

Research Article

Level of Compliance of the School Safety Standards in Public Boarding Secondary Schools in Trans-Nzoia County, Kenya

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Abstract: The Kenyan government has committed to promote access to equity, participation, retention, completion and quality at the schools level. Education is bound to be affected if safety and security concerns of students are not addressed fully. The study sought to examine the effect of existing crime prevention practices on student safety in public boarding secondary schools in Trans-Nzoia County. The study adopted a pragmatic philosophy which focuses on the problem rather than the method of approach. The study employed a mixed method approach that utilized both quantitative and qualitative method of data collection. The study used simple random sampling and purposive sampling procedure to select boarding secondary schools. The total s was 403 respondents which comprised of 20 principals, 143 teachers, 220 students and 20 security officers. Questionnaires, interview schedule and focus groups were used as data collection instruments. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques that were frequencies and percentages. The hypothesis was tested using Pearson's product moment correlation coefficient. Qualitative data was analyzed thematically. The study established that most schools had not complied with the ministry of education safety standards, majority of the teachers, students and staffs were not trained and aware of the safety measures. The study recommends that the schools should comply with Ministry safety standards to guarantee students safety.

Keywords: level, compliance, safety, standards, schools.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The global community is concerned with the protection of children at all levels. As a result there are international and national policies and regulations that individuals and institutions such as schools should comply with in order to ensure and enhance children's safety at home, while in institutions and at all spheres of life. For instance, Child safety as a global concern led to the inception of the United Nations International Emergency Fund in the year 1946. The aim of the fund was to provide protection of the children against violence, exploitation, abusive situations and put an end to preventable death. The major objectives of the fund are to provide healthcare, nutrition, water and sanitation programs, support basic education and gender equality and provide humanitarian aid during crisis and emergencies with a focus of saving the lives and protecting the rights of the children UNICEF (2006). Due to varying trends and changes of insecurity challenges, various countries are obliged to come up

with measures that can fit their situation, Kenya being one of them.

Compliance of the school safety standards is a major responsibility of the school stakeholders. Key stakeholders in a school are the managers (principals), teachers, students, support staff, parents, board of management, the community surrounding the school and the law enforcement officers (MOE, 2008). While schools should be safe places, studies give enough evidence that they could be more unsafe today than in previous years (Kann, McManus, Harris, Shanklin, Flint, Hawkins, & Zaza, One act of school violence has a wider spread consequence. It is important for schools to develop workable plans and systems and make sure that they are implemented fully in order to prevent school violence. There is need for key stakeholders to cooperate and take responsibility of the school safety

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In the year 2001, The Department of Education introduced a system that was aimed at promoting the safety of schools in South Africa. This project was to guide schools towards developing a safe space, encourage discipline among the students, and provide a code of conduct for students as well as teachers in institutions of learning. Compliance with safety standards is a recipe on the health of students; it is necessary to maintain a safe and conducive environment because students thrive in spaces that are positive, healthy and safe. Students are able to adhere to the safety standards taught to them by their teachers (World Health Organization, 2000). The school principal is charged with the duty of ensuring that safety policies and procedures spelt out in the regulations are implemented to the latter. The head of institutions see to it that coordination of all the phases of the program implementation is done by the school through the department of safety. The principals are also responsible for ensuring the formation and maintenance of the school safety committee as well as ensure that they properly dispense their mandate of creating and reviewing the school's safety manual. Moreover, principals should ensure that the teachers and the students work together in ensuring that the school remains a safe and secure environment through the proper use of the schools' resources. Through the school safety committee, the principal should ensure that proper documentation of the school's safety is kept within the school and that there exist monitoring and reviewing program that is responsible for updating and correcting the safety manual standards.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

