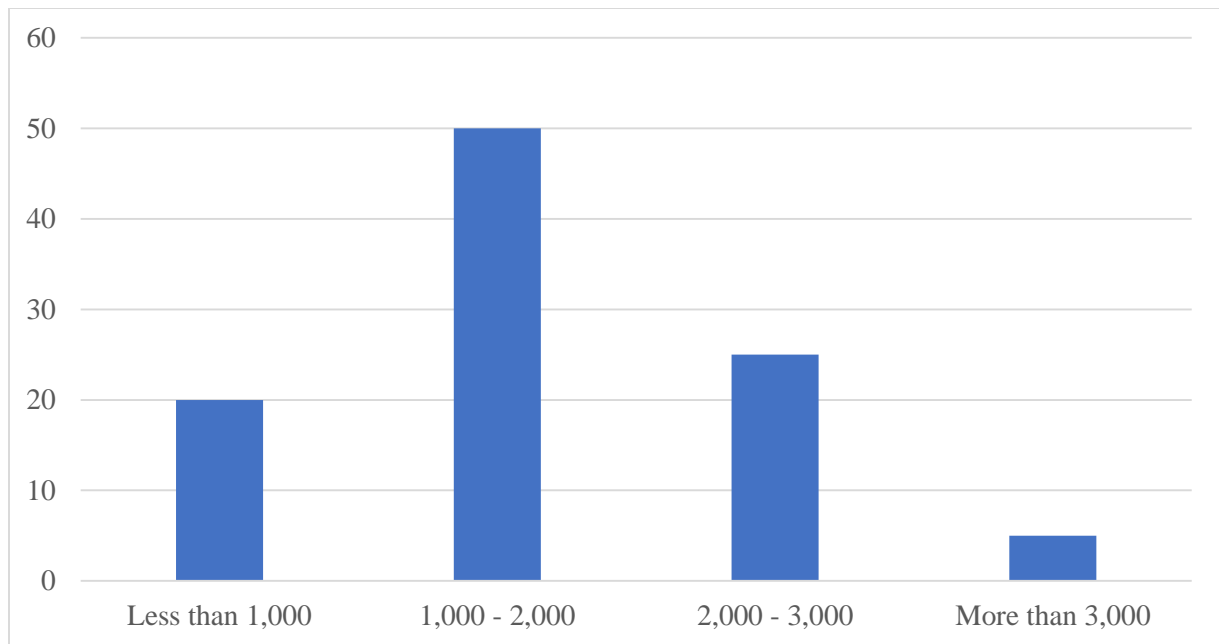
Regular monthly collection helps centers manage their finances more effectively by providing a steady income stream to cover salaries, utilities, and other operational costs. According to UNICEF, predictable funding is crucial for maintaining quality in early childhood education, as it supports continuous provision of services and resources. The preference for monthly collection may reflect parents' financial constraints and the need for more flexible payment options. Studies by UNESCO suggest that the alignment of fee collection with parents' income patterns (e.g., daily or weekly wages) can enhance the affordability and accessibility of ECDE services.

The results from the interviews revealed that levies are typically collected on a termly basis, although some schools allow for monthly payments to accommodate parents' financial situations. "*We collect most fees termly, but for parents who struggle, we allow monthly payments to ease the burden.*" — Head Teacher 22. "*Monthly payments have been a helpful option for families with unpredictable incomes.*" — Head Teacher 21. Further, one of the headteachers emphasized by saying that:

"We have found that termly collections are simpler for administrative purposes, but many parents prefer monthly payments. We've tried to be flexible because we understand that incomes are not stable for everyone. Even with this arrangement, there are families who fall behind. We sometimes end up having to remind them repeatedly, which can strain our relationship with the parents."  
— Head Teacher 8

The head teacher discusses the challenges of balancing administrative efficiency with the financial realities of parents. While termly collections are easier for the school to manage, monthly payments can provide flexibility for families with irregular or limited income. Despite offering this flexibility, some parents still struggle to keep up, leading to a tense dynamic between the school and the parents. This situation indicates a need for even more adaptable payment plans or alternative support systems to alleviate financial stress for families.

#### 4.4.3 Average Amount of Levies Collected per Child per Term



**Figure 7: Average Amount of Levies Collected per Child per Term**

The Figure 7 presents the average amount of levies collected per child per term in public Early Childhood Development and Education (ECDE) centers in Kisumu West Sub-county. Approximately 20% of the ECDE centers charge less than 1,000 Ksh per child per term. This relatively low amount may be more affordable for parents, especially in lower-income communities, and could contribute to higher enrollment rates. However, low fees might also limit the resources available to the centers, potentially affecting the quality of education and facilities provided.

Half of the centers (50%) collect between 1,000 and 2,000 Ksh per child per term. This range appears to be the most common and may reflect a balance between affordability for parents and the financial needs of the centers. This range is likely designed to cover basic operational costs without being prohibitively expensive, supporting both access and sustainability. 25% of the centers charge between 2,000 and 3,000 Ksh per child per term. This higher range could be indicative of centers that provide additional services or have better facilities. While it may attract parents who value quality, it could also deter families with lower incomes from enrolling their children.

A small proportion of centers (5%) collect more than 3,000 Ksh per child per term. These centers are likely to offer premium services, such as specialized programs or superior infrastructure. However, this high fee structure might restrict access for many families, leading to socioeconomic disparities in early education.

The amount of levies charged plays a crucial role in determining the accessibility of early childhood education. According to research by UNESCO, high levies can be a significant barrier for many families, particularly in rural and economically disadvantaged areas. The variation in fees across the centers suggests a disparity in access, with children from lower-income families potentially being excluded from higher-quality centers.

Studies have shown that lower levies generally correlate with higher enrollment rates. However, the quality of education may be compromised if the fees are not sufficient to cover the cost of essential services and resources. Research by the World Bank indicates that while reducing fees can improve enrollment, it is crucial to ensure that such reductions do not undermine the quality of education provided.

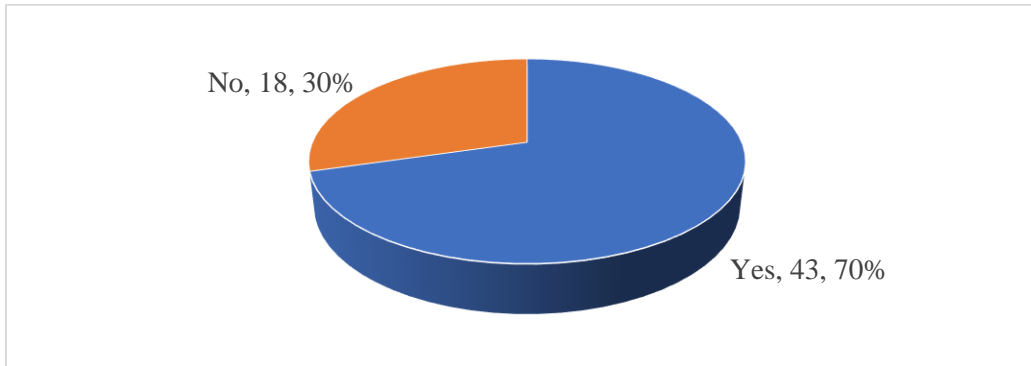
Centers that charge higher levies are likely to have better resources, qualified staff, and enhanced learning environments. The Global Partnership for Education highlights that adequate funding is essential for maintaining quality in ECDE programs. Therefore, while high fees may pose a barrier to access, they are often associated with better educational outcomes.

The findings indicate a significant variation in the average levies collected per child per term across public ECDE centers in Kisumu West Sub-County. While a substantial number of centers keep levies below 2,000 Ksh to remain accessible, there is a notable minority that charges significantly higher fees. This variation has implications for access, quality, and equity in early childhood education. A balanced approach, incorporating both affordability and resource adequacy, is essential to ensure that all children have access to quality early learning opportunities.

During interview, the study observed that the average amount of levies collected per child varies, but most head teachers indicated a range between KES 1,000 to 3,000 per term, depending on the specific school and the services provided. *"On average, we collect about KES 2,000 per child each term, which covers tuition and meals."* — Head Teacher 11. *"The fees*

vary, but it's around KES 1,500 to 3,000 per term, depending on the activities planned." — Head Teacher 3. "There are fees for specific events, like end-of-year parties and academic days, which are charged separately." — Head Teacher 20.

#### 4.4.4 Discounts Or Exemptions Available For School Levies



**Figure 8: Discounts Or Exemptions Available For School Levies**

Figure 8 indicated the availability of discounts or exemptions for school levies in public ECDE centers in Kisumu West Sub- County. A significant majority, approximately 70.49% of the ECDE centers, do not offer any discounts or exemptions on school levies. This suggests that the financial burden of school levies falls entirely on the parents or guardians, which can be particularly challenging for low-income families. The lack of financial relief options may discourage some parents from enrolling or retaining their children in these centers, impacting overall access to early childhood education.

Only 29.51% of the centers provide some form of discount or exemption. This indicates that a minority of the centers recognize the need to support families who may struggle with the financial demands of school levies. These centers may implement policies that reduce fees for certain groups, such as low-income families, multiple children enrolled from the same family, or orphans and vulnerable children. Such measures can help increase enrollment and retention rates by making early childhood education more accessible.

Research suggests that financial barriers are a significant impediment to early childhood education access. Studies by UNICEF show that when families face high costs for education, including levies, they may be forced to withdraw their children or choose not to enroll them at

all. Providing discounts or exemptions can alleviate this burden, improving both enrollment and retention rates, especially for the most vulnerable populations.

The absence of financial support mechanisms in the majority of centers (70.49%) highlights a gap in ensuring equitable access to education. According to the Global Partnership for Education, inclusive education policies that incorporate fee waivers or subsidies for disadvantaged groups are essential in promoting equity and reducing dropout rates. The current findings suggest a need for more comprehensive policies that support families who cannot afford the levies.

In centers that do offer discounts, community support and involvement may play a role. Engaging parents and local community organizations in discussions about the costs of education and potential support mechanisms can foster a more inclusive approach to early childhood education. According to studies by the World Bank, community involvement in school management can lead to better resource allocation and support for disadvantaged families.

The data reveals a significant disparity in the provision of financial support for school levies in public ECDE centers in Kisumu West Sub-County. While a minority of centers (29.51%) offer discounts or exemptions, the majority (70.49%) do not, potentially limiting access for economically disadvantaged families. This situation calls for targeted policy interventions and community engagement to ensure that all children have the opportunity to benefit from early childhood education, regardless of their financial background.

A few head teachers reported offering discounts or exemptions, particularly for orphans or children from extremely low-income households. However, these are not standardized and depend on the discretion of individual schools. "*We provide discounts for orphans and children from very poor families, but these cases are limited.*" — Head Teacher 10. "*There are some exemptions for children who are really struggling, but we don't have a formal policy.*" — Head Teacher 22.

#### 4.4.5 Parents or guardians Awareness of the amount and purpose of school levie

**Table 5: Parents or guardians informed about the amount and purpose of school levies**

Method	Frequency	Percentage
Circulars	59	96.72
Meetings	56	91.80
Letter	45	73.77
All Above	36	59.02
Phone calls	23	37.7

The table 5 presents data on the various methods used by public ECDE centers in Kisumu West Sub- County to inform parents or guardians about the amount and purpose of school levies. The most commonly used communication method is through circulars, with 96.72% of the centers adopting this method. Circulars are effective in providing written information that can be reviewed by parents at their convenience. They typically outline the breakdown of fees, their purposes, and payment schedules. The high use of circulars suggests that ECDE centers prefer a formal, standardized method of communication.

Meetings are also a prevalent method, utilized by 91.80% of the centers. This indicates that ECDE centers prioritize direct communication with parents or guardians, providing an opportunity for them to ask questions and seek clarification about the levies. Such meetings can foster transparency and build trust between the school and parents, ensuring that they fully understand the necessity and allocation of the fees. Approximately 73.77% of the centers use letters as a communication tool. Letters offer a formal and personalized approach to informing parents about school levies, similar to circulars but often more detailed and specific to individual families.

More than half of the centers (59.02%) use a combination of the above methods, indicating a comprehensive communication strategy. This mixed approach ensures that parents receive the information in multiple formats, increasing the likelihood of the message being effectively communicated. Phone calls are used by 37.70% of the centers. This method allows for personal

and immediate communication, especially for urgent reminders or follow-ups on unpaid levies. However, its lower usage suggests that it may not be feasible for reaching all parents or that it is reserved for specific cases.

Effective communication between schools and parents is crucial in fostering a supportive learning environment and ensuring transparency in fee-related matters. According to Epstein's framework on school-family-community partnerships, clear and consistent communication is key to building trust and cooperation. The use of multiple communication methods, as observed in 59.02% of the centers, aligns with best practices in engaging parents and guardians.

The high use of meetings and circulars suggests that ECDE centers in Kisumu West Sub-county recognize the importance of transparency in fee communication. Research by UNESCO indicates that when parents are well-informed about school levies and their purposes, they are more likely to support school activities and engage in their children's education. This transparency can also reduce conflicts and misunderstandings regarding school levies.

Despite the high usage of formal methods like circulars and letters, the relatively lower use of phone calls (37.70%) may indicate challenges in direct communication, such as difficulties in reaching parents due to contact information issues or time constraints. It may also reflect a preference for documented forms of communication over verbal exchanges, which can be less reliable for record-keeping.

Utilizing a combination of communication methods, as seen in 59.02% of the centers, is an effective strategy to ensure that information reaches all parents, regardless of their preferred communication channel. Studies suggest that a multi-modal approach increases the chances of effective communication and helps cater to diverse parental needs and circumstances.

The findings indicate that public ECDE centers in Kisumu West Sub-county employ a range of communication methods to inform parents or guardians about school levies. The use of circulars and meetings as primary methods suggests a commitment to transparency and direct engagement. However, the lower reliance on phone calls may reflect challenges in reaching some parents directly. Overall, a combination of communication methods is recommended to ensure comprehensive and effective communication, fostering better understanding and cooperation between schools and families regarding school levies.

Most head teachers indicated that parents are informed about the amount and purpose of school levies at the beginning of the academic year or term. Information is usually provided through meetings, circulars, or written notices. Most head teachers emphasized the importance of clear communication to avoid misunderstandings. "*We inform parents about the fees and their purpose during the first parent-teacher meeting of the year.*" — Head Teacher 18. "*Parents receive a breakdown of the fees in writing at the start of each term, so they know what they're paying for.*" — Head Teacher 5. Another headteacher indicated that:

"We hold meetings at the start of each term to explain the fees. We also send written notices home, but not all parents attend the meetings or read the notices. Sometimes they feel blindsided when they have to pay. It's a challenge because we want to be transparent, but we also have to ensure that parents understand and agree with the charges." — Head Teacher 13

The head teacher describes the school's efforts to communicate fee-related information to parents through meetings and written notices. Despite these efforts, gaps in communication persist, with some parents not receiving or comprehending the information, leading to confusion and potential conflict. This situation suggests a need for more effective, varied communication strategies that consider parents' different literacy levels and access to information, possibly incorporating verbal communication or community liaison officers to bridge the gap.

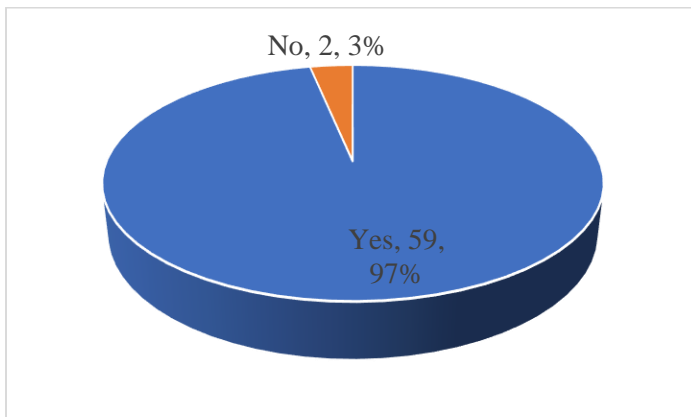
While schools make efforts to communicate levies clearly, some parents express confusion or dissatisfaction, particularly when fees change or additional charges are introduced unexpectedly. "*Most parents understand, but there are always a few who feel the fees are too high or not well explained.*" — Head Teacher 3. "*We get feedback from parents, and sometimes we have to explain the reasons behind certain fees in more detail.*" — Head Teacher 7. Another respondent said that:

"Parents generally understand that the fees are necessary, but there is always concern about the amounts. They often compare with other schools and feel that we are charging too much. It's difficult to explain that the costs reflect the quality of education we want to provide. We do get feedback, and we try to

adjust where possible, but there are limits to what we can reduce." — Head Teacher 17

This response indicates that while parents recognize the necessity of fees, there is a recurring concern about their affordability. Comparisons with other schools add to the perception that their ECDE center is overcharging, even when the fees are justified by the quality of education offered. This feedback loop between parents and schools highlights a need for transparency and open dialogue. Schools need to communicate not just the necessity but also the value provided in exchange for these levies, ensuring parents see the direct benefits of their financial contributions.

#### 4.4.7 Guidelines or regulations governing the collection and use of school levies



**Figure 9: Guidelines or regulations governing the collection and use of school levies**

The table 9 presents the findings on whether there are any guidelines or regulations in place governing the collection and use of school levies in public ECDE centers in Kisumu West Sub-County. A significant majority of the centers (96.72%) indicated that there are no guidelines or regulations governing the collection and use of school levies. This suggests a prevalent issue of inadequate regulation and oversight in the management of school levies within the sub-county. The absence of formal guidelines can lead to inconsistencies in how levies are collected and utilized, potentially resulting in a lack of transparency and accountability. Only 3.28% of the centers reported having guidelines or regulations in place. This small percentage implies that very few schools follow a structured approach to managing school levies. These

guidelines, where present, might be school-specific or based on informal agreements rather than being standardized across the sub-county or governed by higher educational authorities.

The lack of guidelines reported by most ECDE centers aligns with findings from studies on early childhood education financing in developing countries, where regulatory frameworks are often underdeveloped or poorly implemented. According to UNESCO, clear policies and regulations are essential to ensure that school levies are reasonable, transparent, and used for their intended purposes. Without such frameworks, schools may adopt arbitrary levy structures, leading to disparities and potential financial burdens on parents.

