

Navigating Displacement, Educational Challenges, and Interventions for Internally Displaced Children in Oromia and Amhara Regions of Ethiopia

Dechasa Merga Debelo¹, Teshome Nekatibeb Begna², and Alebachew Kemisso Haybano³

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.63990/ejobs.v9i1.13319>

Received: 20 November 2025, Accepted: 03 March 2026

Abstract

Prolonged conflict has caused great internal displacement to Ethiopia and disrupted education in the Oromia and Amhara regions of the country. The research paper examines the existing systemic obstacles to education among internally displaced children and explores the possibility of community and psychosocial factors mediating the efficacy of Education in Emergencies (EiE) interventions. A convergent parallel mixed-methods design was used and involved 624 participants (IDP children, caregivers, and teachers). Quantitative data were explored in terms of descriptive statistics, multiple regression, and mediation analysis (model fit: $R^2 = .75$, $F(9,614) = 38.50$, $p < .001$), and qualitative data were analyzed in terms of reflexive thematic analysis, with the ethical considerations being IRB approval and informed consent/assent. These findings suggested that Temporary Learning Spaces ($0.30 = 0.001$) and Accelerated Learning Programs ($0.28 = 0.001$) were the most significant predictors of positive educational results. Overcrowding, untrained teachers, and student trauma, along with community involvement and psycho-social support, were found to be the major barriers and the basic mediators of intervention acceptance and sustainability, respectively, identified through qualitative analysis. The researchers find that successful EiE demands a paradigm shift from standalone efforts to integrated and community-based intervention and recommend, among other things, multi-year funding of integrated intervention packages, forced training of teachers in trauma models, formal certification systems of accelerated learning, and investment in community-based governance systems.

Keywords: Education in emergencies, internal displacement, temporary learning spaces, psychosocial support, community involvement

¹ Department of curriculum and Comparative Education, Corresponding Author, Email: dechassa.debelo@gmail.com

² Associate Professor of Comparative and International Education, Center for Comparative Education and Policy Studies (CCEPS); Addis Ababa University. Email: 959teshome@gmail.com

³ Associate Professor of Comparative and International Education, Center for Comparative Education and Policy Studies (CCEPS); and Research Chair for Forced Displacement and Migration Studies Addis Ababa University Ethiopia, Email: alebachew.kemisso@aau.edu.et

Introduction

Education in Emergencies (EiE) is a critical crisis intervention to safeguard the rights and potential of crisis-affected children and to offer continuity of learning and critical psycho-social care. Nevertheless, it remains difficult to transform global EiE models into successful local practice. The challenge is frequently undermined by systematic underinvestment, divided strategies, and top-down designs that do not consider local realities that are challenging to understand (Dryden-Peterson, 2017; Shah, 2015).

Ethiopia is home to one of the highest populations of internally displaced persons (IDP) in the world. The armed conflict, the intercommunal war, and the political unrest have caused a devastating derailment of education, and this has been so in the Oromia and Amhara areas. It has resulted in uncontrolled damage to school infrastructure, displacement of teachers, as well as serious psychosocial trauma of children, which has caused a multi-level barrier to access and quality of education (Tsegaye et al., 2022; Yamada and Shibre, 2021). These two areas are the subject of this research due to the magnitude of displacement, as well as the critical disruption of educational services. Different traditional responses to these disastrous upheavals have been introduced, such as Temporary Learning Spaces (TLS) and Accelerated Learning Programs (ALPs). Yet they may prove to be ineffective in the long-term due to a gap of systematic marginalization of the displaced communities during program design and governance (Shah et al., 2021), which this study aims to close.

Critical Literature Gaps and Study Aims

Although the literature has indicated that EiE is required in Ethiopia, it has serious gaps that are delaying the development of effective and context-specific strategies. These are the persistent gaps, according to a critical review. To start with, there is no contextual indication of the application and outcomes of conventional EiE interventions such as TLS and ALPs in the unstable Ethiopian environment (Tsegaye et al., 2022). The evidence base tends to focus on reporting access but fails to pay enough attention to the systemic quality concerns, such as teacher capacity and sustainable certification pathways (Dryden-Peterson, 2017). Second, methodology is predominantly either purely quantitative or qualitative, that cannot provide a connection between the statistical consequences and the explanatory mechanisms, producing

broken evidence. Third, critical mediating factors, specifically meaningful community engagement and systematic psychosocial support, are not sufficiently explored as they are usually seen as additional but not primary to achieve sustainability. Psychosocial support (PSS) is often treated as a separate service rather than a pedagogic underpinning, and the implementation of the trauma-informed practices in the case of long-term crisis is rarely analyzed (Betancourt et al., 2013). Moreover, community involvement is often viewed shallowly, as consultation without analyzing formal governance mechanisms through which displaced communities can have the real power to make decisions (Dryden-Peterson, 2017). Such generic strategies lead to significant contextual blindness, such as the inability to consider the Ethiopian socio-political context. This study goes beyond the documentation of barriers to fill such gaps by exploring the role of EiE intervention, especially in the context of possible intervening mechanisms. It is informed by three research objectives:

1. To identify and analyze key infrastructural, pedagogical, and psychosocial barriers to educational access and quality for internally displaced children in grades 1-4 in Oromia and Amhara.
2. To assess the predictive power of TLS and ALPs on educational outcomes in these displacement settings.
3. To examine the mediating role of community engagement and psychosocial support in the efficacy and sustainability of EiE interventions.

