

Influence of Teacher Recruitment on the Implementation of Early Childhood Development Education Programme in Public Schools in Isiolo County, Kenya.

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2026.100800116>

Received: 10 August 2026; Accepted: 17 August 2026; Published: 27 August 2026

ABSTRACT

This study investigated the influence of teacher recruitment on the implementation of Early Childhood Development Education (ECDE) programmes in public schools in Isiolo County, Kenya. The study was guided by the null hypothesis (H_{01}): *There is no significant relationship between the adequacy of teacher recruitment and the implementation of ECDE programmes in public schools in Isiolo County, Kenya.* The study was grounded in Human Capital Theory (Becker, 1964), which underscores the value of investing in recruitment and placement of qualified personnel to maximize productivity and effectiveness in education. A descriptive survey research design was adopted. The target population included 10 ward coordinators across three sub-counties, 162 headteachers, and 350 ECDE teachers. A sample of 264 respondents comprising 8 ward coordinators, 81 headteachers and 175 ECDE teachers was selected using purposive and simple random sampling techniques. Questionnaires were administered to teachers and headteachers, while interviews were conducted with ward administrators. The correlation analysis revealed a positive and statistically significant relationship between teacher recruitment and the implementation of ECDE programmes ($r(175) = .276, p < 0.05$). Based on these findings, the null hypothesis was rejected, confirming that teacher recruitment significantly influences the implementation of ECDE programmes. The study concludes that the adequacy and fairness of teacher recruitment are central to the successful implementation of ECDE programmes. It recommends that the County Government strengthen recruitment policies to ensure timely placement of qualified ECDE teachers. Additionally, the County Government and County Education Boards should establish clear guidelines for equitable teacher distribution, recruitment, and incentives for teachers posted in remote schools in sub-counties in Isiolo County.

Keywords: Influence, Teacher Recruitment, Implementation, Early Childhood Development Education, Public Schools.

INTRODUCTION

In the USA, according to Ingvarson & Rowley (2017), there is a strong focus on quality assurance in teacher education, but early childhood teachers remain underpaid, leading to recruitment difficulties. States like California and New York offer incentives, such as loan forgiveness programmes, to attract more teachers. In the UK, Galloway, Kriukow & Numajiri (2017) argue that internationalization and the preference for English-speaking teachers have led to recruitment policies and a shortage of qualified local early childhood educators. In France, Swanson & (2018) examined how France's centralized teacher training system contrasts with decentralized models in the US and UK and suggest that structured recruitment efforts have led to more stable employment for early childhood teachers. In China, Li (2020) highlights that while urban areas have strong recruitment programmes, rural regions still struggle with attracting qualified teachers, and the government has introduced incentives to encourage teachers to work in rural schools.

In Nigeria, Chidarikire, Muza & Beans (2021) analyzed gender equality and language diversity in Nigerian teacher education, finding that recruitment strategies are often ineffective due to underfunding and lack of incentives for teachers. In South Africa, Tarisayi & Manik (2021) investigated Zimbabwean migrant teachers in South Africa and found that migrant teachers often fill shortages in ECE programs, yet they face legal and social challenges. In Ghana, Opoku, Asare-Nuamah & Nketsia (2020) explored teacher retention in rural schools, highlighting that teachers are more likely to leave their jobs due to poor infrastructure and a lack of career development opportunities. In Zimbabwe, Weda & de Villiers (2019) studied Zimbabwean teachers migrating to South Africa for better opportunities, demonstrating the impact of poor wages and job security on teacher recruitment in Zimbabwe.

In Tanzania, Ochieng & Yeonsung (2021) studied institutional constraints in education and found that many teachers seek part-time jobs to supplement their income, which affects retention rates. In Uganda, Ejuu (2018) examined early childhood education development in Uganda and highlighted the disparities between private and public teacher recruitment, with private institutions offering better salaries and working conditions. In Rwanda, Leaver et al. (2021) analyzed how performance contracts for civil servants have affected teacher recruitment and retention in Rwandan primary schools.