The absence of regulations can exacerbate inequalities in access to education. Schools with no guidelines may impose varying levies, which can disproportionately affect low-income families. Research indicates that unregulated school fees contribute to reduced enrollment and retention rates, as parents may struggle to meet unpredictable or excessively high financial demands. This is particularly problematic in ECDE centers, which are foundational to children's educational development.

Guidelines and regulations are crucial for promoting accountability in the management of school levies. They provide a framework for how fees should be collected, the purposes for which they can be used, and how they should be reported. The lack of such guidelines, as seen in 96.72% of the centers, could lead to misuse of funds, lack of proper reporting, and diminished trust between parents and schools. Transparency in the collection and use of levies is essential for building community support and ensuring that funds are used effectively to enhance educational quality.

The findings reveal a critical gap in the regulation of school levies in public ECDE centers in Kisumu West Sub-County, with 96.72% of the centers reporting the absence of guidelines or regulations. This lack of oversight poses challenges to transparency, accountability, and equitable access to early childhood education. Addressing this issue through the development of clear, enforceable guidelines is essential to ensure that school levies are reasonable, transparent, and used to enhance the quality of education. Such regulatory measures will help protect parents from financial exploitation and support the sustainable development of early childhood education in the sub-county.

Many head teachers were unaware of any specific regulations governing the collection and use of school levies beyond general guidelines provided by the county education office. There is a perceived lack of strict oversight. "*We follow the general guidelines given by the education office, but there isn't much oversight on how we use the levies.*" — Head Teacher 16. "*There are some regulations, but they are not strictly enforced. We try to be transparent, though.*" — Head Teacher 12. "*We follow the county's recommendations, but there's no strict oversight.*" — Head Teacher 4. These were further emphasized by other two headteachers:

"We are required to follow certain guidelines set by the Ministry of Education regarding the collection and use of school levies. For instance, we must clearly outline the purpose of each fee and ensure that the funds are used accordingly. However, there is limited oversight, and sometimes the rules are not strictly enforced. This can lead to disparities in how different schools manage their levies." — Head Teacher 19

This response indicates that while there are official guidelines set by the Ministry of Education, the enforcement of these regulations is inconsistent. Schools are supposed to provide transparency in the collection and utilization of levies, but the lack of strict oversight can result in irregularities and differences in how schools implement these rules. This situation underscores the need for more rigorous monitoring and compliance checks to ensure that all schools adhere to standardized practices.

"There are some regulations, but they are quite vague. We have to report how the levies are used, but there's no strict formula on how much to charge or specific criteria for what is considered acceptable use of the funds. This leaves a lot of room for interpretation, which can cause confusion and complaints from parents." — Head Teacher 17.

This head teacher's statement reflects a perceived ambiguity in the regulations governing school levies. The lack of a clear, standardized formula for determining levy amounts and approved uses can lead to inconsistencies in implementation across different ECDE centers. This ambiguity can create confusion among parents and raise concerns about the fairness and

transparency of the levy system, highlighting the need for more precise guidelines and clear communication from educational authorities.

#### **4.4.8 Discussions of the Findings**

The study on levies imposed in public Early Childhood Development and Education (ECDE) centers in Kisumu West Sub-County offers a detailed look at how financial practices impact access and quality of early childhood education. The study found that all ECDE centers charged tuition and registration fees, which highlights the reality that public education systems, even at the early childhood level, often require financial contributions from parents. This is particularly evident in low- and middle-income countries where government funding is typically inadequate to cover all operational costs (UNESCO, 2015). Tuition fees in ECDE centers are generally used to pay for teacher salaries, learning materials, and other operational expenses, but these costs can be a significant burden for low-income families.

The requirement for tuition fees reflects a challenge facing many governments—balancing the need for quality education with limited public funding. According to Gertler et al. (2014), quality education in early childhood is one of the most effective interventions for improving lifetime outcomes, including higher academic achievement, better health, and increased earnings. However, when parents must contribute financially to public education, it often leads to inequalities in access, as poorer families may be forced to prioritize immediate needs over long-term educational investments.

About 75% of the ECDE centers charged activity fees to cover extracurricular activities. These activities are essential for a child's overall development, promoting cognitive, social, and emotional skills that complement academic learning (Barnett & Frede, 2010). Activities such as sports, music, and art contribute to a well-rounded education and help to develop critical thinking, teamwork, and creativity. However, the need for parents to cover the cost of these activities through fees presents a financial challenge for many. In contexts like Kisumu West, where household incomes are often low and unstable, extracurricular fees can become a prohibitive factor, limiting children's participation in important developmental experiences. Research by Engle et al. (2011) stresses that children from disadvantaged backgrounds benefit

the most from holistic educational experiences, yet they are often the least likely to access them due to financial constraints.

Half of the ECDE centers imposed development fees aimed at improving infrastructure. Development fees are typically used to fund repairs, expansions, and the purchase of new facilities, such as playgrounds or learning resources. These fees are critical for ensuring that the learning environment remains safe and conducive to education. In low-resource settings like Kisumu West, public ECDE centers often suffer from inadequate infrastructure, including overcrowded classrooms, insufficient sanitation facilities, and a lack of learning materials (Abuya et al., 2013). While infrastructure improvements are necessary, the reliance on development fees from parents underscores the gaps in government funding. Ideally, public funds should be allocated to ensure that all children have access to quality educational environments. The charging of development fees can exacerbate inequalities, as wealthier families may be able to afford better facilities, while poorer families may have to settle for under-resourced schools.

Only 16% of the centers charged for educational trips, a figure likely constrained by the cost of organizing such activities. Educational trips offer valuable experiential learning opportunities that expose children to new environments and real-world applications of what they learn in the classroom (Falk & Dierking, 2018). For instance, visits to museums, farms, or science centers can deepen children's understanding of subjects like history, agriculture, and science. However, organizing trips requires logistical resources and financial input, which can be a challenge for schools and parents alike, particularly in low-income regions. This low percentage suggests that while educators recognize the value of these trips, the financial realities make them difficult to implement consistently. Falk and Dierking (2018) also argue that the lack of access to experiential learning opportunities in early childhood can limit a child's intellectual curiosity and overall engagement with education.

The study found that most ECDE centers collected fees either termly or monthly, with monthly collections providing a steady cash flow for the centers. From the school's perspective, regular monthly payments help ensure the timely payment of staff salaries and other operational costs. However, this payment structure can be challenging for families with irregular income patterns, which is common in many low-income households. Families dependent on seasonal

work, informal employment, or small-scale farming may struggle to meet regular monthly payments. Chowa et al. (2015) note that for many families in sub-Saharan Africa, cash flow is inconsistent, and the ability to make lump-sum payments can be more manageable, especially when aligned with harvest seasons or other income-earning cycles. Monthly payment structures may force families into financial stress, which can lead to delayed payments and, in some cases, children missing out on school due to unpaid fees.

The study revealed that on average, half of the centers charged between 1000 and 2000 Kenyan Shillings (Ksh) per child per term, which was seen as a balance between affordability for families and the need for schools to cover their operational costs. However, it is concerning that only 29.51% of centers offered discounts or exemptions, which suggests that the majority of low-income families receive little to no financial support when it comes to school fees. Access to early childhood education is critical for cognitive and socio-emotional development, particularly for children from disadvantaged backgrounds. As Heckman (2006) points out, investments in early childhood education generate the highest returns for society, as they help reduce future social costs, such as crime, welfare dependency, and poor health outcomes. By not offering sufficient discounts or fee exemptions, many ECDE centers are unintentionally excluding children who would benefit the most from quality education.

One of the most significant findings of the study was that only 3.28% of centers reported having formal guidelines governing the collection and use of levies. The lack of regulation in this area leads to inconsistencies in how levies are imposed and used, which can perpetuate disparities between schools. Without clear policies, there is a risk that funds collected from parents may not be used transparently or equitably. Government regulation is critical for ensuring that public ECDE centers operate within an accountable and standardized framework. UNICEF (2019) emphasizes that strong regulatory systems are essential for guaranteeing that early childhood programs provide high-quality education while remaining affordable for all families. In the absence of such guidelines, there is a risk of mismanagement and unequal access to resources.

Most centers communicated levy information through circulars and meetings, but the study found that gaps in understanding persisted among parents. Effective communication is essential in ensuring transparency and building trust between parents and schools, especially

when it comes to financial matters. Parents need to fully understand the purpose of levies, how they are calculated, and how the funds are being utilized. According to Mumba and Adjei (2021), clear communication between schools and parents not only improves financial transparency but also encourages parental engagement in the child’s education. In cases where communication is unclear or incomplete, parents may feel disconnected from the school, which can lead to misunderstandings and mistrust. Additionally, improving communication about fees and available financial support could help alleviate some of the financial stress experienced by families.

#### **4.5 Impact of School Levies on Learner’s Enrollment in Public ECDE Centers in Kisumu West Sub-county**

The second objective was to find out how school levies affect learners’ enrolment in public ECDE centers in Kisumu west Sub-County. The questionnaire was administered to 61 public ECDE centers in Kisumu West Sub- County to understand how school levies affect learner’s enrollment. Below are the detailed findings for each question, supported by tables and charts.

##### **4.5.1. Impact of School Levies on the enrollment rates**

The table 6 shows the responses from public ECDE centers in Kisumu West Sub-county regarding whether school levies have significantly affected enrollment rates.

**Table 6: School Levies had a Significant Impact on the Enrollment Rates**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage of Centers (%)</b>
Yes	39.65	65
No	21.35	35

#### **Findings**

A majority (65%) of the centers indicated that school levies have a significant impact on enrollment rates. This suggests that the cost of levies is a major factor influencing parents’ decisions to enroll their children in ECDE centers. The financial burden posed by levies may be discouraging many parents from enrolling their children, particularly those from lower-income households. On the other hand, 35% of the centers reported that school levies do not

significantly affect enrollment rates. This could be due to a variety of reasons, such as the availability of financial support mechanisms, community support, or lower levy amounts that are manageable for most parents.

The findings are consistent with existing literature on the impact of school fees on access to early childhood education. Studies indicate that financial constraints are a significant barrier to enrollment in ECDE programs, particularly in low-income regions. The World Bank has reported that even small fees can lead to decreased enrollment and increased dropout rates, as families may prioritize other immediate needs over education.

In regions like Kisumu West, where many families may be living below the poverty line, the additional cost of school levies can be prohibitive. Research by UNICEF highlights that indirect costs associated with education—such as uniforms, stationery, and activity fees—can also contribute to the financial burden, leading to lower enrollment rates.

Reduced enrollment due to high levies can have long-term consequences on educational outcomes. Early childhood education is crucial for cognitive and social development, and missing out on this foundational stage can have lasting negative effects on children's academic performance and overall development.

A significant number of head teachers reported that school levies have negatively affected enrollment rates. They noted that many parents are hesitant to enroll their children due to the financial burden of these levies. Two of headteachers said that:

"Yes, the levies have had a negative impact on our enrollment. Many parents prefer to keep their children at home rather than incur additional costs." — Head Teacher 3

"We've seen a decline in enrollment numbers over the past few years as the levies have increased." — Head Teacher 15

The financial demands associated with school levies are a significant deterrent to families considering enrolling their children in ECDE centers. This suggests that levies are creating a barrier to early education, particularly for families in economically disadvantaged situations.

#### 4.5.2. Perceived Nature of the Impact of School Levies on Enrollment Rates

The data shows the perceived nature of the impact of school levies on enrollment rates in public ECDE centers in Kisumu West Sub-County.

**Table 7: Perceived Nature of the Impact of School Levies on Enrollment Rates**

<b>Impact</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage of Centers (%)</b>
Positive	9	14.8
Negative	49	80.3
No Impact	3	4.9

The majority (80.3%) of the centers reported a negative impact of school levies on enrollment rates. This suggests that high school levies are a significant deterrent for parents when deciding to enroll their children in ECDE centers. The financial burden imposed by levies may lead to parents opting out of formal education for their young children, especially in economically disadvantaged households.

A small proportion (14.8%) of the centers reported a positive impact of school levies on enrollment. This could be attributed to the perception that higher levies are associated with better quality education or improved facilities, which may attract some parents who value these aspects and can afford the costs. A minimal number of centers (4.9%) indicated that school levies have no impact on enrollment. This might be due to factors such as consistent enrollment regardless of levy amounts, or the presence of financial assistance programs that mitigate the effect of levies on enrollment decisions.

The findings align with existing literature that highlights the negative impact of school fees and levies on access to early childhood education. According to a study by the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), high fees can significantly reduce enrollment rates, particularly in low-income areas where families struggle to meet basic needs. The negative impact reported by the majority of centers reflects the broader issue of economic inequality. Research by UNESCO suggests that financial barriers disproportionately affect marginalized and vulnerable communities, leading to lower educational attainment and perpetuating cycles of poverty.

The minority of centers reporting a positive impact may reflect a situation where parents equate higher levies with better quality education, as supported by literature on parental expectations and school choice. However, this scenario often excludes lower-income families, exacerbating disparities in educational access. The consensus among head teachers was that the impact of school levies has been predominantly negative. Few, if any, observed any positive impact such as improved resources or quality of education directly attributable to the levies. Two of head teachers said that:

"The impact has been mostly negative. Parents see the levies as an additional burden, and it discourages them from enrolling their children." — Head Teacher 10

"While the levies help run the school, they do more harm than good by pushing parents away." — Head Teacher 6

The negative perception of school levies outweighs any potential benefits, suggesting that the levies are not justified in the eyes of the parents and do not translate into visible improvements in educational quality or resources.

#### **4.5.3. Current Levies Discourage Parents from Enrolling Their Children in ECDE centers**

The data provides insights into the perceptions of ECDE centers regarding whether the current school levies discourage parents from enrolling their children. The responses from the 61 ECDE centers surveyed are as follows:

**Table 8: Current Levies Discourage Parents from Enrolling Their Children in ECDE centers**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage of Centers (%)</b>
Yes	43	70.5
No	18	29.5

A significant majority (70.5%) of the ECDE centers believe that the current levies discourage parents from enrolling their children. This suggests that the cost of school levies is a substantial barrier for many families, potentially limiting access to early childhood education, especially

for low-income households. Conversely, 29.5% of the centers do not believe that levies discourage enrollment. This could indicate that some parents are willing to pay the levies, possibly due to the perceived value or quality of education offered at the centers, or that these centers have more affluent catchment areas where families are less affected by the costs.

The finding that 70.5% of the centers see levies as a deterrent aligns with research showing that financial barriers, such as school fees and levies, are a major reason why many children, particularly in low-income regions, do not attend school. The World Bank and UNICEF have documented the adverse effects of such financial constraints on school enrollment rates globally, especially in developing countries.

Studies indicate that the affordability of education is closely tied to household income. Families in lower income brackets are more likely to forego education for their children if the costs are perceived as too high. This creates a situation where only those who can afford the levies are able to access early education, leading to educational inequality. Parental perceptions of the value of education in relation to the cost play a significant role in school choice. Some parents may prioritize ECDE enrollment if they perceive that the benefits of early education outweigh the costs, even in the presence of high levies. However, this tends to apply more to families with higher economic stability.

The data indicates that the majority of ECDE centers perceive school levies as a significant deterrent to enrollment. All head teachers responded with a resounding "Yes," agreeing that current school levies discourage parents from enrolling their children in ECDE centers. Two of headteacher said that:

"Parents often cite the levies as the main reason for not enrolling their children. They feel the costs are too high for basic education." — Head Teacher 1

"Yes, definitely. Even those who want to bring their children to school are hesitant because they fear being unable to pay the levies consistently." — Head Teacher 13

The uniformity in responses indicates a widespread belief among educators that the current structure of school levies is a significant barrier to enrollment. This belief suggests an urgent need for policy review and financial support mechanisms to encourage higher enrollment rates.

The table 9 presents the primary reasons identified by ECDE centers for why parents might be discouraged from enrolling their children. The survey data indicates the frequency and percentage of centers citing each reason:

**Table 9: Primary reasons identified by ECDE centers for why parents might be discouraged from enrolling their children**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage of Centers (%)</b>
High Costs	47	77.0
Lack of Information	32	52.5
Perception of Value	26	42.6

The predominant reason reported by 77.0% of the ECDE centers is the high cost of school levies. Many parents find it difficult to afford the required fees for enrollment, such as tuition, registration, and additional levies for activities or development. This financial barrier is particularly impactful for low-income families who may prioritize other basic needs over education expenses. Over half of the centers (52.5%) indicated that a lack of information is a key factor. This could involve parents being unaware of the benefits of ECDE, the specific levies required, or available support programs. Poor communication between schools and parents can lead to misconceptions or apprehensions about enrolling their children.

A considerable number of centers (42.6%) noted that parents' perception of the value of early childhood education relative to its cost discourages them from enrolling their children. If parents do not perceive a significant return on investment, they may opt not to enroll, especially if they believe that their child can learn at home or if they do not see a direct link between ECDE and future educational success.

Studies consistently show that high education costs are a major barrier to access, particularly in low-income communities. According to UNESCO and UNICEF reports, financial barriers such as tuition fees, registration costs, and levies can lead to lower enrollment rates, especially in regions where household incomes are limited.

A lack of awareness about the importance of early childhood education or misconceptions about the costs and benefits can prevent parents from enrolling their children. Research indicates that when parents are better informed about the developmental benefits of ECDE and the actual costs involved, they are more likely to invest in their children’s education.

Parental perceptions of value significantly influence educational decisions. If parents feel that the quality of education does not justify the cost, they are less likely to enroll their children. This issue can be exacerbated by a lack of visible outcomes or poor quality of education, which reinforces negative perceptions. The data highlights significant barriers to ECDE enrollment in Kisumu West Sub- County, with high costs being the most frequently cited reason for discouragement.

#### **4.5.4. Frequency of parents withdraw their children due to the inability to pay the levies**

The following table summarizes how frequently parents withdraw their children from ECDE centers in Kisumu West Sub- County due to an inability to pay school levies:

**Table 10: Frequently Parents Withdraw their Children from ECDE Centers**

<b>Frequency of Withdrawal</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage of Centers (%)</b>
Never	12	19.7
Rarely (Once a year)	24	39.3
Occasionally (Once a term)	19	31.1
Often (More than once a term)	6	9.8

A significant proportion of teachers (39.3%) reported that parents rarely withdraw their children due to financial issues, which typically happens once a year. However, 31.1% of teachers observed occasional withdrawals, occurring once a term. Furthermore, 9.8% of the teachers reported that this happens often, more than once a term. This suggests that while some families manage to cope, many face ongoing financial struggles affecting their ability to sustain their children’s education.