For a number of years, there has been a public outcry over the state of safety in Kenyan schools due to the increased rate of insecurity experienced by many reported cases of school unrests across the country. Safety in the school grounds means ensuring the institution exist without risks. It also means an environment where threats can be detected early and prevented before causing property and human damage. Such an environment is adequate because it allows for quality teaching and learning (MOE, 2008). In June 2018, the Trans-Nzoia County Director of Education (CDE) in a stakeholders' forum cited the urgency of addressing school safety in boarding schools within the county (Trans-Nzoia County Education office 2018). Report by media houses on Tuesday, September 14, 2018 indicated that a form one student died while in school just one and a half weeks after schools reopened from the August holiday at St. Joseph's boys, Kitale. This study therefore established the level of compliance of the school safety standards and its effect on student safety in public boarding secondary schools in Trans-Nzoia County, Kenya.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

To establish the level of compliance of the school safety standards and its effect on student safety in public boarding secondary schools in Trans-Nzoia County.

1.3 Hypothesis of the Study

HO₁: There is no significant relationship between the level of compliance of the school safety standards and student safety in public boarding secondary schools in Trans-Nzoia County.

2.0. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

The study adopted a pragmatic philosophy which focuses on the problem rather than the method of approach. Paradigm is a worldview or a set of assumptions about how things work. It is a shared understanding of reality (James, 2009). Pragmatism is a doctrine that knowledge should be used to act on things. It is the theory that the intelligence function is not to know to find, but to know to act (James, 2009). Therefore knowledge on school safety is needed in order to put in place measures that can prevent insecurity in the schools. This study was out to elicit proven knowledge that will be useful in the action towards security preparedness in the boarding schools. Pragmatism is a method of philosophy designed to make our ideas clear and to avoid confusion by referring ideas to their practical effects. Truth about student safety was established as a belief state based on perfect and complete information after the investigation. Questionnaires were used as data collection instrument. They were administered to the 143 teachers in the 20 sampled boarding secondary schools in Trans-Nzoia County. The questionnaires comprised both closed-ended and open-ended questions. The questionnaires were administered by the researcher to collect information or data relating to, levels of compliance of the school safety standards, effect of existing crime prevention practices, levels of awareness on student safety measures among students and staff and the challenges of implementing security measures on student safety in public boarding secondary schools in Trans-Nzoia County.

2.1 Ethical Considerations

To ensure ethical consideration in this study, the respondents were sort consent before being involved in the study. The nature and purpose of the research was explained to the respondents by the researcher. During data collection, the respondents were assured of the right to withdraw from the study at any stage of the engagement. The respondents were assured of confidentiality of the information that they would provide and that it was only meant for academic purposes. No personal identification numbers were reflected on the questionnaires or other tools of data collection, except the numbering for questionnaires, mainly for purposes of identification of data during its

editing (Kothari, 2008). Any form of literature, data or inferences quoted from elsewhere has been acknowledged by the researcher. The researcher informed the respondents that, permission would be sought before using their quotation in case of any need. The County Commissioner and the County Director OF Education were informed by the researcher about the intended research in Trans-Nzoia County through written consent from the University of Eldoret and from the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation.

3.0. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The objective of this study was to establish the level of compliance of the school safety standards in public boarding secondary schools in Trans-Nzoia County. There were 9 items measuring the level of compliance of the school safety standards in public boarding secondary schools in Trans-Nzoia County. The responses were in a five-point Likert scale where: Information concerning this objective was sought from teachers, students, principals and security officers. Teachers' responses are presented in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 Level of Compliance of the School Safety Standards on Student Safety

Statement	SA		A		U		D		SD		TOTAL	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
School has well trained safety committee	30	25.0	18	15.0	0	0.0	52	43.3	20	16.7	120	100.0
The well trained safety committee has enhanced student safety measures and so the school is safe for students	10	8.3	44	36.7	0	0.0	56	46.7	10	8.3	120	100.0
All avenues for drug entry into school are sealed	34	28.3	56	46.7	0	0.0	30	25.0	0	0.0	120	100.0
There is proper structure for escape in case of threatening situation	16	13.3	80	66.7	0	0.0	24	20.0	0	0.0	120	100.0
There is regular supervision and inspection of school grounds to ensure it is free from harmful objects and substances	24	20.0	30	25.0	0	0.0	66	55.0	0	0.0	120	100.0
Students do not possess any dangerous weapons	64	53.3	50	41.7	0	0.0	6	5.0	0	0.0	120	100.0
Each block is fitted with serviced fire extinguisher	12	10.0	60	50.0	30	25.0	18	15.0	0	0.0	120	100.0
Diseases and ailments of students are attended to with urgency and this has enhanced student safety	30	25.0	48	40.0	24	20.0	18	15.0	0	0.0	120	100.0
All buildings were approved by ministry of public works, ministry of Education and public health as safe before being occupied	16	13.3	20	16.7	60	50.0	10	8.3	14	11.7	120	100.0