Conceptual Boundaries: This study aims to identify the essence of the EiE triad of access barriers, programmatic interventions, and key enabling factors. The factors that the mediators examined included community involvement (a systemic, governance-level factor) and psychosocial support (an individual, well-being factor), as they may have different conceptualizations, and thus, it was possible to clearly study the contribution of these two factors. The results of the study are based on the existing EiE access, participation, and learning indicators.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework used in this study is an integrated conceptual framework that brings together three complementary lenses to provide a comprehensive attitude towards the analysis of EiE in the context of displacement in Ethiopia. Human rights-based Approach (HRBA) offers the ethical guideline and the main evaluative standards and presents education as an inalienable right and is evaluated by the 4-A principles of Availability, Accessibility, Acceptability, and Adaptability (INEE, 2010; Tomasevski, 2001). This ethical framework is organized using Ecological Systems Theory that levels the analysis of the interconnected environmental systems, such as the micro-level of classroom and family, and the macro-level of policy and culture, allowing a multi-level analysis of the systemic barriers and interventions (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Lastly, Resilience Theory changes the analytical lens of looking at the lack of something, but focusing on the capability of something that can be critical is vital, and thus the conceptual framework of the research problem is to explore community involvement and psychosocial support as the most crucial elements of sustainable outcomes (Masten, 2014). The combination of these three theories is designed to produce an analysis which is ethically based, structurally conscious, as well as mechanism-oriented as concluded in Table 1.

Table 1

Integrated Theoretical Framework

Theory	Core Premise	Application to This Study	Linked Research Aim
Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA)	Education is a fundamental human right that must be Available, Accessible, Acceptable, and Adaptable (4-A framework).	Provides the ethical foundation and primary evaluative criteria for assessing barriers and judging intervention efficacy.	1 (Barriers), 2(Intervention Efficacy)
Ecological Systems Theory	Child development and learning are shaped by interactions within nested environmental systems (from micro to macro levels).	Organizes the analysis of barriers, interventions, and systemic levels (e.g., classroom, community, policy).	1 (Barriers), 3 (Sustainability)
Resilience Theory	Positive outcomes arise from the capacity to adapt through internal strengths and external protective support, even in adversity.	Focuses the analysis on identifying and understanding protective factors (e.g., community support, psycho-social well-being) as key mediators.	3 (Mediating Factors)

Critical Gaps

The literature review indicates that there are still gaps in the literature that hinder EiE strategies in Ethiopia. The evidence base tends to focus more on reporting access to interventions (e.g., by Temporary Learning Spaces, Accelerated Learning Programs) and minimally focus on systemic quality concerns, e.g., the capacity of teachers and sustainable

certification routes (Dryden-Peterson, 2017). Such an emphasis is further amplified by the fact that psychosocial support (PSS) is often viewed as an additional, separate service rather than an inherent pedagogical basis, and little attention is paid to the implementation of trauma-informed approaches in prolonged crises (Betancourt et al., 2013). What is more, community participation is often reduced to surface-level consultation, without the analysis of formal governance arrangements that would provide the displaced populations with the actual decision-making authority (Dryden-Peterson, 2017). Such generic strategies lead to serious contextual blindness because they do not take into consideration the Ethiopia-specific socio-political environment, including ethnic federalism and policy obstacles to certifying alternative learning (Tsegaye et al., 2022). Finally, these substantive gaps are compounded by a methodological flaw: the fact that most of the studies are conducted either exclusively in quantitative or qualitative format makes the results fragmented, with a significant necessity to conduct mixed-methods research that can allow statistically correlating results with the explanatory mechanisms underlying them.

Methods

Research Design

The convergent parallel mixed-method design was used (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). Quantitative (survey) and qualitative (interview, focus group) data were simultaneously gathered and analyzed, and subsequently combined in the interpretation phase. The reason why this approach is fitting is that it solves the methodological gap that was revealed in the literature: it allows to test the effectiveness of the intervention in a statistical way, yet it also qualifies the processes and mechanisms of the context in which such outcomes were attained, thus providing an explanatory breadth and an interpretative depth (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010).

Operational Definitions of Key Variables

The concept of ‘Temporary Learning Spaces (TLSs)’ was operationalized as physical facilities in displacement locations to provide short-term education as assessed through a

quantitative measure of its regression coefficient (β) based on a composite quality index and by thematic analysis of the participant reports on overcrowding and safety.