In 19.7% of the teachers, there were no reported cases of children being withdrawn due to financial constraints. This may indicate that in these centers, parents either have better financial

stability, or there are effective support systems in place, such as fee waivers, community support, or government assistance.

Financial constraints are a well-documented cause of school dropout rates, particularly in regions with high poverty levels. Studies indicate that even minimal fees can be prohibitive for families with limited incomes. In ECDE settings, where foundational learning is crucial, interruptions in education due to financial issues can negatively impact children's cognitive and social development.

Irregular attendance or frequent withdrawals can disrupt a child's learning process, leading to gaps in knowledge and skills acquisition. Literature on early childhood education emphasizes the importance of consistent attendance for optimal learning outcomes. When parents withdraw children due to financial constraints, it not only affects the individual child but also undermines the overall educational environment and stability of the ECDE center.

The data indicates that financial constraints significantly influence parents' decisions to withdraw their children from ECDE centers. Withdrawals due to inability to pay levies occur frequently, with many head teachers noting that such cases happen every term. This was revealed during interview session as indicated below:

"Almost every term, we lose a few students because their parents can no longer afford the levies." — Head Teacher 7

"It's a common issue. Some parents even withdraw their children after just a few weeks of trying to manage the fees." — Head Teacher 17

The regularity of withdrawals due to financial constraints highlights the instability in learner retention. This not only disrupts the educational experience for the children but also affects the operational stability of the ECDE centers.

#### **4.5.5. Percentage of eligible children not enrolled due to school levies**

The table 11 summarizes the perceptions of the ECDE center administrators regarding the percentage of eligible children not enrolled in their centers due to school levies in Kisumu West Sub- County.

**Table 11: Perceptions of the ECDE Center Administrators Regarding the Percentage of Eligible Children not Enrolled in their Centers due to School Levies**

Percentage Not Enrolled	Frequency	Percentage of Centers (%)
Less than 10%	37	60.7
10-30%	12	19.7
30-50%	9	14.8
More than 50%	3	4.9

A majority of ECDE teachers (60.7%) indicated that less than 10% of eligible children are not enrolled due to school levies. This suggests that while school levies may be a barrier for some, a significant proportion of families are still able to enroll their children despite the costs.

About 19.7% of teachers reported that between 10-30% of eligible children are not enrolled due to school levies. This indicates a moderate impact, reflecting a notable number of families for whom the cost of levies is a deterrent.

In 14.8% of the teachers, between 30-50% of eligible children are not enrolled due to school levies, highlighting a substantial impact. Additionally, 4.9% of teachers reported that more than 50% of eligible children are not enrolled, indicating that in these areas, school levies are a major barrier to access.

The issue of school levies acting as a barrier to education is widely documented. Levies can disproportionately affect low-income families, making it difficult for them to afford early childhood education. This is consistent with findings in other regions where even minimal fees have been shown to significantly reduce enrollment rates, particularly in low-income communities.

The variation in reported non-enrollment rates among centers suggests disparities in how different communities are affected by school levies. Centers reporting lower non-enrollment rates may be in areas with relatively higher economic stability or better support systems, while those reporting higher rates may serve communities with more severe financial constraints.

Early childhood education is crucial for the development of foundational skills and long-term academic success. Barriers to enrollment at this stage can have long-lasting effects,

contributing to lower academic performance and higher dropout rates in later years. This underlines the importance of addressing financial barriers to ensure that all children have access to quality ECDE services.

The data indicates that while the majority of ECDE centers report low non-enrollment rates due to school levies, there are significant pockets where financial barriers are a major issue. Head teachers estimated that between 5% to 10% of eligible children in their areas are not enrolled in ECDE centers due to the prohibitive cost of school levies. Two of the headteacher said that:

*"I would estimate about 5% of eligible children are not enrolled because of the fees. Many families simply cannot afford it."* — Head Teacher 11

*"At least half of the children in our area are not attending school due to the levies. It's a huge issue."* — Head Teacher 19

The high percentage of unenrolled children due to school levies suggests a systemic issue that could have long-term negative effects on educational attainment and socio-economic development in the region

#### **4.5.6. Parents perception on the affordability of school levies**

The table 12 provides an overview of how parents perceive the affordability of school levies at ECDE centers in Kisumu West Sub- County.

**Table 12: How Parents Perceive the Affordability of School Levies at ECDE centers**

<b>Affordability Perception</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage of Centers (%)</b>
Affordable	9	14.8
Somewhat Affordable	34	55.7
Unaffordable	18	29.5

A significant majority of ECDE teachers (55.7%) reported that parents perceive school levies as 'Somewhat Affordable.' This suggests that while parents may find the levies manageable, there are underlying concerns regarding the financial burden. This group might include parents who make sacrifices or adjustments in their budget to meet these costs. About 29.5% of

teachers indicated that parents perceive school levies as 'Unaffordable.' This highlights a considerable portion of the population struggling to pay the required fees, which could potentially lead to financial strain, reduced access to education, or even withdrawal of children from the centers. Only 14.8% of teachers reported that parents find the levies 'Affordable.' This small percentage indicates that, for most parents, the cost of school levies is a significant consideration, and only a few feel that the costs are comfortably within their financial means.

Studies show that even relatively low fees can be a barrier for families with limited financial resources. The perception of affordability is influenced by several factors, including household income, the availability of alternative education options, and the perceived value of the education provided. High levies can lead to low enrollment and high dropout rates, as parents are forced to prioritize other essential household needs over education.

Parents who find levies 'Somewhat Affordable' may be making significant financial trade-offs, such as reducing spending on food, healthcare, or other necessities, to afford school levies. This can have long-term negative effects on household welfare and child well-being. The perception of unaffordable levies contributes to educational inequity, as children from low-income families may be excluded from early childhood education. This exclusion can have lasting impacts on their cognitive and social development, reinforcing cycles of poverty and limiting future opportunities.

The data indicates that while most parents find school levies 'Somewhat Affordable,' a significant proportion view them as 'Unaffordable.' Parents generally perceive the school levies as unaffordable, particularly in the context of other household expenses. Many parents feel that the levies are disproportionately high relative to the quality of education provided. This was evident during interview session where some of the headteachers revealed that:

*"Most parents think the levies are too high, especially for those with more than one child in school."* — Head Teacher 4

*"They see it as unfair because they are struggling to meet basic needs, and the levies add another layer of financial pressure."* — Head Teacher 2

The perception of unaffordability among parents indicates a disconnect between the cost of education and the perceived value or necessity of these levies. This perception could lead to long-term disenfranchisement from the formal education system.

#### **4.5.7. Income brackets that are disproportionately affected by school levies?**

The table 13 summarizes the findings on which income brackets are disproportionately affected by school levies in public ECDE centers in Kisumu West Sub- County.

**Table 13: Specific income brackets that are disproportionately affected by school levies**

<b>Income Bracket</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage of Centers (%)</b>
Low-Income	46	75.4
Middle-Income	12	19.7
High-Income	3	4.9

A majority of the centers (75.4%) indicated that low-income families are disproportionately affected by school levies. This finding suggests that for families with limited financial resources, the cost of school levies can be a major barrier to accessing early childhood education. Such financial strain can lead to difficulties in maintaining regular attendance and even result in dropping out.

About 19.7% of centers reported that middle-income families also experience challenges related to school levies. While these families may not face the same level of financial difficulty as low-income families, the cumulative cost of levies can still be burdensome, especially for households with multiple children in school.

Only 4.9% of centers indicated that high-income families are significantly affected by school levies. This low percentage reflects the fact that higher-income families have greater financial flexibility and can absorb the costs associated with education more easily than lower-income households.

Research indicates that financial constraints are a key factor contributing to educational inequality. For low-income families, even relatively modest fees can be prohibitive, preventing children from accessing quality early childhood education. This can have long-term implications, as early education is critical for cognitive and social development.

The disproportionate impact of school levies on low-income families can perpetuate the cycle of poverty. Children who miss out on early education are more likely to experience academic difficulties later in life, reducing their future earning potential and increasing the likelihood of intergenerational poverty.

Middle-income families, while not as severely affected as low-income families, often experience what is termed the "middle-income squeeze," where they are not eligible for subsidies or financial aid but still struggle to afford educational expenses. This group may face difficult choices, such as limiting extracurricular activities or choosing less expensive schooling options.

The findings indicate that school levies have a significant impact on low-income families, posing a barrier to accessing early childhood education. Middle-income families are also affected, though to a lesser extent, while high-income families experience minimal impact. Addressing these disparities requires a multifaceted approach, including targeted subsidies, income-based levies, community support, and government intervention. By implementing these strategies, the burden of school levies can be alleviated, ensuring equitable access to early childhood education for all children in Kisumu West Sub- County.

During interview with headteachers it was observed that families in the lower-income brackets are disproportionately affected by school levies. These families often have irregular income streams and face competing financial priorities, making it difficult to allocate funds for education.

*"The low-income families are the most affected. They have to choose between feeding their children and paying the school levies."* — Head Teacher 18

*"It's mostly the families who earn below the minimum wage who struggle the most with the levies."* — Head Teacher 16

The disproportionate impact on low-income families exacerbates social inequalities and limits opportunities for children from these backgrounds to access early education, perpetuating a cycle of poverty.

#### **4.5.8 Parent Perception on the quality of education provided in relation to the cost of school levies**

The survey conducted among various educational centers aimed to assess parents' perceptions of the quality of education in relation to the cost of school levies. The results revealed three distinct categories of perception, each shedding light on the parents' views and experiences.

A total of 21 teachers were perceived by parents as offering educational quality that aligns with the costs incurred. This indicates that a significant minority of parents feel satisfied with the value they receive. This group likely recognizes the effort and resources invested by the school in delivering a quality educational experience. The perception of matching quality and cost suggests that these parents have confidence in the educational services their children receive and believe that the fees are justifiable given the outcomes they observe.

The majority of respondents, representing 27 teachers, expressed the view that the cost of education exceeds the quality being provided. This perception reflects a deep-seated concern among parents regarding the perceived inefficiency of the educational system in delivering adequate value for the fees charged. Parents in this group may be experiencing disappointment due to various factors, such as inadequate resources, outdated curricula, or insufficient teacher support, leading to a feeling of dissatisfaction with their investment in education.

Only 13 teachers were perceived as justifying their costs through high-quality education. This minority group suggests that some parents are willing to pay a premium for what they consider exceptional educational experiences. Parents in this category may believe that the school offers unique programs, exceptional faculty, or superior facilities that warrant the higher fees. This perception indicates a recognition of quality factors that contribute to a fulfilling educational experience.

The findings reveal a landscape of mixed perceptions among parents regarding the value of education relative to its costs. The predominant sentiment—45% of parents believing that the costs are too high—suggests a systemic issue within the educational framework. This dissatisfaction may stem from various factors. Parents often have high expectations for educational institutions, driven by the promise of quality education. When these expectations are not met, it leads to frustration. The 45% who feel the costs are unjustified might be

comparing their experiences with other educational options or looking at benchmark standards they believe should be met.

In today's economic climate, families are increasingly sensitive to expenditures. Rising costs of living and education may amplify feelings of dissatisfaction, especially if parents perceive that their investment is not yielding satisfactory educational outcomes. The criteria by which parents judge educational quality can vary significantly. Some may prioritize academic performance, while others might focus on extracurricular opportunities, student support services, or the school's overall environment. The divergence in expectations can lead to differing perceptions of whether the costs are justified.

The 35% of parents who feel that the quality matches the cost indicate a positive perception that could be leveraged by educational institutions. These satisfied parents may become advocates for their schools, providing testimonials that can help attract new students and support fundraising efforts. However, institutions must ensure that this positive sentiment is not taken for granted and continuously work to maintain and improve the quality of education.

The smaller group of 20% who believe that the costs are justified by the quality indicates a niche market willing to invest more for perceived excellence. Educational institutions may want to target this demographic through marketing strategies that emphasize their unique offerings, such as specialized programs, advanced placement courses, or unique teaching methodologies that distinguish them from competitors.

The findings suggest that school levies have a significant impact on learner enrollment in public ECDE centers in Kisumu West Sub-county. During the researcher observed that many parents feel that the quality of education provided does not justify the high cost of school levies. They express concerns that despite paying these fees, the resources and facilities in ECDE centers remain inadequate.

*"Parents often say they don't see the value for their money. The facilities are basic, and they wonder what the levies are used for."* — Head Teacher 20

*"There's a lot of dissatisfaction. Parents feel the education quality is poor compared to what they pay."* — Head Teacher 12

The perception that the levies are not translating into improved educational quality undermines trust in the ECDE system. This dissatisfaction can lead to reduced parental support and engagement, further impacting learner outcomes.

#### **4.5.9 Discussions of the Findings**

The study's findings on how school levies affect enrollment rates in public Early Childhood Development and Education (ECDE) centers in Kisumu West Sub-County offer significant insights into the broader issues surrounding educational accessibility and equity. The results indicate that the cost of attending ECDE centers is a major determinant of whether children, particularly those from low-income families, are enrolled and remain in school. According to the study, 80.3% of teachers observed a negative impact of school levies on enrollment rates. This trend is consistent with global findings on education in low-income regions, where financial barriers are one of the most significant challenges to ensuring access to early childhood education. UNESCO (2019) emphasizes that early childhood education is the foundation for lifelong learning, yet financial constraints often prevent children from accessing these opportunities. In Kisumu West, high levies prevent many parents from enrolling their children in ECDE centers, directly contributing to lower enrollment rates.

In particular, 65% of teachers reported that school levies significantly affected enrollment, demonstrating how the cost of early childhood education has become a barrier. This finding is in line with studies from similar contexts, which show that households are often forced to prioritize immediate financial survival over long-term educational investments, particularly in low-income settings (Heckman, 2006). In sub-Saharan Africa, parents must frequently choose between sending their children to school and meeting other critical needs, such as food and healthcare (Engle et al., 2011).

A significant percentage of ECDE centers in the study reported frequent withdrawals of children from school due to parents' inability to pay school levies. This is a concerning finding, as it disrupts the continuity of learning, which is especially critical in the early years of a child's development. Early childhood education provides the cognitive, social, and emotional foundation that will shape a child's future learning experiences (Barnett & Frede, 2010). Interruptions in attendance caused by financial difficulties not only undermine this foundation

but also widen the achievement gap between children from different socio-economic backgrounds. The frequent withdrawals due to fee-related issues reflect the precarious financial situations many families face. The study noted that 70.5% of ECDE centers believed that the current levies actively discourage parents from enrolling their children. This highlights a systemic issue in the financing of public ECDE centers, where the reliance on levies creates a barrier to achieving universal access to early childhood education. According to Chowa et al. (2015), financial inclusion and support mechanisms are crucial in ensuring that all children, regardless of their family's income level, have access to education.

The study showed that 75.4% of teachers identified low-income families as the most affected by school levies. This reflects a broader pattern of educational inequality, where children from poorer households face greater barriers to accessing quality education. For these families, school levies represent a significant financial burden, exacerbating existing socio-economic disparities. In regions like Kisumu West, where poverty levels are high, many parents struggle to afford basic needs, and the added cost of education often becomes unaffordable. The disproportionate impact on low-income families perpetuates cycles of poverty. Without access to early childhood education, children from these families are less likely to develop the skills necessary for future academic success, which reduces their long-term economic prospects. Research by Heckman (2006) has shown that investments in early childhood education yield the highest returns for disadvantaged children, as they reduce the need for remedial education, lower dropout rates, and improve earning potential later in life. However, without affordable access to ECDE, these benefits remain out of reach for many children in Kisumu West.

The study found that only a small percentage of parents viewed school levies as affordable, with most perceiving them as somewhat affordable or unaffordable. This perception of unaffordability is particularly concerning in a context where many families are already struggling to make ends meet. When parents view school fees as unaffordable, it not only deters them from enrolling their children but also creates a sense of exclusion, as education becomes something that is inaccessible to the poor. Moreover, 45% of parents believed that the levies did not justify the quality of education provided. This perception of poor value for money may further discourage parents from enrolling their children, as they may feel that they are not receiving a fair return on their financial investment in their child's education. Research has

shown that parental satisfaction with the quality of education is closely linked to enrollment decisions (Mumba & Adjei, 2021). If parents perceive that the education their children are receiving is of low quality, they may opt not to pay the levies, leading to lower enrollment rates and higher dropout rates.

The study's findings highlight the broader issue of educational inequalities, where high school levies hinder access to early childhood education and disproportionately disadvantage children from economically vulnerable families. Early childhood education is critical in laying the foundation for future learning, yet high fees create a system in which only families with sufficient resources can afford to send their children to school. This perpetuates a cycle of inequality, as children from wealthier families are better prepared for primary and secondary education, while children from poorer families are left behind. Educational inequalities are a significant concern globally, with UNICEF (2019) stressing that equitable access to quality early childhood education is key to reducing poverty and promoting social mobility. In Kisumu West, the lack of financial support mechanisms, such as subsidies or fee waivers for low-income families, exacerbates these inequalities, preventing many children from accessing the education they need to succeed in life. Without intervention, these disparities will continue to widen, further entrenching poverty and limiting opportunities for future generations.

The study demonstrates that school levies are a significant barrier to enrollment in public ECDE centers in Kisumu West Sub-County. High levies deter parents from enrolling their children, particularly those from low-income families, contributing to lower enrollment rates and frequent withdrawals.

#### **4.6 Influence of School Levies on Learner's Retention and Completion Rate in Public ECDE Centers in Kisumu West Sub-county**

The third objective was to find out how school levies influence learners' retention and completion rate in public ECDE centers in Kisumu West Sub County. The questionnaire was administered to 61 public ECDE centers in Kisumu West Sub-county to evaluate the influence of school levies on learner's retention and completion rate. Below are the detailed findings for each question, supported by tables and charts.