Source: Research Data 2019

As shown in Table 3.1, the highest number 52 (43.3%) of the teachers who participated in this study disagreed that the schools had well trained safety committee. The second highest number 30(25.0%) strongly agreed and the lowest 18(15.7%) agreed. This shows that most (60.0%) of the schools where the study was done do not have well trained safety committee. Further, the highest number 56(46.7%) of the teachers disagreed that well trained safety committee had enhanced student safety measures while the second highest number 44(36.7%) agreed and the lowest 10(8.3%) strongly Disagreed. This shows that safety measures have not been enhanced in the school since they lack well trained safety committees. Due to lack of safety committees, security has not been enhanced in the schools. This finding agrees with Wanyama (2011) who found out that by the year 2011, most secondary schools had not complied with the requirement of putting in place school safety committees and had not trained teachers on security management.

The results also show that the highest number 56(46.7%) of the teachers agreed that all avenues for drug entry into school were sealed. The second highest 34(28.3%) strongly agreed and the lowest 30(25.0%) disagreed. This implies that to a certain extent, avenues for drug penetration into schools have been sealed but not all. There are still schools where drug entry is

experienced in Trans Nzoia County. The responses from student focus discussion and the security officers about common crimes revealed that drugs get into schools through some support staff that have stayed for too long in the stations and have created close relationship with students and the management. One student exclaimed that;

'The drugs are kept in mattress and pillow cases and others in the latrine ventilations. They are used in the latrines and at times the security officer guards the perpetrators from outside.'

This is in agreement with The Ministry of Education (2001) report which found out that drugs find their way into boarding schools, students purchase and use within the school grounds. Unfortunately the parents, teachers and the administrators are not aware how, where and when the illegal trade goes on. This is also in agreement with the views of Ruto (2009) who assert that drug penetration into schools cause students to lose focus and exhibit criminal character. The study established that the highest number 80 (66.7%) of the teachers agreed that there was proper structure for escape in case of threatening situation. The second highest 24(20.0%) disagreed with the lowest 16(13.3%) strongly agreeing. This implies that incase of any risk, students can have a way of escape. This is

commendable because in some past instances students perished helplessly without having means of escape like the case at St. Kizito where doors opened inwards and windows had grills.

The highest number of teachers 66 (55.0%) disagreed that there was regular supervision and inspection of school grounds to ensure it was free from harmful objects and substances. The second highest number 30 (25.0%) agreed and the lowest 24(20.0%) strongly agreed. This implies that there was no regular supervision and inspection of grounds in most of the schools where the study was done. This agrees with the views of Meloy (2012) in a study which established that the responsibility of risk assessment is under the mandate of the principals. He also asserts that threat assessment is inclusive of risk management whose objective is always to interrupt pathways to insecurity.

The highest number 64 (53.3%) of the teachers strongly agreed that students do not possess any dangerous weapons in the schools in Trans-Nzoia County. The second highest number 50(41.7%) agreed and the least 6(5.0%) disagreed. This implies that a moderate number of schools have students who possess weapons. Weapons are dangerous in school for they can be used to harm fellow students and other school stakeholders. This is also a sign of indiscipline. This finding is in agreement with Kirui, Mbugua and Sang (2011) in their study in Kisii County who established that indiscipline encourage students to bring dangerous weapons to school which can threaten the safety of other students.