The concept of Accelerated Learning Programs (ALPs) was defined as the shortened curricula for the overage children to reach grade-level competency as determined quantitatively by the regression coefficient (β) of the participation and progress measures and qualitatively by the thematic analysis of the stakeholder narratives on relevance and certification pathways.

Psychosocial Support (PSS) was referred to as the intervention that concerned the emotional and psychological health of children affected by a conflict, measured quantitatively by its regression coefficient (β) in a scale rating service access and quality, and qualitatively by thematic analysis of narratives on trauma and trauma-informed classroom practices.

The concept referred to as Teacher Capacity Building was considered the professional growth of the teachers in crisis-sensitive pedagogy, which was quantitatively determined through its regression coefficient (b) based on teacher survey reports on training obtained and qualitative through thematic analysis of training applicability and frequency.

Community Involvement was conceptualized as significant engagement of the IDPs in the planning and management of the education program which was quantified by means of its regression coefficient (0.59) in a scale that evaluated the perceived input in decision making and qualitatively through thematic analysis of reports, which verified the agency and role of community committees.

Student Gender was the child participant's biological sex, measured quantitatively as binary categorical data (Male/Female) via student surveys.

Duration of Displacement was measured as the number of days the child has been displaced, as measured through quantitative data (in months) from caregiver reports on the survey of caregivers.

Distance to School was defined as the distance between the housing of a child and the learning center, which was measured through continuous data (quantitatively) in kilometers as obtained through a survey conducted on caregivers.

Educational Outcomes was set to be a composite measure of educational success comprising access, quality, performance, and well-being measured quantitatively through a composite index score and qualitatively through holistic thematic analysis of multi-stakeholder views of progress.

The 4-A Framework was delineated as a human rights-based criterion for analyzing education, used in putting together the structure of all quantitative survey indicators, and the coding framework of the qualitative thematic analysis.

Coordination gaps were described as systemic failures or misalignment among implementing agencies, as assessed through qualitative methods through thematic analysis of the reports on duplication and operational disunity of the reports of the stakeholder interview and focus groups.

Participants

The entire study sample was 624; half of these were randomly selected in the Oromia region and the other half in the Amhara region to have regional balance. Multistage sampling was used. Two administrative areas with high IDP density were randomly selected to ensure that the study sites are rich in information and reflect the contexts with significant displacement and EiE activities. In each region, 5 Temporary Learning Spaces (TLS) were randomly chosen (there were 10 TLS in total), with the inclusion of both standard primary and Accelerated Learning Programs (ALPs) in operation, to ensure that the study included varying intervention settings. Students ($n = 384$) were determined as a sample of a finite population ($N = 3,150$) with a 5 percent margin of error using the Yamane (1967) formula of calculating sample size given a finite population (N). Each of the TLS randomly picked these students. Other important stakeholders, including all possible teachers ($n = 96$) and primary caregivers ($n = 120$) in the chosen TLS, were invited to participate in the study by applying a

census method. Also, it included all the available education officers and NGO representatives (n = 24) working with EiE program management in the study locations.

For qualitative data, 42 participants were purposely chosen and interviewed using a mixture of 18 in-depth interviews and 4 focus group discussions (FGDs), with each FGD consisting of 6 participants to allow a dynamic discussion. The 6 education officers/NGO representatives, 6 teachers, and 6 caregivers were interviewed individually. Two groups of displaced children, and one group of caregivers, and one group of teachers engaged in separate FGDs (considering the age factor). The sample was selected to represent gender, age, and displacement time and maintain FGDs homogeneity by type stakeholder in the mixed methods design to allow free discussion and data triangulation (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). This was selected because it was found necessary to have thematic saturation of the core research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Instruments

Quantitative Surveys: Questionnaires were distributed to children (age-modified versions), their caregivers, teachers, and education officers/ NGO representatives (questionnaires). The measures that were measured: 1) barriers to education (Likert scales), 2) TLS quality (modified version of INEE Minimum Standards), 3) ALP involvement, 4) community involvement levels, 5) access to psycho-social support, and 6) educational achievement, including attendance, classroom activity, and personal ratings of learning development. All the tools were translated into Afaan Oromo and Amharic, piloted, and administered by trained enumerators.

Qualitative Data: The interview and focus group discussion guides (FGD) were semi-structured and aimed to explore the lived experiences of the participants. These guides explored the views of barriers, the quality of the intervention, the essence of community roles, and displays of psychosocial well-being. The younger participants were treated using child-friendly methods. All the sessions were audio-recorded, transcribed directly, and translated to analyze.