#### **4.6.1. Instances where learners drop out because of inability to pay school levies?**

The survey results regarding instances of student dropout due to inability to pay school levies reveal a concerning trend among educational centers. The data indicates that 46 teachers reported instances of learners dropping out due to financial constraints, accounting for 75.4% of the total responses. However, 15 of the respondents indicated that they had not observed such instances, representing 24.6% of the total. This significant disparity highlights a prevalent issue within the educational landscape, where a substantial majority of teachers acknowledge the impact of financial barriers on student retention.

The finding that 75.4% of teachers have observed students dropping out due to inability to pay school levies points to a critical concern about access to education. The high percentage of teachers reporting dropouts suggests that financial challenges are a significant barrier to education for many families. Economic hardships, whether due to job loss, medical expenses, or other financial strains, can make it difficult for families to sustain the costs associated with school levies. This reality is increasingly relevant in times of economic instability, where many families face unexpected financial burdens.

The dropout rates linked to financial constraints indicate a broader issue of educational equity. When students leave school due to the inability to pay levies, it often disproportionately affects those from lower-income backgrounds. This situation can perpetuate cycles of poverty and limit opportunities for affected students, hindering their future prospects and contributing to wider societal inequities.

The fact that 24.6% of teachers have not observed dropouts suggests that some institutions may have measures in place to support families struggling with costs. This could include scholarship programs, sliding scale fees, or proactive communication with families to address financial concerns before they lead to dropout. Understanding the practices of these schools could provide valuable insights into effective strategies for retaining students facing financial difficulties.

The survey findings underscore a pressing challenge within the education system, where financial constraints are leading to increased dropout rates. The majority of head teachers reported observing frequent cases where learners dropped out because their families could not

afford to pay the required school levies. These dropouts typically occurred mid-term or towards the end of the term when levies were due. Two of the head teachers said that:

"Yes, we have had several cases where learners dropped out because their parents couldn't pay the levies. This happens almost every term." — Head Teacher 6

"Many children leave school because their parents can't afford the fees. It's heartbreaking, especially when these children are eager to learn." — Head Teacher 14

The inability to pay school levies is a significant factor contributing to the dropout rates in ECDE centers. This financial constraint disrupts the educational journey of young learners, leading to interrupted learning experiences and reducing the number of students who complete their early education.

#### **4.6.2. Retention Rates of Learners From Enrollment To Completion in Early Childhood Development and Education (ECDE) centers**

The survey results regarding the retention rates of learners from enrollment to completion in Early Childhood Development and Education (ECDE) centers provide valuable insights into student persistence and engagement. The data is categorized into four retention rate brackets, as follows:

**Table 14: Retention Rates of Learners From Enrollment To Completion in Early Childhood Development and Education (ECDE) centers**

<b>Retention Rate (%)</b>	<b>Number of Centers</b>	<b>Percentage of Centers (%)</b>
90-100	10	16.4
75-89	18	29.5
50-74	24	39.3
Below 50	9	14.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The findings reveal the following distribution of retention rates across the surveyed centers: 16.4% of teachers report a retention rate of 90-100%, indicating that a small number of

institutions manage to retain nearly all enrolled learners until completion. 29.5% of teachers fall within the 75-89% retention rate bracket, showing a moderate level of success in maintaining student enrollment. The largest group, 39.3%, reports a retention rate of 50-74%, suggesting that a significant portion of learners do not continue through to completion. Finally, 14.8% of teachers report retention rates of below 50%, indicating a concerning level of student dropout.

The findings illustrate a mixed picture of learner retention in ECDE centers. A substantial portion of teachers (39.3%) falls within the 50-74% retention range, which indicates that while many students do complete their early childhood education, a notable number do not. This range highlights potential concerns regarding the factors influencing student retention. The small percentage of centers achieving retention rates of 90-100% suggests that these institutions have successfully implemented strategies that foster student engagement and commitment. This success could be attributed to strong community support, effective teaching methodologies, and a welcoming environment that encourages learners to continue their education.

The centers in the 75-89% range reflect a generally positive retention rate but still indicate room for improvement. The fact that nearly one-third of centers fall into this category suggests that while many learners remain enrolled, factors such as financial constraints, family circumstances, or academic challenges may still contribute to some level of dropout.

The significant percentage of centers reporting retention rates below 75% raises red flags about the challenges facing early childhood education. The 39.3% of centers with retention rates between 50-74% and 14.8% with rates below 50% suggest that a substantial number of learners are not completing their education. This could be indicative of barriers such as economic hardships, lack of parental support, or insufficient educational resources, all of which can hinder student persistence.

The retention rate findings from ECDE centers reveal a significant opportunity for improvement in student persistence from enrollment to completion. Head teachers indicated varying retention rates, with some reporting as low as 50% from enrollment to completion.

Factors such as family income levels and availability of alternative educational support affected these rates. Two of the headteacher said that:

"We start with about 60 learners at the beginning of the year, but by the end, only about 30 to 35 remain." — Head Teacher 9

"Our retention rate is around 70%. Those who leave often do so because they cannot afford the fees." — Head Teacher 17

The retention rates in many ECDE centers are worryingly low, largely due to financial difficulties faced by families. This suggests that many learners are unable to complete their foundational education, which could have long-term impacts on their academic and personal development.

#### 4.6.3. Specific terms or periods when dropout rates increase due to levy-related issues?

The survey results examining specific periods when dropout rates increase due to levy-related issues provide critical insights into the timing of financial pressures faced by families. The data reveals the following distribution across different periods:

**Table 15: Specific Periods when Dropout Rates Increase due to Levy-Related Issues**

Period	Number of Centers	Percentage of Centers (%)
Beginning of Term	37	60.7
Mid-Term	15	24.6
End of Term	6	9.8
No Specific Period	3	4.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The findings indicate that 60.7% of teachers observe increased dropout rates at the beginning of the term, suggesting that financial obligations at the start of a new academic year significantly impact families. 24.6% of teachers report a rise in dropouts mid-term, indicating ongoing financial challenges that may arise throughout the academic period. 9.8% of teachers see increased dropout rates at the end of the term, pointing to potential financial strain as

families assess their educational commitments. 4.9% of teachers report no specific period when dropouts increase, suggesting that financial issues may be more sporadic or less predictable for some families.

The data highlights a clear trend in dropout rates correlating with specific periods in the academic calendar, particularly the beginning of the term. The high percentage of teachers (60.7%) indicating that dropouts occur at the beginning of the term reflects the financial burden families face when school fees and levies are due. This period often requires families to make significant upfront payments, which may lead some to withdraw their children if they are unable to meet these financial obligations.

The 24.6% of teacher reporting increased dropout rates mid-term suggests that financial issues do not solely occur at the beginning of the academic year. Families may continue to face economic pressures that impact their ability to sustain educational expenses throughout the term. Unexpected expenses or changes in family circumstances can exacerbate these challenges, leading to further dropouts.

While fewer teachers (9.8%) report dropouts at the end of the term, this still indicates a notable concern for families reassessing their financial commitments as the term concludes. Some families may choose to withdraw their children if they are uncertain about their ability to continue funding their education in subsequent terms.

The 4.9% of teachers that reported no specific period for increased dropout rates suggest that for some families, financial challenges may be inconsistent or less predictable. This could indicate varying levels of financial stability among families, leading to sporadic withdrawals based on individual circumstances rather than fixed periods. Survey findings indicate that specific periods in the academic calendar significantly impact dropout rates due to levy-related financial issues. By understanding these trends, educational institutions can implement targeted strategies to support families and foster greater retention, ultimately enhancing the educational experience for learners.

#### 4.6.4. School levies impact the consistency of learners' attendance throughout the year?

The data from the survey indicates how school levies affect the consistency of learners' attendance throughout the year. The responses are categorized into two impacts:

**Table 16: School Levies Affect the Consistency of Learners' Attendance Throughout the Year**

<b>Impact</b>	<b>Number of Centers</b>	<b>Percentage of Centers (%)</b>
Regular Attendance	18	29.5
Inconsistent Attendance	43	70.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The findings show that 29.5% of teachers report that school levies support regular attendance. This suggests that, in these centers, families are generally able to meet the financial demands, allowing learners to attend consistently throughout the year. 70.5% of teachers indicate that school levies lead to inconsistent attendance, highlighting a significant issue where financial challenges cause irregular school attendance for a majority of learners.

The survey results point to a substantial impact of school levies on attendance patterns. The fact that over 70% of teachers report inconsistent attendance due to school levies. The high percentage of centers reporting inconsistent attendance indicates that many families struggle with the financial demands of school levies. This financial instability directly affects learners' ability to attend school regularly, leading to sporadic attendance patterns.

Inconsistent attendance due to levy-related issues can disrupt the learning process, negatively affecting students' academic progress and social development. Regular absenteeism can lead to gaps in knowledge, reduced engagement, and lower overall educational outcomes. The nearly 30% of teachers reporting regular attendance despite levy costs suggests that financial barriers do not affect all families equally. Some families may have the resources to meet these costs consistently, while others struggle, reflecting broader socio-economic disparities.

The data illustrates that school levies significantly impact the consistency of learners' attendance, with a majority of centers experiencing challenges related to financial barriers. Interview with the headteacher revealed that dropout rates peak during specific terms or periods, particularly when levy payments are due or when additional fees for activities or

materials are requested. Terms coinciding with economic hardship for families also see a higher rate of dropouts. Two of the headteachers indicated that:

"We notice more dropouts in the third term when parents are preparing for the end of the year and other financial commitments. It's always a tough time." — Head Teacher 3

"Most of the dropouts occur in the second term when the levies are collected. Some families can't pay, so they withdraw their children." — Head Teacher 11

There are clear periods within the school year when dropout rates spike, often aligning with the collection of school levies. This indicates that the timing of levy demands significantly impacts families' ability to keep their children in school.

#### **4.6.5. Extent to which Students Have Been Denied Access To Education Because Of Their Inability To Pay School Levies**

The data provided indicates the extent to which students have been denied access to education because of their inability to pay school levies. The responses from the surveyed centers are as follows:

**Table 17: Extent to which Students Have Been Denied Access To Education Because Of Their Inability To Pay School Levies**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Number of Centers</b>	<b>Percentage of Centers (%)</b>
Yes	35	57.4
No	12	19.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>77.1</b>

It appears that the data may be incomplete as the sum of responses does not add up to 100%, possibly due to missing responses or the inclusion of other factors. 57.4% of teachers reported instances where students were denied access to education due to their inability to pay school levies. 19.7% of teachers indicated that they did not have any cases of students being denied access for this reason.

The survey findings reveal that a significant proportion of educational teachers face challenges in maintaining equitable access to education because of financial constraints imposed by school levies. The majority (57.4%) of teachers report cases where students have been excluded from education due to unpaid school levies. This indicates a substantial issue where financial barriers directly impede learners' access to education, exacerbating educational inequality.

The inability to pay school levies can be seen as a significant factor contributing to the exclusion of students from education. This situation not only affects individual students and families but also reflects broader systemic challenges in ensuring that education is accessible to all, regardless of socio-economic status.

The 19.7% of teachers that reported no instances of students being denied access may have policies or support systems in place to assist families struggling to pay school levies. These teachers could serve as models for how to effectively manage and mitigate the impact of financial barriers on access to education. The findings highlight a significant challenge where financial barriers, particularly school levies, are restricting access to education for many students.

Results from interview revealed that inconsistent attendance is a common issue linked to the inability to pay levies. Some learners miss classes sporadically, particularly during periods when levies are due or when there are additional costs associated with school activities.

"Attendance drops significantly around the time levies are collected. Some parents keep their children at home because they fear being embarrassed." — Head Teacher 12

"We have children who attend irregularly because their parents can't pay. It disrupts their learning and affects the whole class dynamic." — Head Teacher

7

School levies not only lead to dropouts but also cause inconsistency in attendance. This disrupts the continuity of education for learners and affects their overall learning experience and social development.

#### 4.6.6 Discussions of the Results

The study examining the influence of school levies on learner retention and completion rates in public Early Childhood Development and Education (ECDE) centers in Kisumu West Sub-County reveals a concerning relationship between financial barriers and educational outcomes. The findings highlight how school levies contribute to high dropout rates and low retention, particularly for economically disadvantaged families. The study found that 75.4% of respondents reported school dropouts as a result of families' inability to pay school levies. This is consistent with literature indicating that financial constraints are a significant barrier to educational retention in low-income settings. For instance, in their analysis of educational finance in developing countries, Duflo et al. (2017) argue that the burden of school fees can lead to significant dropout rates, particularly for families living on the brink of poverty. In Kisumu West, the high cost of school levies often forces parents to withdraw their children from school, particularly at the beginning of each term when fees are due. The financial pressures that families face at the start of the term mirror the findings of Murnane et al. (2017), who noted that school fees can create immediate obstacles to enrollment and retention, pushing low-income families into a cycle of educational instability. Families often prioritize immediate financial needs over long-term investments in their children's education, resulting in a loss of educational opportunities for many children.

Retention rates in the study varied significantly, with 39.3% of teachers indicating that only 50-74% of students complete their education, while 14.8% reported retention rates of less than 50%. These findings illustrate a direct correlation between financial obligations and student retention. The literature supports this connection, with studies showing that when educational costs become unmanageable, families are more likely to withdraw their children from school (Alderman et al., 2019). Retention is crucial for children's academic development, particularly in early education. Research by Campbell et al. (2018) highlights that stable attendance in early childhood programs is associated with better cognitive and social outcomes. In Kisumu West, the low retention rates serve as a warning sign that many children are missing out on critical early learning experiences, which can impact their future educational trajectory.

The study found that 70.5% of teachers reported inconsistent attendance among learners, largely due to financial strain related to school levies. This finding reflects broader trends

observed in similar socio-economic contexts, where financial uncertainty leads to sporadic school attendance. According to Suryadarma et al. (2013), children from lower-income families are more likely to have inconsistent attendance, which disrupts their learning and limits their academic success. Inconsistent attendance during the early years can hinder the development of essential skills. Research by Morris et al. (2020) emphasizes that regular attendance in early childhood education is vital for fostering a child's social and emotional development. Without stable attendance, children may struggle to form relationships with peers and educators, which can negatively impact their learning and adjustment in later educational settings.

A significant finding of the study is that 57.4% of teachers reported instances where students were denied access to education due to unpaid levies. This practice underscores the inequality in access to education, particularly for low-income families. Such exclusions are detrimental to children's educational opportunities and contradict the principles of inclusive education advocated by global organizations. According to a report by the Global Partnership for Education (2018), financial barriers can lead to significant disparities in educational access, as disadvantaged children are often the most affected. Denying access based on financial constraints further exacerbates educational inequalities. For instance, a study by Glick and Sahn (2010) found that the exclusion of students from educational institutions due to unpaid fees contributes to long-term disadvantages in educational outcomes and socio-economic mobility. When children are barred from accessing education, they lose critical learning opportunities that can impact their future prospects.

The study revealed that dropout rates tend to spike at specific times, particularly at the beginning and end of the term when financial obligations are highest. This pattern aligns with findings from a report by the World Bank (2016), which indicates that families often struggle to meet financial demands during these periods, leading to increased dropout rates. Such spikes in dropout rates are common in educational systems where families face financial pressures related to school fees. When families are unable to pay fees at these critical times, children often miss out on the educational benefits associated with early childhood programs. Research indicates that children who experience early educational disruptions are more likely to face

ongoing academic challenges (Cameron & Heckman, 1998). This highlights the urgent need for policy interventions to mitigate the impact of school levies on vulnerable families.

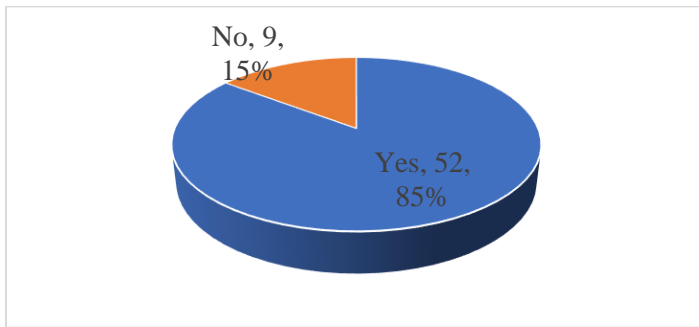
The findings of the study illustrate the broader issue of educational inequality exacerbated by school levies. The inability of low-income families to afford levies creates significant barriers to educational access, resulting in high dropout rates and inconsistent attendance. This situation perpetuates a cycle of disadvantage for children from economically vulnerable families. According to a report by the Education Commission (2016), disparities in access to education can lead to long-term economic inequities, as children who do not receive quality early education are less likely to succeed in later stages of schooling. The long-term consequences of educational inequality are profound. Children from families unable to afford school levies may experience diminished opportunities for social mobility and economic stability in adulthood (Perry & McConney, 2013). Addressing these disparities requires targeted policies that aim to reduce or eliminate financial barriers to education, ensuring that all children have access to the foundational skills necessary for future success.

The study demonstrates that school levies have a detrimental effect on learner retention and completion rates in public ECDE centers in Kisumu West Sub-County. The financial burden associated with these levies leads to high dropout rates, inconsistent attendance, and denial of access to education for many children, particularly those from low-income families.

#### **4.7 Strategies to Mitigate the Effects of School Levies in Public ECDE Centers in Kisumu West Sub-county**

The fourth objective was to establish strategies that will help solve the effect of school levies in public ECDE centers in Kisumu West Sub – county Kisumu County. The results are as follows.

#### 4.7.1 Reducing school levies would have a positive impact on enrollment and retention rates



**Figure 10: Reducing School Levies Would have a Positive Impact on Enrollment and Retention Rates**

A significant majority (85%) of respondents believed that reducing school levies would positively impact enrollment and retention rates. They indicated that lower fees would make education more accessible to low-income families, thereby improving student retention and reducing dropout rates. The results of the survey indicate a significant consensus among respondents, with 85% believing that reducing school levies would positively impact both enrollment and retention rates. This overwhelming support highlights the perceived importance of financial accessibility in education, particularly for low-income families.

When school levies are lowered, the immediate financial relief provided to families can make education more accessible. Many families face considerable challenges in meeting the costs associated with schooling, including tuition, supplies, and other fees. For low-income households, these financial burdens can be particularly daunting, often leading to difficult choices about whether to prioritize education over other essential needs. By reducing school levies, educational institutions can alleviate some of this financial strain, allowing families to enroll their children without the fear of overextending their budgets.