In Kenya, Mtana & Mange (2020) explored the determinants that affect how early childhood education (ECE) is administered in Kilifi South Sub-County and revealed a strong correlation between staffing and the efficient management of ECE in Kilifi County. Gichuki (2015) investigated the effects of management on preschoolers' performance in Embu West, Embu County, and pointed out that Early Childhood Development Education teachers view their position as a temporary stopgap measure to buy them time to look for better employment elsewhere. Boera & Mbaka (2023) investigated how teacher recruitment affects the quality of ECDE in Nyamira-North Sub-County and revealed that variations in teacher qualifications and compensation across counties lead to teacher turnover, as educators move in search of better pay, since the turnover results in inadequate staffing in counties offering lower salaries, thereby compromising the quality of ECDE services. Obeywa, Okoth-Oluoch, Opiyo, and Simiyu (2023) assessed the effectiveness of pedagogical strategies in ECDE curriculum implementation in

Hamisi Sub-County and found that the choice and application of teaching methods significantly affect learners' readiness for primary education, emphasising the need for teacher training programs to focus on effective pedagogical strategies. Ahtaman (2020) explored the global challenges faced by early childhood education programs regarding teacher recruitment and retention and emphasised the need for comprehensive recruitment strategies that address the growing demand for qualified early childhood educators, with a particular focus on improving professional development and increasing incentives for teachers.

In Isiolo County, teacher recruitment and deployment remain critical determinants of ECDE programme implementation. This study specifically focuses on the adequacy and process of teacher recruitment, covering how teachers are identified, attracted, and appointed to public ECDE centres, and how these recruitment practices influence programme implementation outcomes. Kimani (2024) highlights that despite the government's efforts to recruit ECDE teachers, many of them lack formal training, leading to poor learning outcomes, and additionally, most qualified teachers prefer urban centres, leaving rural ECDE centres understaffed. Okatch (2022) notes that many ECDE teachers work under temporary contracts with irregular pay, discouraging long-term retention in the profession, and teachers in Isiolo face significant job insecurity due to inadequate government funding for ECDE programs. According to Otieno, Mkutu & Wandera (2018), there is a gender imbalance in ECDE teacher recruitment, with more female teachers in the profession, although male teachers are underrepresented due to cultural perceptions that early childhood education is a female-dominated field.

Statement of the problem

The Government of Kenya decentralized Early Childhood Education and Development (ECDE) to boost resource allocation, improve the quality of education in ECDE centres, and support teachers' professional growth. Despite these efforts by the government, communities, and development partners, significant challenges and irregularities persist in the recruitment and placement of qualified teachers, a critical factor in the effective implementation of ECDE programmes.

According to the World Bank (2013) evaluation of ECDE centres, and the Kenya Institute of Education (2012) report on the effects of Free Primary Education (FPE) on ECDE, persistent challenges include inadequate resources, limited teaching and learning materials, poor physical facilities, and critically, shortages of qualified teachers. When teacher recruitment is insufficient, classrooms remain understaffed, teacher–pupil ratios widen, and the quality of learning is compromised. In marginalised regions such as Isiolo County, the shortage of qualified ECDE teachers is further aggravated by inequitable distribution and delayed recruitment processes.

These gaps directly undermine the achievement of quality early childhood education, as the availability and adequacy of teachers are central to the implementation of ECDE programmes. This study, therefore, sought to investigate the influence of teacher recruitment on the implementation of Early Childhood Development Education programmes in public schools in Isiolo County, Kenya.

Objective of the study

The study was based on the following research objectives to determine the influence of Teacher Recruitment on the implementation of the Early Childhood Development Education Programme in public schools in Isiolo County, Kenya.

Research Hypothesis

The study was based on the following research hypothesis;

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between Teacher Recruitment and the implementation of the Early Childhood Development Education Programme in public schools in Isiolo County, Kenya

LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview of the implementation of the Early Childhood Development Education programme

Globally, the implementation of Early Childhood Development Education (ECDE) programmes has gained increasing attention as governments and development partners recognize the crucial role of early learning in shaping future educational and socio-economic outcomes. However, disparities in policy, financing, and teacher recruitment remain significant. The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2019) reported wide gaps in investment across member countries, with the United Kingdom spending only USD 7,462 per child aged 0–5 compared to the OECD average of USD 12,749. Such disparities not only affect access to services but also influence the adequacy of teacher recruitment, which is central to programme quality.