Data Analysis

The data analysis was conducted to address three study objectives using mixed methods. The study adopted a 2-fold methodology to identify and examine the major learning barriers. The data from the survey were processed into descriptive statistics and comparative tests to measure the rates of infrastructural, pedagogical, and psychosocial barriers and identify the differences between regions. At the same time, a reflexive thematic analysis of interview and focus group transcripts helped to provide a systematic, contextual perception of these barriers with the help of inductive and deductive coding.

After that, a multiple linear regression model was developed to measure the impact of core interventions. In this model, the predictive power of five major variables had been tested with Temporary Learning Spaces (TLS), Accelerated Learning Programs (ALPs), Psychosocial Support, Teacher Capacity Building, and Community Involvement on a composite measure of educational outcomes, and demographic and contextual variables were controlled. The total importance of the model was validated with the help of ANOVA, and the independent contribution of each predictor was explained with the help of the standardized coefficient of beta (β) and the level of significance: all the required statistical requirements were checked.

Lastly, the possible mediating effects of community involvement and psychosocial support were investigated to investigate the underlying mechanisms. The indirect channels between the core interventions and the ultimate outcomes were tested using a quantitative mediation analysis based on bootstrapping. A narrow qualitative analysis carried out process and impact description of community engagement and psychosocial support supported this statistical exploration to explain contextual dynamics. As per the convergent design, the quantitative and qualitative strands were integrated into the interpretation process, the former explaining the statistical correlations and the latter, their operational facts.

Ethical Considerations

All adult participants provided informed consent, and child participants provided assent in addition to caregiver consent. The process was designed in accordance with the data collection process: specific written consent was obtained for the audio and video recording of

interviews and focus group discussions. Verbal consent was also recorded by the research team with participation in surveys and the non-recorded aspects of qualitative research. The Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Addis Ababa University approved all the procedures.

Results

Identified Barriers to Education:

The key barriers had high prevalence rates according to the quantitative survey results. A descriptive and comparative analysis showed that there was a considerable geographic variation in the encounter of these impediments, as shown in Table 2. In Amhara and Oromia, overcrowding in Temporary Learning Spaces (TLS) was reported to be severe in 82 percent and 74 percent, respectively. In Amhara and Oromia, 70% and 60% of respondents, respectively, cited a critical shortage of trained teachers. There was also an important local disparity in the mode of safety issues: 72% of caregivers in Amhara said they face security problems on their way to TLS, and 58% caregivers in Oromia said they experience the same ($\chi^2 = 8.94, p = 0.003$).

Table 2

Prevalence of Key Barriers by Region

Barrier Category	Specific Indicator	Amhara Region (n=320)	Oromia Region (n=304)	Test Statistic	p-value
Access & Infrastructure	Severe Overcrowding in TLS	82%	74%	$\chi^2 = 6.12$	0.013
	Safety Concerns enroute to TLS	72%	58%	$\chi^2 = 8.94$	0.003
Pedagogical Quality	Critical Shortage of Trained Teachers	70%	60%	$\chi^2 = 4.87$	0.027
	Lack of Basic Learning Materials	85%	80%	$\chi^2 = 2.45$	0.118
Psychosocial Well-being	Observable Symptoms of Student Anxiety/Depression (Teacher Report)	75%	68%	$\chi^2 = 4.02$	0.045

The prevalence and statistical significance of the barriers to regional disparities were determined using quantitative data. The quantitative statistics were enhanced by qualitative analysis, which found three overlapping themes, each contributing to each other in a domino-like manner: (1) Infrastructural Overload, in which an average TLS of 50 students in which a typical class of 120 students was filled with over 120 students, directly reducing instructional time; (2) Pedagogical Strain, in which inexperienced teachers, many of whom were IDP themselves, could not cope with a typical classroom of 120 students and had no materials, which resulted in rote memorization. One teacher observed that a child cannot acquire the alphabet when their mind continues to listen to the sound of gunshots. The lack of systematic coordination between NGOs and government agencies was always mentioned as a contributor to the aggravation of other obstacles.

The prevalence and statistical significance of regional differences in barriers were set by the quantitative data, and their systemic interrelation was found through the qualitative analysis. For example, quantitative reporting of safety concerns was more frequent in Amhara (72% vs 58%), which was partially accounted for qualitatively by the elaborate descriptions of particular security incidents by the participants. The three qualitative themes formed a causal chain in which the infrastructural overload heightened pedagogical stress, and the two stressors combined to increase psychological distress, which, in turn, made effective teaching almost unachievable.

Predictive Power of Interventions:

The data pool of all surveyed stakeholder groups, including children, caregivers, teachers, and education officers/ NGO representatives (N=624), was analyzed using multiple regression analysis. In order to permit this analysis, the dependent variable (Educational Outcomes) was designed as a standardized composite score that is a harmonizing core indicator within each group. The model played an important role in predicating educational outcomes ($R^2 = .75$, $F(9,614) = 38.50$, $p = .001$). The important predictors are provided in Table 3. To carry out this pooled analysis, the control variables will be as follows: Displacement Duration, this variable pertains to the group of IDP children and caregivers (coded 0 as professional stakeholders); Student Gender, this variable will refer to the gender

of the child participant; and Region, this variable will refer to the study location (Oromia/Amhara).

