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Safety Standard Measures Put in Place to Ensure Safety of Learners in Primary Boarding Schools in the North Rift Region, Kenya

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Abstract

Studies and reports indicate that insecurity for children exists in schools as a result of lack of safety policy adherence. The purpose of this study was to analyze safety standard measures put in place to ensure safety of learners in primary boarding schools in the north rift region, Kenya. The study employed convergent design. The targeted population was derived from 161 Public and Private Primary Boarding Schools in the North Rift Region. The target population was 813. The sample size for this study was 685. The study used questionnaires, interview schedules, focus group discussion and observation checklist as the main instruments of data collection. A pilot study was conducted before the main study in order to ascertain the reliability and validity of research instruments. Data were both quantitative and qualitative. Data were analyzed using thematic method. The study revealed that there was positive linear effect of safety standard measures put in place on safety of learners (β=.980, p=0.000). The study concluded that safety standard measures be put in place to ensure safety of learners in primary boarding schools in North Rift Region. The Ministries of Education, Public Works and Health through their officers in the counties should ensure that as schools are built also the required sanitation facilities should be constructed alongside the classes.

Keywords: Safety Standard, Leaners, Schools, Measures

Introduction

According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (Vossekuil, 2004), school safety refers to the process of establishing and maintaining a school that is physically, cognitively and emotionally safe for students and staff to carry out learning activities. This include procedures for maintaining a structurally sound building, conducting emergency drills and having an outlet for students and staff to report abuses or concerns. According to Horng et al (2010), a safe school is the foundation of a good education where pupils feel safe and can learn better. Teachers become more effective when they know that pupils are under control and can concentrate on instructing the class (Alderman & Green, 2011).

In response to the challenge, the United Nations developed a tool, Thematic Platform on knowledge and Education to support governments in developing a holistic approach to school safety. An example of such a tool, is the global baseline study on school safety that provided

guidelines and recommendations to governments for school safety implementation, including successful safety assessments. The United Nations also developed a worldwide initiative for safe schools that focused on motivating and supporting governments to develop national strategies and implement school safety (Hardman, 2004). The initiative builds on the comprehensive school safety framework and defines a safe school as a combination of safe learning facilities (disaster resilience infrastructure), school disaster management and disaster risk reduction and resilience education (Hardman, 2004).

In Australia, the National Crime Prevention, in partnership with other Commonwealth and state partners have developed an approach to school safety across all states and is investing in long term projects aimed at buttressing the capacity of schools, their staff and communities. According to (Peterson & Skiba, 2000), a review of school-based prevention policies has been undertaken. Innovative and restorative policies that deal with safety in schools have also been piloted in Queensland and the Australian Capital Territory. These approaches have improved school safety in Australia and positively impacted on educational outcomes.

In Africa, school safety and educational continuity require a dynamic, continuous process initiated by management and involving workers, students, parents, and the local community (Zuze et al., 2016). School disaster management involves the familiar cycle of steps found in all project management which include; *assessing* hazards, vulnerabilities, capacities and resources; planning and implementing for physical risk reduction, maintaining of safe facilities, standardizing operating procedures and training for disaster response; *testing* mitigation and preparedness plans and skills regularly, with realistic simulation drills; and *revising* your plan based on your experience.

The Social Pillar in the Vision 2030 singles out education and training as the vehicle that will drive Kenya into becoming a middle-income economy (MOE, 2008). In addition, the Kenyan Constitution, 2010 has provided for Free and Compulsory Basic Education as a human right to every Kenyan child. The country is, therefore, obliged to align education and training to the demands of its citizens (The Kenya sector of the International Commission of Jurists, 2010). This requires the review of all aspects of the education system to make it responsive to the new realities including safety measures in the institutions. The government of Kenya has committed to the safety and wellbeing of all children and has zero tolerance to child abuse and demonstrates the commitment through implementing of child protection programs. School management are authorized to provide a child safe environment where children feel safe and their voice are heard when decisions are made that affects their lives.

Literature Review
Friend and Kohn (2018) did a study on safety policy strategies put in place to ensure safety of learners. The study findings show that, duties of supervisory staff (deputy head teachers, curriculum coordinators, heads of year, heads of departments, site managers, clerical managers/supervisors). In addition to the general duties which all members of staff do, they ensure that safe methods of working exist and are implemented throughout their area of responsibility, safety regulations, rules, procedures and codes of practice are being applied effectively; staff, pupils and others, under their jurisdiction, are instructed in safe environment; new employees working within there are given instructions in safe working practices; risk assessments are conducted in their area of responsibility as required by the headteacher or as necessary.