In developing regions, challenges are even more pronounced. For instance, studies in Sub-Saharan Africa (Mwaura, Sylva & Malmberg, 2008) and Nigeria (Akinrotimi & Olowe, 2016) have highlighted that shortages of qualified teachers, weak policy frameworks, and inadequate financing remain persistent barriers to effective ECDE implementation. Similarly, Murphy et al. (2018) noted that in humanitarian and low-resource settings, evidence on ECDE implementation is limited, calling for research that explains not only which interventions work, but also how and under what conditions they can be effectively scaled. In Asia, disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic further exposed systemic weaknesses. Gayatri (2020) observed that home-based learning created challenges for young children's self-regulation and digital readiness, underscoring the need for adaptable teaching strategies and strong parental support.

Within this global landscape, Kenya has made important strides in decentralizing ECDE management. The Constitution of Kenya (2010) devolved the responsibility for ECDE services to county governments, aiming to reduce regional inequalities and better align services with local needs. However, the transition has faced persistent challenges, including inconsistencies in policy implementation, uneven resource allocation, and insufficient recruitment of qualified teachers across counties. A 2024 baseline report emphasized the need for a robust policy and legal environment to strengthen ECDE implementation, particularly in marginalized counties such as Isiolo.

Taken together, these experiences show that while ECDE programmes are globally recognized as essential for child development, their successful implementation is highly dependent on adequate investment, sound policy frameworks, and effective teacher recruitment and deployment.

Teacher Recruitment and the Implementation of the Early Childhood Development Education Programme

Patel and Kumar (2024) highlighted the role of professional development in teacher retention in early childhood education settings, where professional development programs directly contribute to improved recruitment and retention rates, and consequently, the effective implementation of ECE programs. O'Neill & Kalu (2019) examined the policies surrounding teacher recruitment in Sub-Saharan Africa and how they influence the implementation of early childhood education programs and concluded that a lack of qualified teachers and insufficient recruitment policies hinder the successful implementation of ECE programs in the region.

Shikokoti, Okoth & Chepkonga (2020) investigated how teacher recruitment affects the implementation and quality of early childhood education programs in various contexts and found that adequate teacher recruitment positively correlates with the quality of ECE programs, particularly in regions where recruitment strategies emphasize professional development and a deeper understanding of early childhood pedagogy and that teacher recruitment that aligns with program needs and pedagogical frameworks ensures better implementation, especially in developing countries. Moyo & Phiri, (2018) focused on teacher recruitment policies in African countries and their influence on ECE program implementation and highlighted the mismatch between teacher supply and demand in many African nations, noting that insufficient teacher recruitment hampers the effectiveness of ECE programs, particularly in rural areas and found that the implementation of well-structured teacher recruitment policies, including incentives for teachers to work in remote areas, significantly improves the reach and quality of ECE programs. Shikokoti (2023) explored how teacher recruitment and retention policies influence the quality and accessibility of early childhood education in the United States and demonstrated that early childhood teachers who are well-recruited and adequately supported are more likely to implement ECE curricula effectively and found that comprehensive recruitment programs, such as scholarships and targeted hiring campaigns, are essential to filling teacher shortages in early childhood education. Additionally, creating a supportive work environment for ECE teachers leads to improved outcomes for children.

Enge and Chirwa (2017) investigated the relationship between teacher recruitment, training, and the implementation of early childhood education programmes in low-income countries and found that recruitment processes that fail to assess teachers' pedagogical competence, professional qualifications, and motivation often result in poor classroom practices and ineffective implementation of ECDE programmes. Their study emphasized that recruitment aspects such as evaluation of ECDE specialization, teaching competence, child-centred pedagogical skills, and teacher motivation directly influence curriculum delivery, classroom management, and learner outcomes. Similarly, Ramírez and Vargas (2019) examined teacher recruitment strategies and their impact on early childhood education programmes in Latin American countries and established that targeted recruitment strategies, merit-based hiring, and