Table 3

Multiple Regression Analysis of Predictors on Educational Outcomes

Predictor	β	p-value	95% CI for β	Tolerance	VIF
Temporary Learning Spaces (TLS)	0.30	.001	[0.22, 0.38]	0.87	1.15
Accelerated Learning Programs (ALP)	0.28	.001	[0.20, 0.36]	0.89	1.12
Psychosocial Support (PSS)	0.22	.001	[0.15, 0.29]	0.82	1.22
Teacher Capacity Building	0.18	.001	[0.11, 0.25]	0.85	1.18
Community Involvement	0.15	.001	[0.08, 0.22]	0.91	1.10
Control Variables					
Displacement Duration	-0.11	0.002	[-0.18, -0.04]	0.93	1.08
Student Gender (Female)	0.05	0.105	[-0.01, 0.11]	0.96	1.04
Region (Amhara)	-0.08	0.021	[-0.15, -0.01]	0.88	1.14

Thematic analysis elaborated the contextual factors that cause such statistical associations. The participants repeatedly pointed out that the effectiveness of TLS was based on the ability to address overcrowding as identified in Aim 1, whereas the measure of ALP value was inseparably linked to the perceived access to formal certification. Only when it results in a known certificate can an ALP be said to be powerful, as observed by one education officer. Otherwise, it is another practice class that parents do not take seriously. In the same way, the predictive value of community engagement was associated with particular governance practices, such as tracking the attendance of teachers and the acquisition of resources.

Whereas the strongest predictors (TLS and ALPs) have been regressively determined (with $\beta = 0.30$ and 0.28 , respectively), the qualitative data have shown that the efficacy was all dependent on the quality of the implementation. These predictors were too strong in quantitative terms to require acknowledgment of a qualitative fact of the basis on which the

measure was effective, namely the need to reduce overcrowding (in case of TLS) and to offer certification opportunities (in case of ALPs). This integration shows that statistical significance may not accurately reflect the implementation factors that define the success of the intervention.

The Mediating Role of Community & Psychosocial Factors:

Mediation analysis using bootstrapping (5,000 samples) revealed significant indirect effects for key pathways, as shown in Table 4.

Table 4

Mediation Analysis of Indirect Effects

Pathway	Indirect Effect (β)	Boot SE	Bootstrapped 95% CI	Significance
ALPs → Psychosocial Support → Outcomes	0.09	0.03	[0.04, 0.15]	Significant
TLS → Community Involvement → Attendance	0.07	0.02	[0.02, 0.12]	Significant
TLS → Psychosocial Support → Attendance	0.05	0.02	[0.01, 0.10]	Significant
ALPs → Community Involvement → Outcomes	0.04	0.02	[0.01, 0.08]	Significant

These mediating mechanisms were explained by two major themes. The community as Governance theme brought to light the role of functional parent committees, which instated accountability mechanisms that enhanced TLS maintenance and teacher attendance. One of the committee leaders said: It is our school. We lock the materials at night and ensure the teacher is there. The Well-being as Foundation theme showed how learning had been facilitated through psychosocial support in dealing with trauma. One student said: I feel that my head is quieter after playing and drawing time, and I am able to pay attention to the teacher.

Statistically significant indirect pathways were identified in the quantitative mediation that have significant transmission of ALP benefits through psychosocial support ($\beta = 0.09$) and community involvement ($\beta = 0.07$). These pathways were operationalized qualitative analysis describes the specific processes of governance and trauma-informed practices that facilitated the possibility of such mediations. This integration makes the community involvement and the psychosocial support not an independent variable but a facilitating environment of enabling potential of structural interventions, such as TLS, and pedagogical interventions, such as ALPs.

Discussion

This research offers empirical data to the point that the effectiveness of EiE in protracted displacement situations is not dictated by the delivery of standard interventions but is mediated essentially by the community and psychosocial ecosystems, in which the former exists. The combination of the quantitative and qualitative data will allow the analysis to go beyond the description of isolated challenges and to demonstrate the interdependencies on a systemic level, which determine success. This discussion integrates these insights, discusses their theoretical and practical implications in light of current literature, and the limitations of the study are recognized, in addition to giving future research and action directions.