Further, regular safety inspections are made at their area of responsibility as required by the head teacher or as necessary; positive, corrective action is taken where necessary to ensure the safety of all staff, pupils and others; all plant, machinery and equipment in the department in which they work is adequately guarded, in safe working order and restricted to authorized persons only; appropriate protective clothing and equipment, first aid and fire appliances are provided and readily available in the department in which they work; hazardous and highly flammable substances in the department in which they work are correctly stored and labeled, and exposure is minimized; they monitor the standard of safety throughout the department in which they work and encourage staff, pupils and others to achieve the highest practicable standards of safety ; all safety information is communicated to the relevant persons and they report any safety concerns to the head teacher (Friend & Kohn, 2018).

Facility Design
Facilities were designed in a manner consistent with safety regulations and standards of good design. Those school departments charged with primary responsibility for the design, construction, and/or renovation of facilities, together with stakeholders shall ensure that there is appropriate safety review of facility concepts, designs, and plans. In case of disagreement between stakeholders and the cognizant facilities department, the conflict shall be resolved by the school management (World Health Organization, 2016).
Internationally, according to Arkansas School Facility Manual, the Arkansas Department of Education (ADE), is charged with overseeing the design and construction of school facilities. The Arkansas School Facility Manual provides consistent, clear information for school districts and professionals as a new generation of schools is being created for Arkansas. The standards and guidelines contained in the manual are the culmination of standards, accepted procedures, statutory requirements, and experience of experts and authorities across the United States who establish a uniform level of quality of all public-school buildings (Blouin, & Tekian, 2018).

Hazard Identification and Correction
Benn et al (2018), encourage employees and students to report safety hazards to their supervisors, managers, employees and students who shall not be discriminated against in any manner for bona fide reporting of safety hazards to Stanford or to appropriate governmental agencies. Supervisors shall inform students and employees of the policy and encourage reporting of workplace hazards. Supervisors, both faculty and staff, shall assure that regular, periodic inspections of workplaces, are conducted to identify and analyze workplace hazards and unsafe work practices. The frequency of inspections should be proportional to the magnitude of risk posed in a particular workplace. Means of correcting discovered hazards and/or protecting individuals from the hazards shall be determined and implemented appropriately.
Unsafe conditions which cannot be corrected by the supervisor or manager must be reported to the next higher level of management. Any individual, supervisor or manager who becomes aware of a serious concealed danger to the health or safety of individuals, shall report this danger promptly to the Department of Environment Health and Safety (EH&S) and to the faculty, staff and students who may be affected (Benn *et al.,* 2018).

Shutdown of Dangerous Activities
In cases of dispute, an order to curtail or shutdown will remain in effect until the head teacher (or their respective designates) communicates in writing in writing that the danger has passed or been mitigated or that the order should be rescinded for other reasons. Should the head teachers disagree with a determination to restore a curtailed or shutdown activity? In the event of an appeal, the order to curtail or shutdown shall be in effect until the Minister of Education determines otherwise (American College of Sports Medicine, 2018).

Providing Medical Surveillance
Boarding school administrators shall analyze and monitor, through a program of medical surveillance, the health of faculty, staff and students who are exposed to certain hazardous materials and situations as defined by law or school policy. Each supervisor is responsible for ensuring that employees and students under their supervision participate in the medical surveillance program as required by school policy. EH&S will monitor medical surveillance program participation. Each department shall administer the program for faculty, staff and students covered by school policy (Gostin & Wiley, 2016).

Emergency Response and Preparedness
According to Phillips, Neal, Webb (2016), head teachers coordinate overall emergency response planning for the institution and provides guidelines for departmental emergency response plans. Every department shall have an individual emergency response plan and shall develop business continuity and contingency plans and implement appropriate mitigation programs to reduce the impact of emergency events. Departments shall maintain local departmental emergency operations centers and communications capabilities according to guidelines in the campus emergency plan. Multiple departments located within individual buildings will jointly develop comprehensive building-based life safety response plans.
According to Hammett (2016), school also covers First Aid policies by providing green posters (written procedures) of First Aid provision information and instruction on all main corridors in case of emergency; these consist of, list of first aider and their contact details according to year groups. The school has First Aid Boxes in all the cloak room; these are checked by lunchtime by supervisors who are responsible for first aid. The school has also fire alarms, 3 different types of extinguishers, (Foam, CO_2 and Water). There is a comprehensive site survey every term, this includes Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) records, First aid provision, review of Risk Assessments, fire and safety drills. All staff is required to carry out assigned task and duties safely in accordance with instructions, methods and procedures safely coordinating with their supervisors.
Another example of safety monitored in our school is by providing sanitized hand gels in all classrooms; children should not leave their classroom unnecessarily. Children use the hand gels after their science experiment or any other class activities to stop spreading germs and viruses which may spread infections. All responsible adults working with children monitor the check and use of this policy. The school also contains various other H&S policies such as building, ground, Adventure playground and E-policy. Often school sends letters to parents via email about E-safety for parents and children (Kilns & Hill, 2018).
Kerr and King (2018) in a study on safety methods analyzed that in most schools, rigorous training of Health & Safety Policy is provided to all members of staff who have different roles and responsibilities in areas of; fire, child protection and First Aid. The school does an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) for all staff and volunteers who come in