competitive remuneration enhanced programme implementation and child development outcomes by attracting qualified and committed teachers. These findings support the applicability of Human Capital Theory in explaining that investment in qualified and competent teachers improves the implementation of ECDE programmes. The theory is relevant to the study because it highlights the importance of teacher competencies, qualifications, and professional skills in enhancing educational effectiveness; however, its limitation is that it mainly focuses on individual teacher capabilities while giving limited attention to contextual factors such as teacher motivation, school resources, working conditions, and policy support that also influence programme implementation. Therefore, there is a need to refine the theory by integrating institutional and stakeholder perspectives to provide a broader understanding of how recruitment practices, motivation, and organizational support collectively influence the implementation of ECDE programmes.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study was guided by Human Capital Theory developed by Gary Becker (1964), which posits that investment in human capital (education, training, and professional development) leads to improved individual productivity and organizational performance. Human capital is viewed as the knowledge, competencies, experience and abilities that individuals possess and utilize to contribute to institutional effectiveness. In the education sector, teachers represent a critical form of human capital because their qualifications, competencies and professional expertise directly influence educational quality and learner outcomes.

Human Capital Theory suggests that organizations achieve better performance when they recruit and retain qualified personnel. In the context of Early Childhood Development Education (ECDE), effective recruitment ensures that trained and competent teachers are placed in learning institutions where they can successfully implement the curriculum, support child development and improve educational outcomes. The theory therefore provides a useful framework for understanding how teacher recruitment contributes to the implementation of ECDE programmes in public schools.

The theory informed this study by emphasizing that the recruitment of professionally qualified ECDE teachers is an investment capable of improving programme implementation. Counties that recruit adequate numbers of trained teachers are more likely to achieve effective curriculum delivery, improved classroom management, enhanced learner participation and better educational outcomes. Consequently, the study examined whether the adequacy of teacher recruitment significantly influences the implementation of ECDE programmes in public schools in Isiolo County, Kenya.

However, Human Capital Theory has limitations. While it emphasizes teacher qualifications, competencies, and skills, it pays limited attention to contextual factors such as teacher motivation, remuneration, working conditions, resource availability, institutional support and policy environments that may also influence programme implementation. Therefore, although the theory provides a useful explanation of the role of teacher recruitment in ECDE implementation, its assumptions should be interpreted alongside broader organizational and environmental factors affecting educational service delivery.

METHODOLOGY

A descriptive survey research design was used as it allows the researcher to describe characteristics of an individual or group as they are (Shikokoti, Okoth Abungana, 2024). The design was considered appropriate for investigating the influence of teacher recruitment on the implementation of Early Childhood Education (ECDE) programmes in public schools in Isiolo County, Kenya. The study targeted 522 respondents comprising 10 ward coordinators, 162 headteachers and 350 ECDE teachers in Isiolo County. A sample of 264 respondents was selected, consisting of 8 ward coordinators, 81 headteachers and 175 ECDE teachers. Ward coordinators were selected purposively, while headteachers and teachers were selected using simple random sampling techniques. All sampled respondents participated in the study, yielding a response rate of 100%. Data was collected using questionnaires administered to headteachers and teachers and interview schedules administered to ward coordinators. Questionnaires were preferred because they facilitate the collection of large amounts of information from respondents within a short period and minimize researcher bias. The questionnaire consisted of two sections. Section A collected demographic information, while Section B contained Likert-scale items measuring teacher recruitment and implementation of ECDE programmes. Responses were rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5). To ensure content validity, the instruments were subjected to a pilot study to test clarity, appropriateness of language and feasibility. Reliability was established using the test-retest technique. The teachers' questionnaire yielded a reliability coefficient of $r = 0.86$, while the headteachers' questionnaire yielded a reliability coefficient of $r = 0.98$, indicating that the instruments were highly reliable for data collection.

Descriptive statistics were used in the analyses of the data collected. For inferential statistics, Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to determine the relationship between teacher recruitment and implementation of ECDE programmes. The hypothesis test was at 5% level of significance. The null hypothesis was rejected and accepted if the p-value is greater than 0.05 ($P \geq 0.05$) or 0.01 ($P \geq 0.01$). It was rejected if the p-value is less than or equal to 0.05 ($P \leq 0.05$) and 1% level of significance if the p-value was less than or equal to 0.01 ($P \leq 0.01$). The Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS), version 22, was used to code and enter the data into the computer for analysis after the questions.