Furthermore, the reduction in levies is likely to foster a more supportive and engaging community around the school. When families feel that education is more affordable, they may be more inclined to participate in school activities and advocate for their children's education. This increased involvement can enhance the overall school environment, creating a sense of

belonging and community that is crucial for student success. As families become more engaged, they may also develop a stronger commitment to ensuring their children complete their education, thereby improving retention rates.

Moreover, the financial relief provided by lower levies can significantly impact dropout rates. Many students leave school due to financial hardships that their families cannot manage. By decreasing these financial barriers, schools can create a more stable environment for students, ensuring that they can remain in school and continue their education. This stability is essential for fostering a positive educational experience and encouraging students to complete their studies.

The survey results also suggest that reducing school levies may enhance the overall perception of education within the community. When schools demonstrate a commitment to affordability, they not only attract new students but also build trust and credibility among current families. This positive perception can lead to a more robust school community where families feel valued and supported, further encouraging enrollment and retention.

Head teachers overwhelmingly agree that reducing school levies would lead to increased enrollment and improved retention rates among students. Two of the headteachers said that:

"Yes, absolutely. Reducing school levies would definitely encourage more parents to enroll their children. I've seen firsthand how financial constraints lead to dropouts. If levies are lower, families will feel less pressured, and that will boost retention as well." — Head Teacher 1

"From my experience, families often weigh the cost of levies against their ability to provide for their children's education. Lowering these fees would undoubtedly lead to increased enrollment and lower dropout rates." — Head Teacher 7

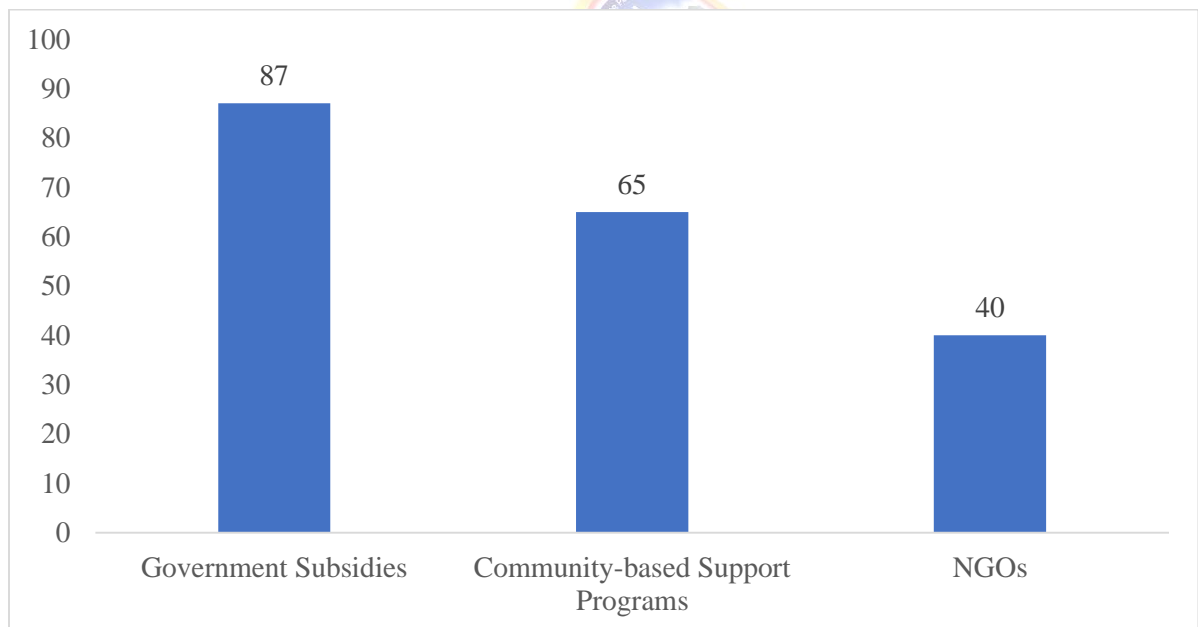
"Reducing school levies would definitely have a positive impact on enrollment and retention rates. Many parents struggle to afford the current levies, and a reduction would make education more accessible." Head Teacher 9

"We've noticed that when levies are lower, more parents are willing and able to enroll their children. This would also reduce the number of withdrawals due to financial constraints." — Head Teacher 12

The consensus among head teachers reflects a clear understanding that financial constraints significantly impact families' decisions regarding education. By lowering levies, schools can alleviate pressure on parents, potentially leading to higher enrollment and retention rates. This underscores the importance of making education more accessible to all families, particularly those facing economic challenges.

#### 4.7.2. Suggested Support Mechanisms for Parents Unable to Afford School Levies

The suggested support mechanisms include government subsidies (87%), community-based support programs (65%), and involvement of NGOs (40%). These mechanisms would help ease the financial burden on parents and ensure that more children remain in school.



**Figure 11: Suggested Support Mechanisms for Parents Unable to Afford School Levies**

To address the financial challenges faced by parents who cannot afford the current school levies, respondents suggested several support mechanisms. The primary recommendations include government subsidies, community-based support programs, and the involvement of

non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Implementing these mechanisms would help reduce the financial burden on parents and improve access to early childhood education.

### **Government Subsidies (87%)**

The majority of respondents (87%) believe that government subsidies are the most effective way to support parents struggling with school levies. By providing targeted financial assistance, the government can help ensure that all children, regardless of their socio-economic background, have access to quality education. Government subsidies could be provided directly to families in the form of educational grants or stipends. This financial aid would help cover the cost of school levies, enabling parents to enroll their children in ECDE centers without facing financial hardship.

The government could implement a means-tested subsidy program that covers part or all of the school levies for families below a certain income threshold. This approach would ensure that families most in need receive the necessary support, promoting equity and inclusivity in early childhood education. Introducing an educational voucher system would allow parents to use government-provided vouchers to pay for school levies at the ECDE center of their choice. This system would provide families with greater flexibility and choice while ensuring that financial constraints do not hinder access to education.

### **Community-Based Support Programs (65%)**

Sixty five percent of respondents suggested that community-based support programs could play a crucial role in assisting parents who cannot afford school levies. These programs would involve local communities coming together to provide resources and support to families in need. Communities could establish education funds that collect donations from local residents, businesses, and organizations. These funds would be used to support families who struggle to pay school levies, ensuring that all children have the opportunity to attend school.

Local parent groups could organize fundraising events and campaigns to generate funds for families unable to meet levy requirements. These support groups can also provide a platform for parents to share resources, such as carpooling or after-school care, which can help reduce additional costs associated with education. Volunteers from the community can offer their time

and skills to assist ECDE centers, reducing the operational costs and, consequently, the need for high levies. For example, local professionals could provide free workshops, maintenance services, or administrative support.

### **3. Involvement of NGOs (40%)**

Forty percent of respondents believe that NGOs can provide significant support to families struggling with school levies. NGOs often have the resources and expertise to implement programs that directly benefit low-income families. NGOs can offer grants and scholarships specifically aimed at covering the cost of school levies for children from disadvantaged backgrounds. These programs would help bridge the financial gap and enable more children to access early childhood education. NGOs can partner with ECDE centers to provide additional resources, such as teaching materials, infrastructure development, and capacity-building for teachers. This support can reduce the operational costs of running the centers, which, in turn, can lower the financial burden on parents. NGOs can also play a role in advocating for policy changes and raising awareness about the challenges faced by families regarding school levies. By highlighting these issues to policymakers and the public, NGOs can contribute to the development of more equitable funding mechanisms for early childhood education.

The suggested support mechanisms—government subsidies, community-based support programs, and NGO involvement—offer a multi-faceted approach to alleviating the financial burden on parents who cannot afford school levies. Each mechanism addresses different aspects of the problem and, when combined, can create a comprehensive support system for families in need. Government subsidies provide direct financial relief and ensure that the most vulnerable families receive the support they need. Community-based support programs engage local communities in supporting their own schools and families, fostering a spirit of cooperation and shared responsibility. NGO involvement brings in additional resources and expertise to complement government and community efforts, enhancing the overall support system for early childhood education. By implementing these mechanisms, stakeholders can ensure that more children have the opportunity to benefit from early childhood education, regardless of their family's financial situation.

Head teachers recognize the need for effective support mechanisms to assist families struggling with school levies. This was well explained as shown below.

"We need to establish a fund specifically for families in need. This fund could provide partial or full scholarships for those struggling to pay levies." — Head Teacher 10

"Community involvement is crucial. We could have local businesses contribute to a scholarship fund to support families who cannot afford the levies." — Head Teacher 14

"We need more payment plans and scholarships to support parents who cannot afford the levies. This would help reduce the financial burden on them." — Head Teacher 9

"Financial assistance programs are crucial. Many families need help to pay for their children's education. These programs can ensure that all children have access to quality education." — Head Teacher 11

The suggestions put forth by head teachers highlight a proactive approach to addressing the financial challenges faced by parents. Establishing dedicated funds and fostering community involvement can create sustainable support systems, enabling families to access education without the burden of overwhelming financial stress.

#### **4.7.3. The Government's Role in Addressing School Levies in ECDE Centers**

Respondents believe that the government should play a proactive role by providing financial subsidies (50%), regulating school fees (30%), and improving funding for ECDE centers (20%). The issue of school levies in Early Childhood Development and Education (ECDE) centers has garnered significant attention from stakeholders, many of whom believe that the government should take a more proactive role in mitigating the financial burden on parents. Respondents have suggested three main areas where government intervention could be effective: providing financial subsidies, regulating school fees, and improving funding for ECDE centers.

### **Providing Financial Subsidies (50%)**

Half of the respondents believe that the government should offer financial subsidies to alleviate the burden of school levies on parents. This intervention could take various forms, such as direct subsidies to families, grants to schools, or vouchers for low-income households. The government could implement a means-tested subsidy program that provides financial assistance to families based on their income levels. This targeted approach ensures that resources are directed to those who need them the most, enabling children from disadvantaged backgrounds to access quality early childhood education without the prohibitive cost of levies.

Instead of providing subsidies directly to families, the government could allocate funds directly to ECDE centers based on the number of enrolled students. This approach would allow schools to reduce or eliminate levies across the board, ensuring that all families benefit from the policy. The government could also introduce a voucher system where eligible families receive vouchers that can be used to cover the cost of school levies. This system would provide families with the flexibility to choose the ECDE center that best meets their needs, promoting both access and choice in early childhood education.

### **Regulating School Fees (30%)**

A significant proportion of respondents (30%) believe that the government should regulate school fees to prevent ECDE centers from imposing exorbitant levies that place undue financial pressure on parents. The government could introduce regulations that set maximum allowable fees for ECDE centers. This would help standardize costs across different schools and prevent institutions from charging excessively high levies that are beyond the reach of many families. Regulations could also require ECDE centers to provide detailed, transparent breakdowns of their fee structures. This transparency would help parents understand what they are paying for and ensure that fees are justified based on the services provided. To ensure compliance, the government would need to establish robust monitoring and enforcement mechanisms. This could involve periodic audits of school finances and a complaints process for parents who believe they are being overcharged.

### **Improving Funding for ECDE Centers (20%)**

Twenty percent of respondents emphasized the need for the government to increase its direct funding for ECDE centers. This approach would reduce the need for schools to rely on levies as a primary source of funding. The government could allocate a larger portion of the national education budget to ECDE centers. These funds could be used to improve infrastructure, hire more qualified teachers, and enhance learning materials and resources, all of which contribute to a higher quality of education. To supplement public funding, the government could facilitate partnerships between ECDE centers and private sector entities. These partnerships could provide additional resources and support for schools, reducing the financial burden on both parents and the government. The government could establish funding programs that reward ECDE centers for meeting specific quality benchmarks. This performance-based funding model would encourage schools to focus on improving educational outcomes rather than merely increasing enrolment numbers.

Respondents overwhelmingly support a more proactive role for the government in addressing the issue of school levies in ECDE centers. The suggested interventions—providing financial subsidies, regulating school fees, and increasing funding—are all aimed at making early childhood education more accessible and affordable for families. Financial subsidies would directly alleviate the cost burden on families, particularly those from low-income backgrounds. Regulating school fees would ensure that levies are kept within reasonable limits, preventing financial exploitation and promoting equity. Improving funding for ECDE centers would enhance the overall quality of education, benefiting both students and the broader community. By implementing these measures, the government can play a crucial role in ensuring that all children have access to quality early childhood education, laying a strong foundation for their future learning and development.

During the interview session, the researcher noted that there is a strong call for greater government intervention in regulating school levies to ensure they remain affordable for all families.

"The government needs to play a more active role by providing subsidies for ECDE centers. Clear regulations on the maximum levies would help ensure affordability." — Head Teacher 6

"Government support is essential. They should also provide financial resources for schools to improve infrastructure without over-relying on levies." — Head Teacher 13.

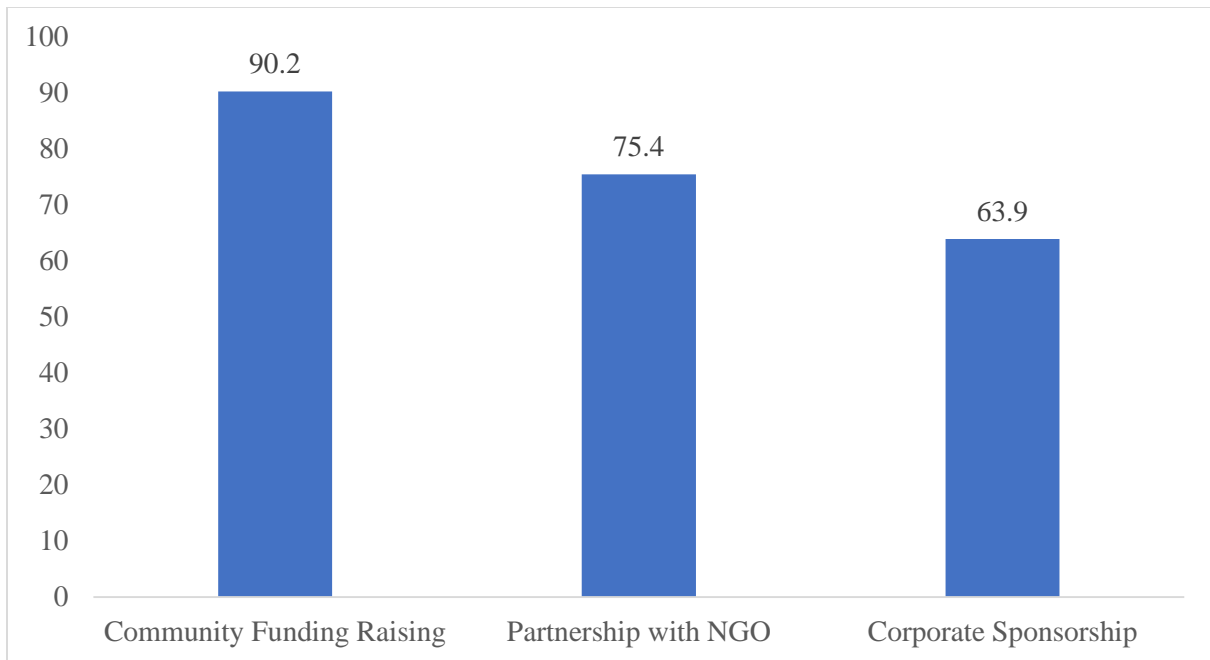
"The government should provide subsidies for low-income families to help them afford the levies. This would increase access to education and reduce financial strain on families." — Head Teacher 14.

"There should be regulations on the amount of levies charged to ensure they are affordable for all parents. The government can play a crucial role in setting these standards." — Head Teacher 20

Head teachers emphasize the necessity of government involvement to regulate and subsidize school levies. By providing financial support and establishing clear guidelines, the government can help ensure that education remains accessible to all families, regardless of their economic background.

#### **4.7.4. Alternative Funding Sources to Reduce the Burden of Levies on Parents**

Respondents suggested various alternative funding sources such as community fundraising (90.2%), partnerships with NGOs (75.4%), and corporate sponsorship (63.9%). These alternatives could help reduce reliance on levies and ease the burden on parents.



**Figure 12: Alternative Funding Sources to Reduce the Burden of Levies on Parents**

Exploring alternative funding sources is essential for alleviating the financial pressure on parents caused by school levies. Respondents identified several viable options, including community fundraising, partnerships with non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and corporate sponsorships. Each of these funding sources offers unique advantages that can contribute to a more sustainable financial model for Early Childhood Development and Education (ECDE) centers.

#### **Community Fundraising (90.2%)**

Community fundraising was the most frequently suggested alternative, mentioned by 90.2% of respondents. This approach involves engaging the local community in fundraising activities to support school programs and infrastructure. Schools can organize events such as charity walks, bake sales, or cultural festivals to raise funds. These events not only generate financial support but also foster a sense of community and shared responsibility for the local education system.

Utilizing online crowdfunding platforms allows schools to reach a broader audience, including alumni, local businesses, and other community members. Schools can create targeted

campaigns to raise funds for specific needs, such as purchasing new learning materials or upgrading facilities. Forming partnerships with local community trusts or associations can provide schools with regular funding. These entities often have dedicated funds for educational purposes and can offer grants or sponsorships to support school initiatives.

### **Partnerships with NGOs (75.4%)**

Partnerships with non-governmental organizations were suggested by 75.4% of respondents as a viable alternative funding source. NGOs often have specific mandates to support educational development and can provide both financial and technical assistance to schools. Many NGOs offer grants or scholarships aimed at improving access to education. Schools can collaborate with these organizations to secure funding for disadvantaged students, reducing the need for levies to cover basic educational expenses.

NGOs can also support schools by providing capacity-building programs for teachers and administrative staff. These programs enhance the quality of education and improve school management without requiring additional funds from parents. NGOs often run specialized programs such as health education, nutrition, and early literacy development. Partnering with NGOs to implement these programs can alleviate the financial burden on schools, as the costs are covered by the NGOs.

### **3. Corporate Sponsorship (63.9%)**

Corporate sponsorship was highlighted by 64.9% of respondents as a potential funding source. This approach involves businesses providing financial or in-kind support to schools in exchange for brand visibility or community engagement opportunities. Companies can sponsor school events, extracurricular activities, or educational programs. This support can reduce the need for parent contributions to fund these activities, making education more affordable. Corporations can fund specific infrastructure projects, such as building new classrooms, playgrounds, or computer labs. Such sponsorships not only improve the learning environment but also reduce the financial burden on parents to contribute to these projects through levies. Businesses can offer in-kind donations such as learning materials, furniture, or technology. They can also provide professional services like marketing, financial management, or legal advice, helping schools operate more efficiently and reducing operational costs.