The intended contribution is the empirical validation of the role of community involvement and psychosocial support as determinants mediating factors, rather than complementary factors. This result partially fills a significant gap in the literature on EiE that has frequently drawn attention to these factors and their rhetorical importance but has not provided strong mixed-method evidence of their actual operation (Dryden-Peterson, 2017). Although quantitative regression showed the strong predictive value of structural and pedagogical inputs (TLS and ALPs), the mediation analysis showed that a considerable part of their impact is mediated by the community governance and emotional well-being. This role is the psychosocial support since it is the necessary enabler of learning that provides the cognitive readiness of pedagogical success, and community engagement as the sustainability driver that ensures accountability and physical infrastructure ownership by the local population. This argument works well to unite the Resilience Theory, emphasis on adaptive

abilities, and protective mechanisms (Masten, 2014), with the Human Rights-Based Approach, which requires participation, acceptability, and adaptability (Tomasevski, 2001). Thus, sustainable educational recovery is redefined as a synergistic process of promoting community resilience and meeting basic rights that synthesis that top-down and service-delivery models tend to ignore, requires.

This synthesis introduces a serious implementation paradox that has major implications for monitoring and evaluation. The quantitative effect of the regression model (community involvement) was small (0.15) compared to TLS (0.30). Nonetheless, their invaluable nature was revealed by qualitative narratives and mediation paths, which are the governance mechanisms in which TLS quality, safety, and teacher accountability are fulfilled. It is a paradox in that an essential methodological constraint in the field: proximate outcome measures such as enrollment and test scores are indicators of delivery, but not of the underlying local ownership and adaptive governance that would allow sustainability in the long term once the external actors have exited (Shah & Lopes Cardozo, 2021). We were able to discover this dynamic because of our mixed-methods approach, which is why the field must develop indicators to capture programmatic power transfer and the quality of psychosocial environments.

Conclusions And Implications

This research has robust empirical data that can improve the theoretical concept of successful EiE in the long-term crisis. Using a convergent parallel mixed-methods design, the study proves that community ownership and organized psychosocial support are not marginal aspects, but the essential mediators of educational success among internally displaced children. The greatest result is that an integrated efficacy framework is confirmed: core interventions such as Temporary Learning Spaces (TLS) and Accelerated Learning Programs (ALPs), and powerful as individual predictors of positive outcomes (0.30 and 0.28, $p = .001$) can only achieve their potential when incorporated into community-governed systems and trauma-informed contexts.

This fact requires a pivotal paradigm shift in humanitarian and educational policy: to provide isolated, and high-level projects, invest in sustainable educational ecosystems on a

community level. The results indicate a sustainability paradox where the engagement of the community demonstrates a less significant direct quantitative impact but is disclosed in a qualitative manner as the key foundation for long-term legitimacy and continuity of operations when external parties pull out. Therefore, sustainable education recovery needs to be reframed in the form of a concomitant process of rights-fulfillment (through authentic participation) and resilience-building (through adaptive, localized governance).

Recommendations

To translate this evidence into action, the following targeted recommendations are made for key stakeholders:

For Donors and Implementing NGOs:

- **Integrate Intervention Packages:** Break the silos of funding. Make physical infrastructure (TLS/ALPs) proposals, which have specific budgetary allocations to resource community governance committees and compulsory training of teachers on trauma issues, mandatory at the start.
- **Mandate Psychosocial Integration:** Restructure proposal requirements to state that psychosocial support and the trauma-informed pedagogy will be defined to be part of the fundamental, non-negotiable aspects of any educational program and will not be offered as an individual or an addition to the program.

For National Policymakers (Ethiopia and Similar Contexts):

- **Formalize Alternative Learning Pathways:** Implement and institutionalize national certification systems of Accelerated Learning Program (ALP) graduates to guarantee educational continuation, certification, and integration within the formal system.
- **Decentralize Educational Governance:** Implement policies that decentralize certain jurisdictions of schools that make decisions on school management, resource distribution, and personnel to elected committees among Internally Displaced persons (IDP) communities, and realize the right to participate.

For Practitioners (Teachers, School Administrators, and Cluster Leads):

- Use a Whole-School, Trauma-Informed Strategy: Institutionalize the day-to-day practices and professional education based on the concept of making safety, relational trust, and emotional regulation central to all teaching and operational processes, thereby providing a favorable environment of learning to traumatized children.
- Transfer Power: Proactively develop the ability of community education committees to transfer power, no longer consultation but actual control of critical management and oversight functions.

Limitations

- The conclusions of these results shall be contextualized with the limitations of the study:
- Cross-sectional design has a good correlation but will not necessarily indicate causality or the long-term impact of interventions.
- On the one hand, the purposive sampling in Oromia and Amhara regions helps to obtain rich, contextual data. However, this approach does not allow direct generalization of the results to other conflict-related contexts with different socio-political environments.
- The use of self-reported data (surveys, interviews) is associated with the potential risk of social desirability bias.
- Security restrictions and political sensitivities restricted the physical access to the area of the research in Ethiopia's Oromia and Amhara Regions.

Future Research Directions

Future Research Directions

- Following this work, an additional area of future work should include:
- Longitudinal and Causal Analysis: Cohort studies that follow the same children, teachers, and structures of communities over 3-5 years to identify causal pathways and measure the lasting effects of integrated interventions.