RESULTS

Teacher Recruitment and implementation of Early Childhood Development Education programmes

The researcher sought to determine the influence of Teacher Recruitment and the implementation of ECDE. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, Means, and Standard Deviation were utilised. The rating was based on a Likert Scale where 1=Strongly Disagree (SD), 2=Disagree (D), 3=Undecided (UD), 4= Agree (A), 5=Strongly Agree (SA). The results of the objective were presented in Table 1, which shows Head Teachers' responses on Teacher Recruitment and implementation of Early Childhood Development Education programmes

Table 1: Head Teachers' responses on Teacher Recruitment and implementation of Early Childhood Development Education programmes

	Saf %	Af %	Udf %	Df %	SDf %	Mean	Std
Policies and plans in the county are developed to guide the recruitment of ECDE teachers	22 (68.8)	10 (31.2)	0 0.0	0 0.0	0 0.0	4.69	0.47
There is an established recruitment policy for ECDE	22 (68.8)	10 (31.2)	0 0.0	0 0.0	0 0.0	4.69	0.47
Devolved County Early Childhood Education recruitment structures are put in place	13 (40.6)	9 (28.1)	10 (31.3)	0 0.0	0 0.0	4.09	0.83
There is a clear policy on the recruitment of Early childhood education programmes	6 (18.8)	26 (81.2)	0 0.0	0 0.0	0 0.0	4.19	0.39
The county government has implemented the ECDE teacher recruitment policy	14 (43.8)	18 (56.2)	0 0.0	0 0.0	0 0.0	4.44	0.50
Average Mean						4.42	0.53

Table 1 shows that the majority, 22(68.8%), of the Head teachers Strongly Agreed that the Policies and plans in the county are developed to guide the recruitment of ECDE teachers, while 10(31.2%) agreed with a mean of (M=4.69, SD=0.47). This implies that the Policies and plans in the county are developed to guide the recruitment of ECDE teachers. The findings are in line with Mwangi and Nyaboke (2020) analysed how government policies affected teacher recruitment in the ECDE sector and concluded that teacher recruitment policies had positive impacts in terms of improving teacher quality and the overall implementation of ECDE programs, and emphasised that the Teacher Service Commission (TSC) had made significant strides in ensuring that only qualified teachers were recruited for ECDE programs.

There is an established recruitment policy for ECDE 22(68.8%) of the Head teachers Strongly Agreed, while 10(31.2%) Agreed with a mean of (M=4.69, SD=0.47). This implies that there is an established recruitment policy for ECDE. The findings concur with Gichuki (2015), who studied the effects of management on preschoolers' performance in Embu West, Embu County, and found that Teacher recruitment with better pay promotes classroom performance, and Early Childhood Development Education teachers view their position as a temporary stopgap measure to buy them time to look for better employment elsewhere.

On Devolved County Early Childhood Education, recruitment structures are put in place, 13(40.6%) of the Head teachers Strongly Agreed, while 10(31.3%) were Neutral and 9(28.1%) Agreed, respectively, with a mean of ($M=4.09$, $SD=0.83$). This implies that devolved county early childhood education recruitment structures have been put in place. The findings concur with Ratemo (2016) on the standard of instruction in public and private pre-primary schools in Nairobi City County, Kenya. Pre-primary schools in Nairobi City County provide quality care and education to children, and staffing has an impact on educational quality.

There is a clear policy on recruitment of Early childhood education programs, 26(81.2%) of the Head teachers agreed, while 6(18.8%) Strongly Agreed with a mean of ($M=4.19$, $SD=0.39$). This implies that there is a clear policy on the promotion of Early childhood education programs. The findings are in line with Kamau (2021), who focused on the influence of teacher recruitment policies on the implementation of ECDE programs in East Africa and revealed that in countries like Kenya and Uganda, there is a significant disparity between teacher qualifications and the educational needs of young children.

The County, while 14(43.8%), Government has implemented ECDE teacher recruitment policy, 18 (56.2%) of the Head teachers agreed, Strongly Agreed with a mean of ($M=4.44$, $SD=0.50$). This implies that the county government has implemented the ECDE teacher promotion policy. The findings concur with Nabirye Ssali & Mugisha, (2021) explored the relationship between teacher recruitment and the quality of ECDE in Uganda and found that teachers hired without adequate training and professional preparation often struggle with the implementation of ECDE curricula, especially in remote and underserved areas and highlighted the importance of recruiting teachers who have been specifically trained in early childhood education and child development which called for government intervention in teacher recruitment and capacity building to ensure that only qualified professionals are placed in ECDE roles. Table 2 shows Teachers' responses on Teacher Recruitment and implementation of Early Childhood Development Education programmes.