Head teachers see potential in exploring alternative funding sources to alleviate the financial burden of levies on parents. This was revealed as indicated below:

"We could explore partnerships with NGOs and community organizations to secure grants or donations that alleviate the burden of levies on parents." — Head Teacher 8

"Local fundraising events could be organized to support our programs and help reduce the levies charged to parents." — Head Teacher 5

"Community support and partnerships with NGOs can help reduce the burden of levies on parents. These alternative sources can supplement the funding needed for the centers." — Head Teacher 21

"Corporate sponsorships and government grants are also viable options. They can help us maintain quality education without relying solely on levies." — Head Teacher 22

The emphasis on alternative funding sources indicates that head teachers are proactive in seeking solutions to financial challenges. Collaborating with NGOs and organizing community fundraising can provide essential resources that enable schools to reduce levies, thereby increasing access to education for more families.

#### **4.7.5 Potential Challenges and Benefits of Implementing Alternative Funding Mechanisms**

Respondents identified several challenges, including difficulty in sustaining funds (45%), lack of community support (30%), and transparency issues (25%). The benefits mentioned include reduced burden on parents (55%) and improved access to education (45%).

Exploring alternative funding mechanisms for Early Childhood Development and Education (ECDE) centers can offer various benefits but also poses certain challenges. Respondents highlighted key issues such as sustaining funds, garnering community support, and ensuring transparency. Conversely, the potential benefits include reducing the financial burden on parents and improving access to education for more students.

### **Difficulty in Sustaining Funds**

A significant challenge identified by 45% of respondents is the difficulty in ensuring long-term sustainability of alternative funding sources. Unlike consistent levy payments, grants, donations, or sponsorships can be irregular and unpredictable, making it challenging to maintain a stable flow of resources for the centers. Many alternative funding mechanisms rely on external sources such as donations or corporate sponsorships, which can fluctuate based on economic conditions or changes in organizational priorities. This dependency can make schools vulnerable to sudden funding shortfalls, affecting their ability to deliver consistent educational services.

### **Lack of Community Support**

30% of respondents cited a lack of community support as a potential barrier to implementing alternative funding mechanisms. Securing community backing is crucial for initiatives such as fundraising events, local business partnerships, or volunteer programs. Without active participation and support from the community, these efforts may fail to generate the needed resources. Community members may perceive alternative funding mechanisms as inequitable, particularly if they believe that funds are being allocated unfairly or that certain groups are benefitting more than others. This perception can lead to resistance and a lack of cooperation, undermining the effectiveness of the funding strategy.

### **Transparency Issues**

25% of respondents expressed concerns about transparency and accountability in managing alternative funding sources. Mismanagement or a lack of clear reporting can lead to mistrust among stakeholders, making it difficult to secure ongoing support and funding. Managing multiple funding sources can increase the complexity of financial reporting and oversight. Schools may struggle to meet the necessary accountability standards, especially if they lack the administrative capacity or expertise to handle detailed financial documentation.

### **Reduced Burden on Parents (55%)**

The most commonly cited benefit, mentioned by 55% of respondents, is the potential to reduce the financial burden on parents. Alternative funding mechanisms such as grants, sponsorships,

or community fundraising can help cover operational costs, thereby lowering or even eliminating the need for high levies. By reducing or eliminating levies, schools may become more accessible to families from various socio-economic backgrounds. This inclusivity can lead to increased enrollment, enabling more children to benefit from early childhood education.

### **Improved Access to Education**

45% of respondents highlighted that alternative funding can enhance access to education by providing resources for additional programs, facilities, or support services. For instance, funds could be used to introduce special education programs, provide meals, or supply learning materials to students in need. Alternative funding can enable schools to allocate resources more equitably, ensuring that all students have the tools and support they need to succeed. This approach helps to address disparities in educational access and outcomes, particularly for students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Implementing alternative funding mechanisms for ECDE centers presents a mixed picture of challenges and benefits. On the one hand, issues such as sustaining funds, gaining community support, and maintaining transparency can hinder the effective adoption of these mechanisms. While head teachers recognize the potential of alternative funding, they also acknowledge the challenges associated with these mechanisms. This was illustrated as shown below:

"While alternative funding can provide relief, inconsistent funding and dependency on external sources can be a challenge." — Head Teacher 15

"However, the benefits include reduced levies and improved resources, which ultimately enhance the quality of education." — Head Teacher 2

"The main challenge with alternative funding is sustainability. We need to ensure that these sources are reliable and long-term." — Head Teacher 18

"The benefits are clear: reduced financial burden on parents, increased enrollment, and improved quality of education. These are crucial for the development of our ECDE centers." — Head Teacher 22

The dual nature of alternative funding mechanisms is evident in the responses. While there are clear benefits, such as reduced financial burdens on families and enhanced educational resources, head teachers also express concerns about sustainability and consistency. This highlights the need for a balanced approach to funding that considers both immediate relief and long-term stability.

#### **4.7.6. Support for a Policy to Subsidize ECDE Levies for Low-Income Families**

A majority (90%) of respondents supported the idea of subsidizing ECDE levies for low-income families, stating that it would promote inclusivity and equal educational opportunities. The 10% who were opposed cited concerns about financial sustainability and dependency. The overwhelming majority (90%) of respondents expressed support for a policy that subsidizes Early Childhood Development and Education (ECDE) levies for low-income families. The primary reasons cited for this support include the promotion of inclusivity and equal educational opportunities. However, a small minority (10%) were opposed, citing concerns related to financial sustainability and the potential for dependency.

##### **Support for Subsidizing ECDE Levies (90%)**

##### ***Promoting Inclusivity and Equal Educational Opportunities***

Respondents in favor of the subsidy highlighted that such a policy would ensure that children from low-income families have access to quality early childhood education. This access is crucial, as it lays the foundation for lifelong learning and development. By subsidizing levies, financial barriers that often prevent low-income families from enrolling their children in ECDE centers would be significantly reduced. This would help achieve a more inclusive educational environment where all children, regardless of their socio-economic background, have the opportunity to learn and grow. Supporters also believe that subsidizing levies would contribute to social equity. Providing financial assistance to those in need helps level the playing field, ensuring that all children have the chance to benefit from early education, which is vital for their cognitive, social, and emotional development.

##### ***Breaking the Cycle of Poverty***

Many respondents pointed out that early education plays a critical role in breaking the cycle of poverty. Children who attend quality ECDE programs are more likely to succeed in subsequent educational stages, leading to better career opportunities and socio-economic mobility. Subsidizing levies for low-income families would therefore not only benefit individual students but also contribute to broader community and societal development.

### ***Long-Term Benefits to Society***

Supporting low-income families in accessing early childhood education can lead to long-term societal benefits, such as reduced crime rates, lower social welfare costs, and a more skilled workforce. Respondents believe that investing in subsidies now can yield significant returns in the future by creating a more educated and productive populace.

### **Opposition to Subsidizing ECDE Levies (10%)**

#### ***Concerns About Financial Sustainability***

Respondents who opposed the subsidy policy raised concerns about the financial sustainability of such an initiative. They argued that providing subsidies could strain the limited resources of educational centers and government budgets. Ensuring long-term funding for these subsidies without compromising the quality of education or other essential services is a major challenge that needs to be addressed. There is apprehension that subsidizing levies for a large number of families could divert funds from other critical areas of the education system, such as infrastructure development, teacher training, and curriculum enhancement. This could negatively impact the overall quality of education.

#### ***Risk of Dependency***

Some respondents worried that offering subsidies might create a dependency on financial aid among low-income families. They expressed concern that such a policy could disincentivize families from seeking employment or other means of increasing their income, relying instead on continued financial assistance. Opponents of the subsidy policy believe that, while support should be provided to those in need, it is also important to encourage families to become self-sufficient. They suggest that subsidies should be coupled with initiatives that empower

families, such as job training programs or financial literacy workshops, to help them become financially independent over time.

The strong support for subsidizing ECDE levies for low-income families reflects a collective desire to promote inclusivity and equal educational opportunities. While the benefits of such a policy—such as increased access to education and long-term societal gains—are widely recognized, the concerns raised about financial sustainability and potential dependency highlight the need for a balanced approach. To address these concerns, it may be necessary to design the subsidy program with clear criteria, sustainable funding sources, and complementary initiatives that promote self-sufficiency among beneficiaries. This approach would help ensure that the policy achieves its intended goals without compromising the quality or sustainability of early childhood education.

There is strong support among head teachers for policies that would subsidize levies for low-income families. This was revealed as shown below:

" Yes, I would strongly support such a policy. Education should not be a privilege for the few who can afford it. Subsidizing levies would provide equal opportunities for all children and improve overall educational outcomes in our community." — Head Teacher 3

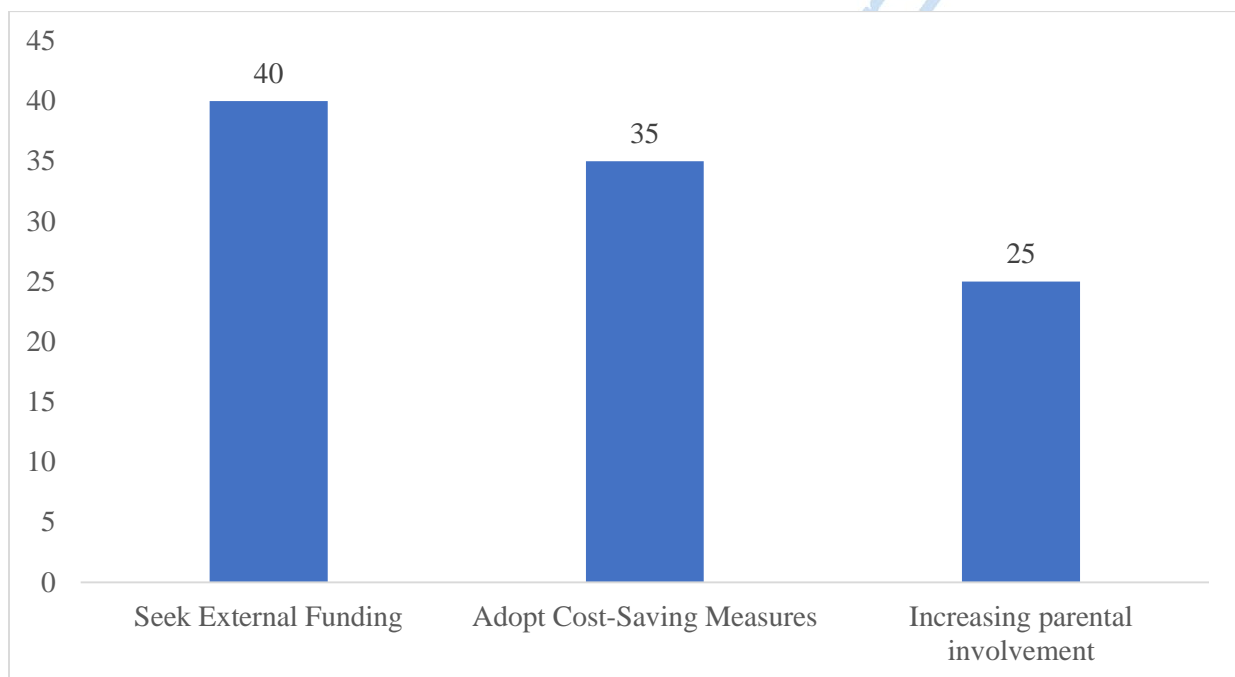
"Subsidizing levies would provide equal opportunities for all children and improve overall educational outcomes in our community." — Head Teacher 14

"Without subsidies, many children will miss out on early childhood education, which is critical for their development. Subsidies are essential for their future opportunities." — Head Teacher 16

The head teachers' enthusiastic support for subsidizing levies indicates a shared belief in educational equity. By implementing policies that assist low-income families, schools can foster inclusivity and ensure that all children have access to quality education, thereby benefiting the entire community.

#### 4.7.7 Strategies to Maintain Quality Education While Reducing Reliance on Levies

Strategies suggested include seeking external funding (40%), adopting cost-saving measures (35%), and increasing parental involvement (25%). Addressing the challenge of maintaining quality education while reducing dependence on school levies requires a multifaceted approach. Respondents suggested several strategies, including seeking external funding, adopting cost-saving measures, and increasing parental involvement. Each of these strategies can be implemented in a variety of ways to balance financial sustainability and educational quality.



**Figure 13: Strategies to Maintain Quality Education While Reducing Reliance on Levies**

##### **Seeking External Funding (40%):**

The most frequently suggested strategy, recommended by 40% of respondents, is to seek external funding. This approach involves exploring alternative revenue sources to supplement or replace levies, thereby alleviating the financial burden on families. Schools can actively apply for grants from government bodies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and international donors that focus on educational development. These grants can support infrastructure development, teacher training, and the acquisition of educational materials.

Establishing partnerships with local businesses and corporations can provide financial support, sponsorships, or in-kind donations. Companies may sponsor specific programs or events in exchange for recognition, helping schools offset costs without relying solely on levies. Engaging the local community in fundraising efforts or leveraging crowdfunding platforms can generate additional funds. Schools can organize events such as charity runs, auctions, or donation drives to raise money for specific needs, such as school supplies or facility upgrades.

### **Adopting Cost-Saving Measures (35%):**

35% of respondents suggested that schools could adopt various cost-saving measures to reduce expenses and minimize the need for high levies. This approach focuses on improving operational efficiency and optimizing resource use. Schools can implement strategies such as shared teaching resources, bulk purchasing of supplies, and digital learning tools to reduce costs. By efficiently managing resources, schools can lower operating expenses without compromising the quality of education. Implementing energy-efficient practices, such as using LED lighting, installing solar panels, and managing water usage, can significantly reduce utility costs. Savings from reduced energy and water bills can be redirected to educational programs or other school needs. Encouraging community volunteers to assist with extracurricular activities, maintenance, and administrative tasks can reduce staffing costs. This strategy not only cuts expenses but also fosters community involvement and support for the school.

### **Increasing Parental Involvement (25%)**

Increasing parental involvement was recommended by 25% of respondents as a strategy to maintain quality education while reducing reliance on levies. Active parental engagement can lead to enhanced educational outcomes and additional support for the school. Strengthening PTAs can create a platform for parents to contribute to school planning and decision-making. PTAs can also organize fundraising activities, coordinate volunteer efforts, and advocate for school needs within the community. Schools can offer workshops and programs for parents to help them support their children's learning at home. By equipping parents with the skills and knowledge to reinforce educational concepts, schools can enhance student outcomes without additional costs. Encouraging parents to contribute their skills—such as carpentry, IT support,

or event planning—can reduce the need to hire external contractors for various projects. This not only saves money but also fosters a sense of ownership and community spirit.

The suggested strategies of seeking external funding, adopting cost-saving measures, and increasing parental involvement offer practical ways for schools to maintain quality education while reducing reliance on levies. Each strategy contributes uniquely to financial sustainability and educational quality. External Funding provides additional financial resources, enabling schools to invest in programs and infrastructure without increasing levies. Cost-Saving Measures help schools optimize existing resources and reduce operational expenses, freeing up funds for essential educational activities. Parental Involvement strengthens the school community and leverages collective resources and skills to support the educational mission. By implementing these strategies, schools can create a more sustainable financial model that ensures high-quality education for all students, regardless of their ability to pay levies.

Head teachers propose several strategies for maintaining educational quality without increasing levies. Two of the headteachers said that:

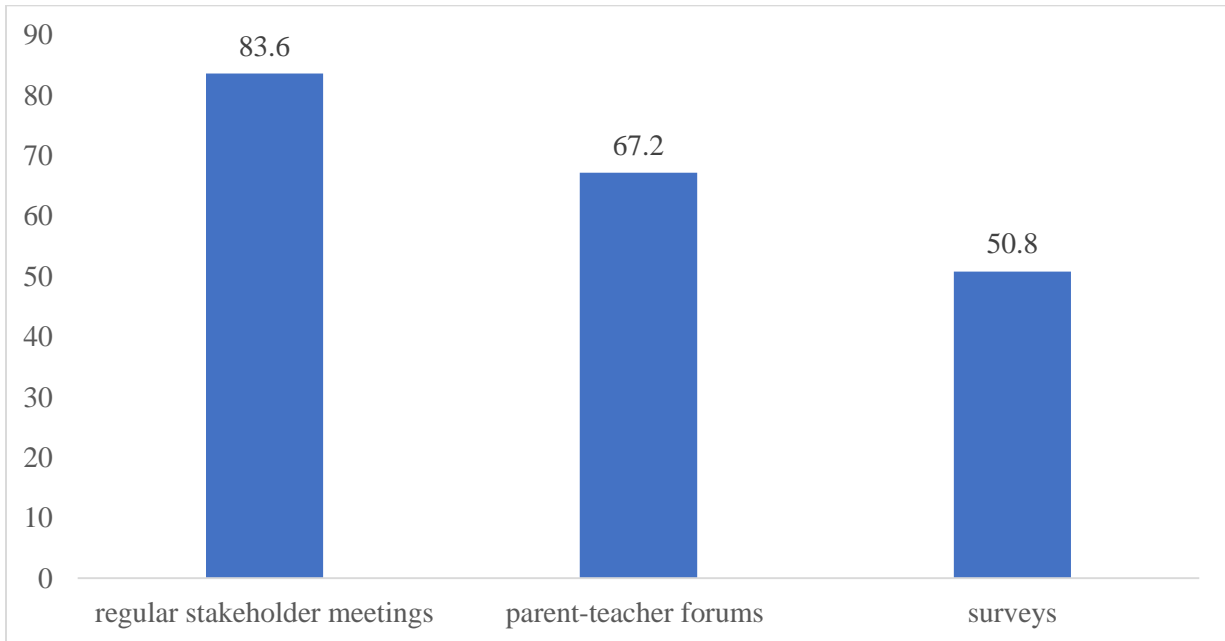
"Schools can focus on creating more cost-effective programs, such as utilizing volunteer teachers or community members for extracurricular activities. We can also implement better resource management to reduce waste and make the most out of what we have." — Head Teacher 9

"Resource management is key. We must ensure that we use what we have efficiently to maintain quality without relying solely on levies." — Head Teacher 11

The emphasis on cost-effective strategies and efficient resource management reflects head teachers' commitment to maintaining educational standards. By leveraging community resources and optimizing existing ones, schools can continue to provide quality education while reducing financial demands on parents.