- **Participatory Tool Development:** Co-designing and validating culturally grounded measures of well-being, safety, and program ownership: participation of all key stakeholders (IDP communities) through the use of the Participatory Action Research (PAR) methodology.
- **Intervention Trials:** Cluster-randomized controlled trials (RCTs) should be conducted to have a rigorous comparison of the cost-efficiency and value-added of integrated packages (TLS + governance + training) to the usual service delivery on a standalone basis.
- **Pilots of Innovation:** To eliminate scale and quality barriers, investigate the feasibility of technological solutions, including mobile platforms to coach educators in remote areas with poor connectivity and secure systems to certify educators in secure areas with limited connectivity.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Funding information

The study was not funded by any agency.

References

- Abebe, T. (2018). *The mobility and vulnerability of children in Ethiopia*. Addis Ababa University Press.
- Amnesty International. (2021). *"We are like strangers in our own land": The impact of conflict on education in Ethiopia*.
<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr25/4296/2021/en/>
- Benson, C. (2005). *The importance of mother tongue-based schooling for educational quality*. UNESCO. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000146632>
- Betancourt, T. S., & Khan, K. T. (2008). The mental health of children affected by armed conflict: Protective processes and pathways to resilience. *International Review of Psychiatry, 20*(3), 317–328. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09540260801990363>

- Betancourt, T. S., Meyers-Ohki, S. E., Stevenson, A., Ingabire, C., Kanyanganzi, F., Munyana, M., & Beardslee, W. R. (2013). Using mixed-methods research to adapt and assess a family strengthening intervention in Rwanda. *African Journal of Traumatic Stress, 3*(1), 32–45. (No DOI found). Available from: <https://www.ajol.info/index.php/ajts>
- Bird, L., Harris, J., & Smith, T. (2022). Community involvement in education in emergencies. *Journal on Education in Emergencies, 8*(1), 45–67. <https://doi.org/10.33682/1k7p-9e12>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3*(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Burde, D., Kapit, A., Wahl, R. L., Guven, O., & Skarpeteig, M. I. (2017). Education in emergencies: A review of theory and research. *Review of Educational Research, 87*(3), 619–658. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654316671594>
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approach* (4th ed.). Sage Publications.
- Creswell, J. W., & Plano Clark, V. L. (2018). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research* (3rd ed.). Sage Publications.
- Dryden-Peterson, S. (2016). *The educational experiences of refugee children in countries of first asylum*. Migration Policy Institute
<https://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/educational-experiences-refugee-children-countries-first-asylum>
- Dryden-Peterson, S. (2017). Refugee education: Education for an unknowable future. *Curriculum Inquiry, 47*(1), 14–24
<https://doi.org/10.1080/03626784.2016.1255935>
- Dryden-Peterson, S. (2021). Education in emergencies: A review of theory and research. *Review of Educational Research, 91*(3), 385–408. <https://doi.org/10.3102/00346543211030099>
- Ethiopia Education Cluster. (2022). Annual report on Education in a state of Emergency. Ministry of Education <https://www.educationcluster.net/resources/ethiopia-education-cluster-quarterly-newsletter-3>

Ethiopian Journal of Behavioral Studies, April 2026, 9(1), 37-60

- Ethiopia Education Cluster. (2023, December). Evaluation of emergency education programmes in Oromia and Amhara. Relief Web. <https://reliefweb.int/report/ethiopia/ethiopia-education-cluster-evaluation-emergency-education-programmes-oromia-and-amhara-december-2023>
- Fowler, F. J. (2014). *Survey research methods* (5th ed.). Sage Publications.
- Global Education Cluster. (2023). *Education in emergencies: A global update*. UNICEF. <https://educationcluster.app.box.com/s/ojmajrj1wkewh5w1e4rxtg2bjt0e8rc>
- Global Partnership for Education. (2023). *Education and crisis: A review of evidence*. <https://www.globalpartnership.org/content/education-and-crisis-review-evidence>
- Greene, J. C. (2007). *Mixed methods in social inquiry*. Jossey-Bass.
- Human Rights Watch. (2021). *"I'm afraid to go to school": The impact of attacks on education for Ethiopian children*. <https://www.hrw.org/report/2021/10/15/im-afraid-go-school/impact-attacks-education-ethiopian-children>
- Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies. (2010). *Minimum standards for education: Preparedness, response, recovery*. <https://inee.org/resources/inee-minimum-standards>
- Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies. (2020). *Education in emergencies: A practitioner's guide*
- Jones, N., Presler-Marshall, E. <https://inee.org/resources/education-emergencies-practitioners-guide>
- Yadete, W., Gebreyehu, Y., & Gezahegne, K. (2021). Gender and education in conflict-affected contexts: A review of the literature. *Journal of International Development*, 33(5), 789–810. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jid.3547>
- Kagawa, F. (2005). Emergency education: A critical review of the field. *Comparative Education*, 41(4), 487–503. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03050060500317620>
- Mackenzie, C., McDowell, C., & Pittaway, E. (2007). Beyond 'do no harm': The challenge of constructing ethical relationships in refugee research. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 20(2), 299–319. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/fem008>