Table 2: Teachers' responses on Teacher Recruitment and implementation of Early Childhood Development Education programmes

	SAf %	Af %	UDf %	Df %	SDf %	Mean	Std
Policies and plans in the county are developed to guide the recruitment of ECDE teachers	4 (5.7)	53 (75.7)	0 0.0	13 (18.6)	0 0.0	3.74	0.78
There is an established recruitment policy for ECDE	19 (27.1)	48 (68.6)	3 (4.3)	0 0.0	0 0.0	4.26	0.49
Devolved County Early Childhood Education	15 (21.4)	42 (60.0)	3 (4.3)	10 (14.3)	0 0.0	3.91	0.88

recruitment structures are put in place							
Average Mean						4.04	0.63

Table 2 shows that the majority, 53(75.7%) of the teachers agreed that the Policies and plans in the county are developed to guide the recruitment of ECDE teachers, while 4(5.7%) agreed with a mean of ($M=3.74$, $SD=0.78$). This implies that the Policies and plans in the county are developed to guide the recruitment of ECDE teachers. The findings are in line with Mwangi and Nyaboke (2020) analysed how government policies affected teacher recruitment in the ECDE sector and concluded that teacher recruitment policies had positive impacts in terms of improving teacher quality and the overall implementation of ECDE programs and emphasized that the Teacher Service Commission (TSC) had made significant strides in ensuring that only qualified teachers were recruited for ECDE programs.

On whether there is an established recruitment policy for ECDE, the Majority, 48(68.6%), teachers agreed, while 19(27.1%) Strongly Agreed with a mean of ($M=4.26$, $SD=0.49$). This implies that there is an established recruitment policy for ECDE. The findings concur with Kamau (2021), who focused on the influence of teacher recruitment policies on the implementation of ECDE programs in East Africa and revealed that in countries like Kenya and Uganda, there is a significant disparity between teacher qualifications and the educational needs of young children.

In the Devolved County, Early Childhood Education recruitment structures are put in place. 42(60.0%) of the teachers Agreed while 15(21.4%) Strongly Agreed, and 10(14.3%) disagreed, respectively and with a mean of ($M=3.91$, $SD=0.88$). This implies that the devolved county's early childhood education recruitment structures have been. disagreed with Ochieng and Karanja (2022) assessed the recruitment policies in light of the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) and their influence on the effectiveness of ECDE programs and found that teacher recruitment policies had to evolve to ensure the integration of core competencies outlined in the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) into ECDE teaching practices was a need for ongoing professional development, especially in curriculum delivery and classroom management for ECDE teachers thereby recommended aligning teacher recruitment with curriculum demands to ensure synergy between the ECDE programs and the National Curriculum Framework.

The researcher further used inferential statistics, Pearson product-moment correlation, to analyse the hypothesis. The hypothesis was tested using Pearson's product-moment correlation to test the relationship between Teacher Recruitment and Implementation of Early Childhood Development Education programmes. The hypothesis stated:

H01: There is no significant relationship between Teacher Recruitment and Implementation of Early Childhood Development Education programmes in public schools in Isiolo County, Kenya.

To test the hypothesis, Pearson product-moment correlation was done to determine the

relationship between Teacher Recruitment ($M=4.05$, $SD=0.64$) and Implementation of Early Childhood Development Education programmes ($M=3.17$, $SD=1.38$)

Table 3 shows the correlation matrix between Teacher Recruitment and Implementation of Early Childhood Development Education programmes.

Table 3: Correlation matrix between Teachers' Recruitment and Implementation of Early Childhood Development Education programmes

		Teachers' Recruitment	Implementation of Early Childhood Development Education programmes
Teachers' Recruitment	Pearson Correlation	1	.276*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.007
	N	175	175
Implementation of Early Childhood Development Education programmes	Pearson Correlation	.276*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.007	
	N	175	175
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (1-tailed).			