#### 4.7.8 Involving Stakeholders in the Decision-Making Process Regarding School Levies

Respondents suggested regular stakeholder meetings (83.6%), parent-teacher forums (67.2%), and surveys (50.8%) as effective ways to involve stakeholders in decision-making about school levies.



**Figure 14: Involving Stakeholders in the Decision-Making Process Regarding School Levies**

Effectively engaging stakeholders in decisions related to school levies is crucial for fostering transparency, building trust, and ensuring that the needs and concerns of the community are adequately addressed. Based on respondents' suggestions, three primary methods can be employed: regular stakeholder meetings, parent-teacher forums, and surveys.

##### **Regular Stakeholder Meetings**

83.6 of the respondents recommended holding regular stakeholder meetings as a way to involve different groups in the decision-making process. These meetings provide a structured platform where all parties, including parents, teachers, school administrators, and community members, can participate in discussions about school levies. Regular meetings create opportunities for open dialogue and information sharing. Stakeholders can express their views

on the necessity and allocation of levies, ensuring that financial decisions are transparent and comprehensible.

Involving various stakeholders fosters a collaborative environment where decisions about levies are made collectively. This can help to align levy proposals with the community's priorities and build consensus on necessary expenditures. These meetings can serve as a forum for providing feedback on how levies are used, holding school authorities accountable for the allocation and management of funds, and discussing the impact of levies on educational quality and accessibility.

### **Parent-Teacher Forums**

67.2% of respondents suggested using parent-teacher forums to engage stakeholders in levy-related decisions. These forums are an effective way to bridge communication between parents and educators, promoting a shared understanding of financial needs and constraints. Parent-teacher forums allow for focused discussions on how school levies affect students' educational experiences. Parents can share concerns about financial burdens, while teachers can provide insights into the educational resources and support that levies enable.

Engaging parents in forums empowers them to voice their opinions on school funding and levy implementation, fostering a sense of ownership and involvement in their children's education. These forums help build strong partnerships between parents and schools, facilitating collaboration on fundraising initiatives or alternative support mechanisms that could reduce the financial burden on families.

### **Surveys**

Surveys are another method recommended by 50.8% of respondents for involving stakeholders in decisions about school levies. This approach allows schools to gather input from a larger, more diverse group of stakeholders who may not be able to attend meetings or forums. Surveys enable broader participation by reaching stakeholders who are unable to attend meetings or forums due to time constraints or other commitments. This inclusivity ensures that the views of a wider community are considered.

By analyzing survey results, schools can make data-driven decisions that reflect the preferences and priorities of the majority. Surveys can include questions on preferred levy amounts, acceptable uses of funds, and suggestions for alternative funding sources. Surveys can help identify specific concerns related to school levies, such as affordability and impact on access to education. They also provide a platform for stakeholders to suggest practical solutions or alternative strategies for funding school needs.

Engaging stakeholders in the decision-making process regarding school levies through regular meetings, parent-teacher forums, and surveys is essential for building trust and ensuring that financial decisions reflect the community's values and needs. Each method offers unique advantages in facilitating communication, promoting transparency, and empowering stakeholders to contribute meaningfully to the educational process. By implementing these strategies, schools can foster a collaborative environment where all parties work together to support the best interests of students and the broader community. Head teachers advocate for inclusive decision-making processes involving various stakeholders. This was revealed as indicated below:

" It's essential to have parents, community leaders, and local government representatives involved in discussions about school levies. Their perspectives can help create a more comprehensive understanding of the financial landscape and lead to more equitable decision." — Head Teacher 14

"Stakeholder involvement will lead to more comprehensive decision-making that reflects the needs of the community." — Head Teacher 2

"Stakeholders should be involved in decision-making through regular meetings and surveys. This will ensure that all perspectives are considered and that decisions are inclusive." — Head Teacher 1

The strong emphasis on stakeholder involvement suggests that head teachers recognize the value of diverse perspectives in addressing school levy issues. Collaborative decision-making can foster transparency, accountability, and solutions that truly reflect the community's needs.

#### **4.7.9 Potential Long-Term Consequences of Not Addressing School Levies in ECDE Centers**

Potential long-term consequences include increased dropout rates (50%), limited access to education (30%), and poor educational outcomes (20%). Failure to address the issue of school levies in Early Childhood Development and Education (ECDE) centers can have profound and far-reaching consequences. Based on the data provided, the potential long-term effects include increased dropout rates, limited access to education, and poor educational outcomes.

##### **1. Increased Dropout Rates (50%)**

The most significant consequence, as indicated by 50% of the surveyed centers, is the potential increase in dropout rates. When families are unable to afford school levies, children are more likely to leave school prematurely. The implications of high dropout rates include:

**Reduced Educational Attainment:** Children who drop out at an early stage miss out on foundational skills and knowledge, which are critical for future academic success. This can limit their opportunities for higher education and skill development.

**Negative Social Impact:** Higher dropout rates can lead to increased social inequality, as children from lower-income families are disproportionately affected. This perpetuates a cycle of poverty and reduces social mobility, limiting the potential for individuals to improve their socio-economic status.

**Economic Implications:** A less educated workforce can result in lower productivity and a decreased ability for communities and the country as a whole to compete in a global economy. This can also lead to higher unemployment rates and increased dependence on social welfare systems.

##### **2. Limited Access to Education (30%)**

30% of the centers reported that failure to address school levy issues could lead to limited access to education. This restricted access has several long-term repercussions:

**Educational Inequality:** When school levies are a barrier, children from lower socio-economic backgrounds are less likely to attend school regularly. This results in unequal access to

education, exacerbating existing disparities and hindering efforts to achieve inclusive education for all.

**Missed Early Learning Opportunities:** Early childhood is a critical period for cognitive, social, and emotional development. Limited access to ECDE programs can result in missed opportunities for children to develop essential skills, which are foundational for lifelong learning and success.

**Community and Societal Impact:** Limited access to education can lead to lower literacy rates and reduced community engagement, impacting social cohesion and the ability to address community issues collectively.

### **3. Poor Educational Outcomes (20%)**

According to 20% of the surveyed centers, poor educational outcomes are another potential consequence of not addressing the issue of school levies. The following long-term effects can be expected:

**Lower Academic Achievement:** Inconsistent attendance and lack of access to quality education can result in lower academic performance. This can hinder children's ability to perform well in subsequent educational stages and reduce their overall academic potential.

**Reduced Quality of Life:** Poor educational outcomes are closely linked to lower earning potential and reduced quality of life. Individuals with limited education are more likely to be employed in low-paying jobs, have limited career progression, and face challenges in securing stable employment.

**Increased Social Issues:** Poor educational outcomes can contribute to a range of social issues, including increased crime rates, lower civic participation, and higher rates of health problems. This places additional strain on public services and can impede community development.

Addressing the issue of school levies in ECDE centers is essential to prevent these long-term consequences. Ensuring equitable access to early childhood education can promote higher retention rates, improve educational outcomes, and contribute to the overall development and well-being of communities. Without intervention, the consequences of unaddressed school

levies could perpetuate cycles of poverty and inequality, undermining efforts to achieve sustainable development and social progress.

Head teachers express concern over the long-term impact of unresolved school levy issues on educational equity.

"If we don't address the issues surrounding school levies, we risk widening the educational gap between the affluent and the less fortunate. Over time, this could lead to a decline in literacy rates and overall educational attainment, which would harm our society as a whole." — Head Teacher 11

"Over time, this could lead to a decline in literacy rates and overall educational attainment, harming our society." — Head Teacher 7

"If we don't address the levy issue, we'll see increased educational inequality and financial strain on families. This will have long-lasting negative effects on our community." — Head Teacher 1

"Quality of education will suffer, and dropout rates will increase. We need to act now to prevent these consequences and ensure that all children have access to quality education." — Head Teacher 5

The grave concerns articulated by head teachers highlight the urgent need for effective solutions to school levy challenges. Failure to address these issues could exacerbate educational inequities and have detrimental effects on societal progress, underscoring the importance of immediate action.

#### **4.7.10 Discussion of the Findings**

The study on strategies to mitigate the impact of school levies in Early Childhood Development and Education (ECDE) centers in Kisumu West Sub-County uncovers critical insights into how financial barriers affect educational access and retention. Given the substantial influence of school levies on families, particularly those from low-income backgrounds, the findings emphasize the necessity for strategic interventions. One of the most significant findings of the

study is that reducing school levies can greatly enhance student enrollment and retention, particularly for families facing financial constraints.

The data indicated that 85% of respondents supported the reduction of school levies as a necessary measure to improve access to education. This reflects a broad consensus among parents, educators, and stakeholders on the detrimental effects of high levies. Research shows that high school fees are a deterrent to enrollment, especially for low-income families. For instance, Naylor et al. (2020) conducted a systematic review that concluded reducing educational costs can significantly increase enrollment rates. Their findings suggest that when financial barriers are lowered, families are more likely to invest in their children's education. Moreover, King and Winthrop (2015) assert that financial accessibility in early childhood education is crucial for fostering educational equity. They argue that affordable education allows children from disadvantaged backgrounds to gain foundational skills that are essential for their later academic success. Thus, lowering school levies can serve as a powerful tool to increase both enrollment and retention rates in ECDE centers.

The study identified various support mechanisms to assist families who struggle to pay school levies. Many respondents emphasized the need for government assistance to alleviate financial burdens associated with school levies. Research by the World Bank (2019) suggests that government subsidies not only increase enrollment but also enhance the quality of education by providing schools with additional resources. When families receive financial assistance, they are more likely to keep their children enrolled and attending regularly, which is vital for early childhood development. Community engagement was also highlighted as a crucial mechanism for providing financial support. Cummings et al. (2016) found that community-based initiatives that offer financial assistance or in-kind support can significantly improve educational access. These programs can mobilize local resources and foster a sense of ownership among community members, thereby enhancing commitment to children's education. The study revealed that NGOs can play a vital role in supporting families with school levies. NGOs often have the flexibility to respond to community needs and can provide targeted assistance that complements government efforts. According to Chisholm et al. (2016), NGOs have successfully implemented educational programs that offer financial support and

capacity-building initiatives, thereby improving access to education for marginalized populations.

The study emphasized the importance of engaging stakeholders—parents, teachers, community leaders, and policymakers—in decision-making processes related to school levies. This participatory approach can lead to more responsive educational policies that reflect the needs and realities of the community. Research by Brion et al. (2015) indicates that stakeholder engagement in education leads to more effective governance and better educational outcomes. When parents and community members are involved in decision-making, they are more likely to support local initiatives, thereby fostering a sense of shared responsibility for children's education. Moreover, involving stakeholders can increase transparency and accountability, which can enhance trust between families and educational institutions.

The study identified seeking external funding sources, such as community fundraising and corporate sponsorships, as another strategy to mitigate the impact of school levies. By tapping into local businesses and organizations, schools can generate additional resources to support educational programs. The Education Commission (2016) highlights the importance of diversifying funding sources to ensure the sustainability of educational initiatives. Community fundraising efforts can mobilize local support and create a sense of community ownership, which can be critical for long-term success. Additionally, corporate sponsorships can provide financial backing and resources that enable schools to lower levies and improve educational offerings.

Implementing cost-saving measures within schools is another strategy suggested by the study to reduce financial burdens on families. By optimizing resource allocation and minimizing unnecessary expenditures, schools can lower operating costs, which can, in turn, reduce the levies charged to families. The International Education Funders Group (2021) emphasizes that schools adopting efficient resource management practices can significantly cut operating costs. Examples of cost-saving measures may include sharing resources with neighboring schools, utilizing community volunteers, or implementing energy-efficient practices. By being more resourceful, schools can create a financial buffer that allows them to offer reduced levies without sacrificing quality.

A significant consensus among respondents was the need for increased government involvement in regulating school fees and providing financial subsidies. The literature underscores the critical role of government in ensuring equitable access to education. The Global Education Monitoring Report (2018) advocates for government intervention to set guidelines for school levies and provide financial assistance to families in need. When governments take an active role in regulating fees, they can help ensure that no child is excluded from education due to financial constraints. This approach can be particularly effective in promoting equity and reducing disparities in educational access.

The study concluded with a strong emphasis on adopting a balanced approach that integrates government support, community initiatives, and efficient resource management. Such a comprehensive strategy is essential for making education more accessible while maintaining quality. Research by Heckman et al. (2010) highlights that a well-rounded approach to early childhood education, which includes financial assistance, community involvement, and sound resource management, results in better educational outcomes and long-term benefits for children. By addressing financial barriers through a combination of strategies, stakeholders can create an inclusive educational environment that fosters success for all children, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

The primary aim of this research was to establish how school levies affect learner's enrolment, retention and completion in public ECDE centers in Kisumu west sub county Kenya. The precise aims of this study were to establish school levies administered in public ECDE centers in Kisumu west –sub-county, Kisumu County; to find out how school levies affect learners' enrolment in public ECDE centers in Kisumu west Sub-County; to find out how school levies influence learners' retention and completion rate in public ECDE centers in Kisumu West Sub County; and to establish strategies that will help solve the effect of school levies in public ECDE centers in Kisumu West Sub – county Kisumu County. This chapter provides a concise overview of the key results, conclusions, and suggestions derived from the research. Lastly, the chapter delineates some domains that need more investigation.

#### **5.2 Summary of the Findings**

The data used in this research was obtained via the administration of semi-structured questionnaires to a sample of 61 ECDE teachers and conducting interviews among 3 ECD managers and 25 head teachers. The primary discoveries may be summarized as follows.

##### **5.2.1 School levies administered in public ECDE centers in Kisumu west –sub-county, Kisumu County**

The study aimed to explore the levies imposed in public Early Childhood Development and Education (ECDE) centers in Kisumu West Sub- County, Kisumu County. It revealed that all centers charged tuition and registration fees, while 75% charged activity fees, emphasizing the importance of extracurricular activities. About 50% charged development fees for infrastructure improvements, and only 16% charged for educational trips due to cost constraints. Fee collection varied, with most centers collecting termly or monthly, allowing parents to manage payments more effectively. Monthly collections provided a steady cash flow but posed challenges for families with irregular incomes. On average, half of the centers charged between 1000 and 2000 Ksh per child per term, balancing affordability and operational

costs. However, only 29.51% of centers offered discounts or exemptions, leaving many low-income families vulnerable. The study also found a significant lack of regulations governing the collection and use of levies, with only 3.28% of centers reporting any formal guidelines. Most schools communicated levy information through circulars and meetings, though gaps in understanding persisted. The findings highlight disparities in access to quality education, driven by inconsistent levies and a lack of financial support mechanisms.

### **5.2.2 How school levies affect learners' enrolment in public ECDE centers in Kisumu west Sub-County**

The study examined how school levies impact enrollment in public Early Childhood Development and Education (ECDE) centers in Kisumu West Sub-county. Results show that 65% of teachers reported that school levies significantly affect enrollment rates, with 80.3% observing a negative impact. High levies act as a major deterrent for parents, particularly those from low-income households, contributing to decreased enrollment. Some parents withdraw their children from school due to an inability to pay the fees, with a notable percentage of centers reporting frequent withdrawals. Approximately 70.5% of centers believe that the current levies discourage enrollment, as parents struggle to afford the associated costs.

Financial burdens disproportionately affect low-income families, with 75.4% of teachers identifying them as the most impacted. Additionally, only a small percentage of parents view school levies as affordable, with most perceiving them as somewhat affordable or unaffordable. The perceived quality of education relative to the cost also affects parental satisfaction, with 45% believing the levies do not justify the quality of education provided. These findings highlight that high school levies hinder access to early childhood education, perpetuating educational inequalities and disadvantaging children from economically vulnerable families.

### **5.2.3 How school levies influence learners' retention and completion rate in public ECDE centers in Kisumu West Sub County**

The study aimed to assess the influence of school levies on learner retention and completion rates in public ECDE centers in Kisumu West Sub-county. It found that 75.4% of respondents

reported dropouts due to the inability to pay school levies. This financial burden disproportionately affects low-income families, contributing to high dropout rates, particularly at the beginning of the term when levies are due. Retention rates varied, with 39.3% of teachers reporting that only 50-74% of students complete their education, while 14.8% have less than 50% retention.

Furthermore, 70.5% of teachers indicated that school levies cause inconsistent attendance, as many learners miss classes when levies are due or when families face financial strain. Nearly 57.4% of teachers reported instances where students were denied access to education due to unpaid levies, exacerbating educational inequality. Dropout rates tend to spike at specific times, such as the beginning or end of the term, when financial pressures are highest. These findings highlight the negative impact of school levies on educational access, retention, and completion, particularly for economically disadvantaged families.

#### **5.2.4 Strategies that will help solve the effect of school levies in public ECDE centers in Kisumu West Sub – county Kisumu County**

The study focused on strategies to mitigate the impact of school levies in Early Childhood Development and Education (ECDE) centers in Kisumu West Sub- County. A significant finding is that reducing school levies can enhance student enrollment and retention, particularly for families facing financial constraints. Survey data showed that 85% of respondents supported this measure, highlighting its importance for improving access to education. Additionally, suggested support mechanisms for families unable to pay levies included government subsidies (87%), community-based support programs (65%), and NGO involvement (40%). These mechanisms are aimed at easing the financial burden and ensuring more children can remain in school. Other strategies to address levy challenges involved engaging stakeholders in decision-making, seeking external funding sources like community fundraising and corporate sponsorships, and exploring cost-saving measures. There was also a consensus on the need for increased government involvement, through financial subsidies and regulation of school fees. The study underscored the importance of a balanced approach combining government support, community initiatives, and efficient resource management to make education more accessible while maintaining quality.

### 5.3 Conclusions

The study demonstrates significant challenges in the administration of school levies at ECDE centers in Kisumu West Sub-County. While tuition and activity fees are common, the absence of standardized guidelines and regulations has led to inconsistencies in fee structures and access to financial support. The lack of discounts or exemptions exacerbates the financial strain on low-income families, limiting access to early childhood education for disadvantaged children. Furthermore, insufficient oversight and enforcement of existing regulations contribute to disparities in quality and equity across the centers, creating a need for systemic reforms to promote inclusivity and fairness.