- Maxwell, J. A. (2013). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach* (3rd ed.). Sage Publications.
- Mosselson, J., Wheaton, W., & Frisoli, P. S. J. (2009). Education and fragility: A synthesis of the literature. *Journal of Education for International Development, 4*(1), 1–20. <https://www.equip123.net/JEID/articles/4/1-20.pdf>
- Myers, M., & Barrs, J. (2022). A systematic review of non-formal education in crisis settings. *Journal on Education in Emergencies, 8*(2), 112–134. <https://doi.org/10.33682/5x2c-7m14>
- Nicolai, S., & Triplehorn, C. (2003). *The role of education in protecting children in conflict* (HPN Paper No. 42). Humanitarian Practice Network, ODI. <https://odihpn.org/publication/the-role-of-education-in-protecting-children-in-conflict/>
- Novelli, M., Higgins, S., & Ugur, M. (2022). The role of education in peacebuilding: An analysis of the theoretical literature and a framework for evaluation. *Journal of Peace Research, 59*(2), 245–260. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00223433211055429>
- Novelli, M., Lopes Cardozo, M. T. A., & Smith, A. (2019). Education and peace making in Ethiopia. *Journal on Education in Emergencies, 5*(1), 89–115. <https://doi.org/10.33682/3k4b-1e15>
- Overseas Development Institute. (2022). *Community involvement in humanitarian response*. <https://odi.org/en/publications/community-involvement-in-humanitarian-response/>
- Save the Children. (2019). *Education in emergencies: A tool to measure learning environments and quality*. Save the Children International. <https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/document/education-emergencies-tool-measure-learning-environments-and-quality/>
- Save the Children. (2023). *Mental health and psychosocial support in education*. Save the Children International. <https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/document/mental-health-and-psychosocial-support-mhpps-in-education/>
- Shah, R. (2015). Teacher development in conflict and post-conflict situations. *Education and Conflict Review, 1*(1), 45–48.

Ethiopian Journal of Behavioral Studies, April 2026, 9(1), 37-60

- Shah, R., & Lopes Cardozo, M. T. A. (2021). Education and peacebuilding in light of the Rohingya refugee crisis. *Globalization, Societies and Education*, 19(2), 212–226. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14767724.2021.1887726>
- Shapiro, E., Morrison, B., & Fisher, K. (2018). Ethics and evidence in trauma-informed schooling: A review of the literature. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 56(4), 434–448. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JEA-02-2017-0016>
- Sobe, N. W. (2018). Problematizing comparison in an age of post-foundationalism. *Research Intelligence*, 135, 22–23.
- Sommers, M. (2011). Governance, security and culture: Assessing the impact of education sector reform in Ethiopia. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 31(1), 13–20. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2010.06.004>
- Tashakkori, A., & Teddlie, C. (Eds.). (2010). *Sage handbook of mixed methods in social and behavioral research* (2nd ed.). Sage Publications.
- Tsegaye, M., & Mebratu, L. (2019). Educational access and inequality in the Oromia region of Ethiopia. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 65, 72–80. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2018.08.004>
- Tsegaye, M., Mebratu, L., & Teka, S. (2022). Educational challenges in conflict-affected regions of Ethiopia. *Ethiopian Journal of Education*, 42(2), 45–68.
- UNESCO. (2015). *Education for All 2000-2015: Achievements and challenges*. UNESCO Publishing. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000232205>
- UNESCO. (2021). *Global education monitoring report 2021/2: Inclusion and education: All means all*. UNESCO. <https://doi.org/10.54676/UZQV8501>
- UNESCO. (2023). *Global education monitoring report 2023: Technology in education: A tool on whose terms?* UNESCO. <https://doi.org/10.54676/QOAM4472>
- UNICEF. (2022). *The state of the world's children 2021: On my mind – Promoting, protecting and caring for children's mental health*. UNICEF. <https://www.unicef.org/reports/state-worlds-children-2021>
- UN Women. (2022). *Gender-responsive education in emergencies: A guide for policymakers and practitioners*. UN Women. <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2022/06/gender-responsive-education-in-emergencies>

Ethiopian Journal of Behavioral Studies, April 2026, 9(1), 37-60

World Bank. (2023). *World development report 2023: Learning to realize education's promise*. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/publication/wdr2023>

Yamada, S., & Shibre, B. (2021). Gendered experience of schooling in rural Ethiopia. *Gender and Education*, 33(7), 870–886. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09540253.2021.1884198>

Yin, R. K. (2018). *Case study research and applications: Design and methods* (6th ed.). Sage Publications.