The correlation in Table 3 indicates a positive and statistically significant relationship between Teachers' Recruitment and Implementation of Early Childhood Development Education programmes ($r = .276$, $p < .05$). Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected, indicating that teacher recruitment significantly influences ECDE implementation in public schools in Isiolo County. Although the relationship was statistically significant, the correlation coefficient ($r = .276$) indicates a weak to moderate positive relationship. This suggests that improvements in teacher recruitment contribute to better implementation of ECDE programmes, but recruitment alone does not fully explain variations in programme implementation. Other factors such as teacher training, career progression opportunities, availability of teaching and learning resources, funding, and administrative support may also influence successful implementation.

The positive relationship may be explained by the fact that effective recruitment increases the availability of qualified teachers, improves teacher distribution across schools, reduces teacher shortages, and enhances teacher-learner interactions. Adequate staffing enables teachers to

implement the ECDE curriculum more effectively, provide individualized learner support, and improve classroom management practices. Conversely, inadequate recruitment contributes to high teacher-learner ratios, increased workload, and reduced effectiveness in curriculum delivery.

The findings support Human Capital Theory, which argues that investing in qualified and competent human resources improves organizational performance. In the ECDE context, recruitment of trained and qualified teachers represents an investment in educational quality, which subsequently contributes to improved programme implementation and learner outcomes.

These findings are consistent with Kamau (2021) and Nyaboke (2023), who reported that recruitment policies, equitable teacher deployment, and adequate staffing enhance the implementation of ECDE programmes, particularly in rural and Marginalised areas where teacher shortages remain a significant challenge.

Qualitative findings on Teacher Recruitment and ECDE Implementation

The interview data from ward coordinators were analyzed thematically. Three major themes emerged: teacher shortages, recruitment policy implementation challenges and teacher motivation and retention.

Theme 1: Teacher shortages and high teacher-learner ratios

Ward coordinators consistently identified inadequate staffing as a major challenge affecting ECDE implementation. They reported that many centres operate with insufficient numbers of teachers, resulting in high teacher-learner ratios and reduced effectiveness in curriculum delivery.

One coordinator stated:

“There is a significant shortage of ECDE teachers in many wards since the teacher-to-learner ratio is too high, making it difficult for effective learning to take place. More efforts are needed to recruit and retain qualified teachers” (W2)

These findings suggest that teacher shortages limit teachers' ability to provide individual attention to learners and effectively implement ECDE programmes.

Theme 2: Recruitment policy and funding challenge

The respondents acknowledged that recruitment policies exist but indicated that implementation is constrained by financial limitations and delayed funding allocations.

One ward coordinator observed:

“While policies guiding ECDE teacher recruitment exist, implementation is a challenge due to limited funds. Counties depend on allocations from the national government, which are sometimes delayed, affecting the hiring process” (W3)

Another coordinator added:

“The recruitment of ECDE teachers has been inconsistent across different counties due to financial constraints and lack of standardised policies.” (W1 and W5). These responses indicate that the existence of recruitment policies alone does not guarantee effective implementation unless adequate financial support and implementation structures are in place.

Theme 3: Teacher motivation and retention

The ward coordinators further highlighted poor employment terms, job insecurity, and limited professional development opportunities as factors undermining teacher recruitment and retention.

One respondent explained:

“The biggest issue affecting ECDE implementation is the lack of motivation among teachers because many are underpaid and have no job security.” (W4)

Another observed:

“There is little investment in continuous professional development for ECDE teachers; therefore counties need to allocate funds for training and workshops.” (W5)

These findings suggest that teacher recruitment should not only focus on filling vacancies but should also address retention through improved remuneration, job security and professional development opportunities.

Integration of qualitative and quantitative findings

The qualitative findings support the quantitative results, which revealed a positive and statistically significant relationship between teacher recruitment and implementation of ECDE programmes ($r = .276$, $p < .05$). The quantitative findings demonstrate that better teacher recruitment is associated with improved implementation of ECDE programmes, while the qualitative findings explain the mechanisms through which this relationship operates, including adequate staffing, effective recruitment processes, teacher motivation and retention. The findings indicate that although recruitment significantly influences ECDE implementation, the relatively modest correlation coefficient suggests that other factors such as teacher training, career progression and resource availability also contribute to programme implementation.