The findings also indicates that majority 60(50.0%) of the respondents agreed that each block is fitted with serviced fire extinguisher. The second highest 30(25%) were undecided to the fact that all buildings are fitted with serviced fire extinguishers. 18(15.0%) disagreed and the lowest 12(10.0%) strongly agreed. According to Okeno (2011) quality of education is enhanced by school infrastructure. One principal during the interview reported that one of the challenges they had experienced as a school was the roof of two buildings, a dormitory and a classroom being blown by wind during a thunderstorm. The highest number 48(40.0%) of the teachers who participated in this study agreed that diseases and ailments of students were attended to with urgency and this had enhanced student safety while the second highest number 30(25.0%)

strongly agreed and the lowest 24(20.0%) were undecided. This implies that majority of the schools respond to student ailments with urgency however the percentage that was undecided (20%) and those who disagreed (15%) gives an indication that there is some gap in attending to student ailments.

When the principals were asked the extent to which they have implemented the requirements of the Ministry of Education Safety standards, one principal noted that:

“A number of factors determine the implementation such as the location of the school and type of school (national, county or Sub County). My school for example is over 50 kilometers away from a major market where there is a healthy center and a private hospital. The school driver stays over 10 kilometers away from the school compound, the road become muddy and impassable during rainy season. In case a student or staff member fall sick during the night, the school nurse gives first aid, but if it is a serious ailment, then it becomes a challenge getting the driver and attending to the patient with the required agency”

The highest number 60(50.0%) of the teachers were undecided on whether all buildings were approved by ministry of public works, ministry of education and public health as safe before being occupied. Second highest number 20 (16.7%) of the teachers agreed and the lowest 10(8.3%) strongly agreed. This implies that teachers are not sure whether the buildings were approved and are safe. When the students were asked to state the measures put in place to ensure their safety in school, the focus group results established that there were school rules and fire extinguishers positioned at strategic places for use in case of an occurrence of any security threat.

3.1 Hypothesis Testing

There was need to establish, statistically, the relationship between level of compliance of the school safety standards and safety of the students. The hypothesis was stated as: **HO₁**: There is no significant relationship between the level of compliance of the school safety standards and student safety in public boarding secondary schools in Trans-Nzoia County. To test this hypothesis a Pearson correlation analysis was carried out and the results are presented in Table3.2.

Table 3.2 Relationship between Level of Compliance of the School Safety Standards and Student Safety

		Compliance level	Student safety
Compliance level	Pearson Correlation	1	.723**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	120	120
Student safety	Pearson Correlation	.723**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	120	120
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

As shown in Table 3.2, there is a significant positive relationship ($r=.723^{**}$, $P<.01$) between level of compliance of the school safety standards and safety of the students in the secondary schools where the study was done. Since $p<.05$, the null hypothesis that 'there is no significant relationship between the level of compliance of the school safety standards and student safety in public boarding secondary schools' is rejected which implied that there was a significant relationship between the level of compliance of the school safety standards and student safety in public boarding secondary schools in Trans-Nzoia County. This finding is in line with the views of Redican (1986) who asserts that schools should have a long-term and sustainable plan which involve the students, teachers the community and the government. Compliance with laid down policies helps managers to identify early safety warning signals and make early preparation for emergencies.

4.0 CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings of the study, schools had not constituted safety committees and there were no emergency safety plan manuals and Minutes of safety committee in the schools where the study was done. This implies that there was low level of compliance of the school safety standards, it can be concluded that compliance of school safety standards is a significant factor for the implementation of inclusive safety of students in public boarding secondary schools. The study found that most schools had compounds that were not well fenced with inadequate dormitory spacing of beds and inadequate sewage system which was a healthy risk that could lead to an outbreak of communicable diseases. It was evident that most schools did not have emergency safety plan manuals and Minutes of safety committee. The conclusion on this is that there was low level of compliance of the school safety standards. Statistical analysis indicated that there was a positive significant relationship between level of compliance of the school safety standards and student safety.

5.0. POLICY RECOMMENDATION

The school principals and Board of management should comply with ministry safety standards to guarantee students safety. They should ensure secure school grounds, adequate buildings,

Install security gadgets such as CCTV cameras and lightning arresters and employ enough qualified security personnel.

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