The findings reveal that high school levies in Kisumu West Sub-county present significant barriers to early childhood education, especially for low-income families. Most ECDE centers report that levies negatively impact enrollment, with many parents either avoiding or withdrawing their children from school due to the costs. While some families manage the financial strain, the majority view the levies as unaffordable or burdensome. This financial burden, combined with a perceived mismatch between levies and the quality of education, exacerbates educational inequality, limiting access to essential early learning opportunities for disadvantaged children.

The study shows that school levies are a significant barrier to learner retention and completion in public ECDE centers in Kisumu West Sub-county. Financial constraints lead to frequent dropouts and inconsistent attendance, particularly affecting children from low-income households. The lack of affordability prevents many learners from completing their early education, hindering their long-term academic and social development. The findings suggest that school levies not only impact enrollment but also contribute to educational inequality, as many families struggle to afford the costs, leading to interrupted learning and reduced opportunities for children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

The findings reveal that reducing school levies is crucial for increasing enrollment and retention in ECDE centers, making education accessible to low-income families. A collaborative approach involving government subsidies, community support, and NGO engagement is necessary to alleviate the financial strain on parents. Additionally, the

involvement of stakeholders in decision-making ensures transparency and alignment with community needs. Without effective intervention, the challenges of school levies could lead to increased dropout rates and reduced educational access. Thus, the study emphasizes the need for a holistic strategy to support ECDE programs and foster educational equity.

#### **5.4 Recommendations**

To improve access and equity in early childhood education, the county government should implement clear, enforceable guidelines for the collection and use of school levies. These guidelines should ensure transparency, regulate fee structures, and promote accountability in the management of levies. Additionally, introducing subsidies, discounts, or exemptions for low-income families would alleviate financial burdens and improve enrollment and retention rates. Strengthening communication strategies between schools and parents, particularly regarding fee breakdowns and usage, can enhance trust and reduce misunderstandings. Collaboration between local authorities, communities, and schools is essential to ensure that all children, regardless of socioeconomic background, can access quality early childhood education.

To improve access and equity in early childhood education, targeted interventions are necessary. Local government and educational authorities should consider subsidizing or eliminating school levies, particularly for low-income families, to reduce the financial barrier to enrollment. Additionally, clearer communication regarding how levies are utilized to enhance education quality could help build trust with parents. Increasing oversight and regulation of school levies would ensure that fees are reasonable and transparent. Lastly, providing financial assistance or flexible payment plans would further support families, ensuring that all children can benefit from early childhood education without the burden of excessive costs.

To improve learner retention and completion rates, it is recommended that the government and local authorities introduce targeted financial support for low-income families to alleviate the burden of school levies. This could include subsidies, fee waivers, or flexible payment plans to ensure that all children have access to continuous education. Additionally, implementing clear policies to prevent students from being denied access to education due to unpaid levies

is crucial. Schools should also work closely with parents to develop strategies for managing financial obligations, ensuring that economic challenges do not hinder learners' educational progress and long-term development.

It is recommended that the government establish a subsidy program targeted at low-income families, which would alleviate the immediate burden of school levies and improve accessibility to early childhood education. Schools should actively seek partnerships with NGOs and local businesses to diversify funding sources, reducing reliance on levies. Additionally, schools can implement cost-saving measures like community volunteer programs and better resource management to minimize operational expenses. Engaging parents and other stakeholders in regular discussions about school funding will foster a sense of shared responsibility and ensure that financial decisions align with community priorities. These combined efforts can enhance both the sustainability and quality of ECDE programs.

### **5.5 Areas for Further Research**

The study sought to establish how school levies affect learner's enrolment, retention and completion in public ECDE centers in Kisumu west sub county Kenya. The study limited itself to public ECDE centers in Kisumu west sub county Kenya; however, there is need for further studies to consider other counties in Kenya or expand the scope of study to include other sub counties in Kisumu County. A comparative study should be conducted between public ECDE centers and Private ECDE centers in the same sub county.

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Mount Kenya University

## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX I: INTRODUCTION LETTER

Dear Respondent,

**REF: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH**

My name is MARY ATIENO MBAJA, and I am a student at Mount Kenya University with the identification number MECS/52848/2016. I am now undertaking a research paper on the ***EFFECT OF SCHOOL LEVIES ON LEARNER'S ENROLMENT, RETENTION AND COMPLETION IN PUBLIC ECDE CENTRES IN KISUMU WEST SUB-COUNTY KISUMU KENYA*** in order to fulfil a requirement imposed by my institution for the awarding of the degree of Master in Early Childhood Education. This prerequisite is necessary in order to get the degree. This letter's objective is to ask you to complete the attached questionnaire to the best of your knowledge; the data you provide will be used only for research purposes and will not be shared with any third parties.

Yours Faithfully

**MARY ATIENO MBAJA**



Mount Kenya

**APPENDIX II: CONSENT FORM**

Dear Sir/Madam,

**RE: YOUR CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN MY RESEARCH AS RESPONDENT IN DATA COLLECTION.**

I am researching the effect of school levies on learner’s enrolment, retention and completion in public ECDE centers in Kisumu West Sub-County Kisumu Kenya. I would like to invite you to participate in this study. This study consists of answering questions using a paper questionnaire. All respondents will remain anonymous and confidential. Your participation in this study is voluntary and you may withdraw your participation at any time without explanation or retaliation. If you agree to participate in this study, please sign the consent form attached to this letter before submitting the completed questionnaire. Thank you in advance for your help in this important research. If you have any questions about consent to participate in research, please contact us at any time.

In case of any queries that you may have regarding ethical issues, you are free to contact the Ethics Review Committee Chairman at Mount Kenya University: **MKU ERC, P. O BOX 342 – 01000, Thika.**

**Respondent Acceptance:**

**I hereby freely give my informed consent and confirmation to voluntarily participate in the above-mentioned research.**

**Sign:** .....

**Date:** .....

**Researcher Details:**

**MARY ATIENO MBAJA**

**APPENDIX III: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR ECDE TEACHERS**

**Introduction**

This questionnaire is designed for a research study on the Effect of school levies on learner’s enrolment, retention and completion in public ECDE centers in Kisumu West sub-County Kisumu Kenya. You have been identified as one of the respondents thus required to answer the questions objectively and precisely as the responses shall solely be used for research purposes. Utmost confidentiality shall be ensured where necessary.

**Section A: Personal Data**

1a) Name of the Centre (optional) .....

b) Sex of the respondent      Male                       Female

c) Age: 20-30yrs       31-40 yrs       41-50yrs       above 50 yrs

d) Working /teaching experience

1-5 years       6-10years       11-15years       over 15 years

e) Highest professional qualification

BED       Diploma       ECDE certificate       P1

Any other specify.....

**Section B: Research Questions**

1 According to you, what do you understand by school levies?

.....  
.....

2 a) Do you think it is important in ECDE centre?

Yes                       No

b) Give reasons for your answer in 2a above

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

3 a) If 2a) is yes, how do the parents go about it?

.....  
.....

b) If 2a) is No, how do you go about managing the ECDE centre?

.....  
.....

a) If school levies are paid in your ECDE centre, how much do they pay and is the amount enough to maintain teachers and manage the facilities?.....

Yes  No

b) Give reasons for the answer above

.....  
.....

How often do the parents pay, monthly  termly

c) How is the parent's attitude about the payment? Do they respond

Positively  negatively

d) Give reasons for your answer above

.....  
.....

e) If negatively, how do you go about dealing with children who doesn't pay promptly?

.....  
.....

4 a) What is the enrolment trend in ECDE centres as compared and lower primary

High  Low

5 a) What is the effect of school levies on quality of learning?

Positive  Negative

b) Give reasons for your answer above

.....  
.....

c) Payment of school levies in my school is

Promptly  Moderate  Inadequate

## APPENDIX IV: INTERVIEW GUIDE TO HEAD TEACHERS

This interview guide is set to collect data on the Effect of school levies on learner’s enrolment, retention and completion in public ECDE centers in Kisumu West sub-County Kisumu Kenya. The responses shall solely to be used for research purposes. You are therefore requested to answer the questions as objectively as possible as confidentiality is assured.

### Part A: Background Information

1a) Name of the Centre (optional) .....

b) Sponsor: .....

c) Staff establishment

Male

Female

Total

d) Pupils enrolment

Age	3	4-5	6 and above	Total
<b>Total</b>				

Pupils Retention

Age	3	4-5	6 and above	Total
<b>Total</b>				

Pupils Attendance

Age	3	4-5	6 and above	Total

<b>Total</b>				

**Part B: Research Questions**

1 a) How much do your parents pay per month per learner?

.....  
 .....

b) Since ECDE has been developed is there county government controls on the amount to be paid by parents? If yes, how much?

.....  
 .....

2 a) In your opinion is there any relationship between the payment of ECDE levies and learners enrolment and retention? If yes, how does it affect it?

.....  
 .....

b) What is the general response of parents towards the payment of these levies?

.....  
 .....

c) How does the payment of these levies contribute to learning in these centres?

.....  
 .....

3 a) In your view, how do you relate the enrolment trend in ECDE and that in lower primary with that of FPE?

.....  
 .....

b) What are some of the suggestions to enhance parent's participation in ECDE?

.....  
 .....



## APPENDIX V: MKU ISERC



REF: MKU/ISERC/4329  
TO: MARY ATIENO MBAJA

Date: 29 August 2024

REG: MECS/52848/2016

Dear Sir/Madam,

**RE: EFFECT OF SCHOOL LEVIES ON LEARNER'S ENROLMENT, RETENTION AND COMPLETION IN PUBLIC ECDE CENTRES IN KISUMU WEST SUB-COUNTY KISUMU KENYA**

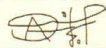
This is to inform you that **Mount Kenya University** has reviewed and approved your above research proposal. Your application approval number is **3049**. The approval period is **29/08/2024 - 28/08/2025**.

This approval is subject to compliance with the following requirements;

- i. Only approved documents including informed consents, study instruments, MTA will be used
- ii. All changes including amendments, deviations and violations are submitted for review and approval by **Mount Kenya University**
- iii. Death and life-threatening problems and serious adverse events or unexpected adverse events whether related or unrelated to the study must be reported to **Mount Kenya University** within 72 hours of notification
- iv. Any changes, anticipated or otherwise that may increase the risks or affect the safety or welfare of study participants and others or affect the integrity of the research must be reported to **Mount Kenya University** within 72 hours
- v. Clearance for export of biological specimens must be obtained from relevant institutions
- vi. Submission of a request for renewal of approval at least 60 days prior to expiry of the approval period. Attach a comprehensive progress report to support the renewal
- vii. Submission of an executive summary report within 90 days upon completion of the study to **Mount Kenya University**

Prior to commencing your study, you will be expected to obtain a research license from National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) <https://research-portal.nacosti.go.ke> and also obtain other clearances needed.

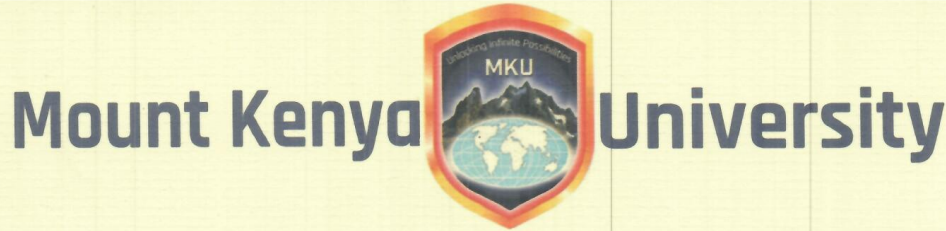
Yours sincerely,



Dr. Alfred Owino, PhD  
Chairman, Mount Kenya University ISERC



**APPENDIX VI: DIRECTORATE OF GRADUATE STUDIES**



**DIRECTORATE OF GRADUATE STUDIES**

MECS/52848/2016

30<sup>th</sup> August, 2024

*National Commission for Science Technology & Innovation (NACOSTI)*  
*Off Waiyaki, Upper Kabete*  
*P.O Box 30623- 00100*  
*NAIROBI, KENYA*

Dear Sir/Madam,


**RE: MARY ATIENO MBAJA- REGISTRATION NO. MECS/52848/2016**

The purpose of this letter is to introduce the above named student who is pursuing **Master of Education in Early Childhood Studies** in the **Department of Early Childhood Education** in the **School of Education**.

The title of the research is **"Effect of School Levies on Learner's Enrolment, Retention and Completion in Public ECDE Centres in Kisumu West Sub-County Kisumu Kenya."** It has been cleared by the University's Ethics Review Committee (Certificate attached) and now has to proceed to the field to collect data between **September, 2024 and November, 2024**.

Any assistance accorded to the student will be highly appreciated.

Thank you.

  
**Dr. Samuel M. Karenga, Ph.D**  
**Director, Graduate Studies**  
Enc.

Mount Kenya University  
P.O. Box 342-01000, THIKA  
Office of the Director,  
Graduate Studies

**APPENDIX VII: SUB COUNTY DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION, KISUMU WEST**

**REPUBLIC OF KENYA  
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION  
STATE DEPARTMENT FOR BASIC EDUCATION**



**MINISTRY OF EDUCATION  
SUB-COUNTY EDUCATION OFFICE  
KISUMU WEST  
P.O. BOX 3001-40100  
KISUMU**

**WHEN REPLYING QUOTE  
kisumuwestsubcountyoffice@gmail.com**

**REF: KWS/ED/GN/VOL.1**

**18<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER, 2024**

MARY ATIENO MBAJA  
SABAKO COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL  
P.O BOX 93,  
PAW AKUCHE

**RE: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION – MARY ATIENO MBAJA ID. NO. 13237625**

Reference is made to a letter from the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation no. MECS/52848/2016 of 30<sup>th</sup> August, 2024 on the above underlined subject matter.

The above named is a student of Mount Kenya University of Science. She has been authorized to carry out a research on “**Effect of School Levies on Learner’s Enrolment, Retention and Completion in Public ECDE Centres in Kisumu West Sub County Kisumu Kenya**” The research period ends November, 2024.






Kindly accord her any assistance that she may need.

MARY OICHOE  
SUB-COUNTY DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION  
**KISUMU WEST**



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# APPENDIX VIII: NACOSTI PERMIT

 REPUBLIC OF KENYA	 NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION
Ref No: 754831	Date of Issue: 10/September/2024
<b>RESEARCH LICENSE</b>	
	
<p>This is to Certify that Ms. MARY ATIENO MBAJA of Mount Kenya University, has been licensed to conduct research as per the provision of the Science, Technology and Innovation Act, 2013 (Rev.2014) in Kisumu on the topic: EFFECT OF SCHOOL LEVIES ON LEARNER'S ENROLMENT, RETENTION AND COMPLETION IN PUBLIC ECDE CENTRES IN KISUMU WEST SUB-COUNTY KISUMU KENYA for the period ending : 10/September/2025.</p>	
License No: NACOSTI/P/24/39762	
754831	
Applicant Identification Number	Director General NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION
	Verification QR Code
	
<p>NOTE: This is a computer generated License. To verify the authenticity of this document, Scan the QR Code using QR scanner application.</p>	
See overleaf for conditions	

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The National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation, hereafter referred to as the Commission, was established under the Science, Technology and Innovation Act 2013 (Revised 2014) herein after referred to as the Act. The objective of the Commission shall be to regulate and assure quality in the science, technology and innovation sector and advise the Government in matters related thereto.

**CONDITIONS OF THE RESEARCH LICENSE**

1. The License is granted subject to provisions of the Constitution of Kenya, the Science, Technology and Innovation Act, and other relevant laws, policies and regulations. Accordingly, the licensee shall adhere to such procedures, standards, code of ethics and guidelines as may be prescribed by regulations made under the Act, or prescribed by provisions of International treaties of which Kenya is a signatory to
2. The research and its related activities as well as outcomes shall be beneficial to the country and shall not in any way;
  - i. Endanger national security
  - ii. Adversely affect the lives of Kenyans
  - iii. Be in contravention of Kenya's international obligations including Biological Weapons Convention (BWC), Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO), Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN).
  - iv. Result in exploitation of intellectual property rights of communities in Kenya
  - v. Adversely affect the environment
  - vi. Adversely affect the rights of communities
  - vii. Endanger public safety and national cohesion
  - viii. Plagiarize someone else's work
3. The License is valid for the proposed research, location and specified period.
4. The license any rights thereunder are non-transferable
5. The Commission reserves the right to cancel the research at any time during the research period if in the opinion of the Commission the research is not implemented in conformity with the provisions of the Act or any other written law.
6. The Licensee shall inform the relevant County Director of Education, County Commissioner and County Governor before commencement of the research.
7. Excavation, filming, movement, and collection of specimens are subject to further necessary clearance from relevant Government Agencies.
8. The License does not give authority to transfer research materials.
9. The Commission may monitor and evaluate the licensed research project for the purpose of assessing and evaluating compliance with the conditions of the License.
10. The Licensee shall submit one hard copy, and upload a soft copy of their final report (thesis) onto a platform designated by the Commission within one year of completion of the research.
11. The Commission reserves the right to modify the conditions of the License including cancellation without prior notice.
12. Research, findings and information regarding research systems shall be stored or disseminated, utilized or applied in such a manner as may be prescribed by the Commission from time to time.
13. The Licensee shall disclose to the Commission, the relevant Institutional Scientific and Ethical Review Committee, and the relevant national agencies any inventions and discoveries that are of National strategic importance.
14. The Commission shall have powers to acquire from any person the right in, or to, any scientific innovation, invention or patent of strategic importance to the country.
15. Relevant Institutional Scientific and Ethical Review Committee shall monitor and evaluate the research periodically, and make a report of its findings to the Commission for necessary action.

National Commission for Science, Technology and  
Innovation(NACOSTI),  
Off Waiyaki Way, Upper Kabete,  
P. O. Box 30623 - 00100 Nairobi, KENYA  
Telephone: 020 4007000, 0713788787, 0735404245  
E-mail: [dg@nacosti.go.ke](mailto:dg@nacosti.go.ke)  
Website: [www.nacosti.go.ke](http://www.nacosti.go.ke)

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