Table 4 shows the Observation Schedule on Teachers' Recruitment and Implementation of Early Childhood Development Education programmes

Table 4: Observation Schedule on Teachers’ Recruitment and Implementation of Early Childhood Development Education programmes

Item	Rating (1-5) where 1-Poor, 2-Fair, 3-Good, 4-Very Good, 5-Excellent	Comment/ Observation	
Teacher Recruitment			
1. Recruitment (trained or non-trained teachers)	• 3	Policies and plans in the county are developed to guide the recruitment of ECDE teachers.	
2. Terms of Engagement	• 5	There is an established recruitment policy for ECDE.	
3. Recruitment Structures	• 3	Devolved County Early Childhood Education recruitment structures are put in place.	

Table 4 presents observational findings on teacher recruitment and the implementation of Early Childhood Development Education (ECDE) programmes. The results show that the recruitment of ECDE teachers was rated as *good* (3), indicating that while recruitment practices exist, they are not consistently effective in attracting adequately trained teachers to all schools. The presence of county policies and plans guiding recruitment was rated as *very good* (5), suggesting that Isiolo County has made progress in establishing formal guidelines to streamline teacher recruitment. However, the rating of *fair to good* (3) for devolved recruitment structures implies that, despite the existence of policy frameworks, implementation at the county and sub-county levels remains uneven.

These findings collectively suggest that the existence of recruitment policies alone does not automatically translate into effective ECDE implementation. The variation in ratings highlights the gap between policy formulation and operational execution, especially in Marginalised counties such as Isiolo, where funding, oversight, and administrative capacity remain constrained. This finding is consistent with Kamau (2021), who observed that weak institutional capacity and inconsistent policy enforcement often limit the impact of teacher recruitment initiatives on ECDE outcomes.

From a theoretical perspective, the results reinforce the Human Capital Theory (Becker, 1964), which posits that effective investment in human resources, including structured recruitment of qualified teachers, enhances educational productivity. The “very good” rating for recruitment

policies aligns with this theory, showing that counties recognize the importance of investing in recruitment systems. However, the moderate ratings on actual recruitment and deployment suggest that the conversion of policy into human capital investment is not fully realized, thereby limiting the theory's assumption of optimal efficiency in human resource utilization.

The findings also point to implementation bottlenecks such as delayed hiring, limited incentives, and inadequate monitoring mechanisms. As Ramírez and Vargas (2019) noted in the Latin American context, targeted and timely recruitment policies lead to improved programme outcomes; similarly, in Isiolo County, full realization of ECDE goals requires not just the existence of recruitment policies but also their consistent application.

Limitations of the Study

This study was limited to public ECDE centres in Isiolo County and therefore the findings may not be generalizable to private ECDE centres or other counties in Kenya with different socio-economic and educational contexts.

The study also relied largely on self-reported data from teachers, headteachers and ward coordinators, which may have been influenced by personal perceptions and respondent bias. In addition, the study examined teacher recruitment as a determinant of ECDE implementation without exhaustively investigating other contextual factors such as school infrastructure, parental involvement, funding levels and community support that may influence programme implementation. Despite these limitations, triangulation of questionnaires, interviews and observation schedules enhanced the credibility of the findings.

CONCLUSION

Teacher recruitment plays a crucial role in the successful implementation of Early Childhood Education (ECDE) programs. Effective recruitment strategies ensure that ECDE programs are staffed with professionals who have the necessary pedagogical skills, content knowledge, and passion for working with young learners.

Countries that invest in structured recruitment, competitive compensation, and teacher training tend to have stronger ECDE programs that enhance school readiness and long-term academic success. However, challenges such as teacher shortages, inadequate funding, lack of proper training, and high attrition rates continue to hinder the effective execution of early childhood education initiatives.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Ministry of Education should allocate sufficient resources to support the recruitment, and retention of qualified ECDE teachers, ensuring timely hiring, equitable deployment, and adequate remuneration to sustain programme implementation.

The County Government should collaborate with teacher training institutions to forecast demand and recruit teachers based on projected needs.

The County Government should ensure that recruited teachers are equitably distributed across urban and rural areas to minimize shortages in marginalized communities.

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