contact with the school children. The school requires all potential employees/volunteers to have an induction, prior to commencing to work. The induction covers all aspect of H&S policies. Appropriate Induction booklet, Keeping Children Safe in Education, East Riding Safeguarding Children Board (ERSCB) Safe School, Safe Children, Safe Staff code of conduct are handed to all as part of their induction training. After the induction, volunteers are expected to sign that they have understood the H&S School's policy in the presence of the trainer. The induction is done by the head teacher or one of the assistant head teachers. In addition, all visitors to the school must sign and obtain a badge which gives them valid entry to the school. Signing the register also means that they have read and understood the safeguarding statements. The school admin is responsible for checking the visitors and maintaining their records.

Methodology
The study adopted convergent. The research was carried out among public and private primary boarding schools in North Rift Region. The targeted population was derived from 161 public and private primary boarding schools in the North Rift Region. Stratified and simple random sampling were used to determine the schools which took part in the study. The study used a questionnaire and interview schedule as the main instrument of data collection. Quantitative data collected were coded, edited and analyzed through the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) software version 25. Qualitative data were grouped into themes based on study objectives. A mixed method procedure was employed to analyze both qualitative and quantitative data. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics.

Results
Table 1
Safety standard measures Put in Place

Statements		SA	A	UN	D	SD	Mean	Std. Dev
1. The schools don't have fire extinguishers in place to ensure safety in case of fire	F	43	35	3	3	2	4.33	0.89
	%	50	40.7	3.5	3.5	2.3		
2. There are no emergency doors in all physical facilities to cater for emergencies.	F	40	31	9	3	3	4.19	1.00
	%	46.5	36	10.5	3.5	3.5		
3. The school has no first aid kit to cater for accidents	F	40	27	9	7	3	4.09	1.1
	%	46.5	31.4	10.5	8.1	3.5		
4. The windows are not fitted with grills and are open outwards.	F	43	3	6	1	2	4.34	0.85
	%	50	3.5	7	1.2	2.5		
	F	52	26	4	1	3	4.43	0.91

							Mean	SD
5.	There are the provision of rubbish / dust bins at strategic points to avoid littering of dangerous objects.	%	60.5	65.1	4.7	1.2	3.5	
6.	Fire and other security alarms are not placed strategically for use	F	23	38	10	10	4	4.12	3.34
		%	26.7	44.2	11.6	11.6	4.7	
7.	The school does not have well trained security guards to ensure safety in case of outside attacks	F	28	42	10	4	2	4.05	0.92
		%	32.6	48.8	11.6	4.7	2.5	
8.	There is a school nurse to cater for emergencies.	F	34	21	6	17	8	3.65	1.41
		%	39.5	24.4	6.9	19.7	9.3	
9.	There are matrons and housekeepers to cater for security of learners in the dormitories	F	3	32	7	3	3	4.22	0.99
		%	3.4	37.2	8.1	3.5	3.5	
10.	Lighting arrestors have been appropriately placed in the various physical facilities.	F	21	30	9	20	6	3.47	1.28
		%	24.4	34.8	10.5	23.5	6.9	
11.	The school has fenced compound to avoid inversion.	F	44	35	2	3	2	4.35	0.88
		%	51.1	40.6	2.3	3.5	2.3	

Table 1 shows that 43(50%) of the respondents strongly agreed, 35(40.7%) agreed, 3(3.5%) undecided, 3(3.5%) disagreed and 2(2.3%) strongly disagreed that the schools have no fire extinguishers in place to ensure safety in case of fire. The study Furthermore, showed in terms of mean and standard deviations that majority of the respondents agreed that the schools have no the fire extinguishers in place to ensure safety in case of fire (Mean=4.33, Standard Deviation=0.89). The study agrees with a study by Khan (2020) who cited that fire extinguishers play a vital role in any fire protection plan in any environment. They are a first aid response to fire and can help prevent catastrophic damage to property and even loss of life. From interviews, QASO zone 1 noted that;

"We have ensured that all the schools in our subcounty have fire extinguishers this ensures safety of our student if incase of fire outbreak"

The findings also revealed that, 40(46.5%) of the respondents strongly agreed, 31(36%) agreed, 9%) were undecided, however, 3(3.5%) disagreed and 3(3.5%) strongly disagreed that there were no emergency doors in all physical facilities to cater for emergencies. Furthermore, the study confirmed through the Mean and Standard Deviations that majority of the respondents agreed that there were no emergency doors in all physical facilities to cater for emergencies (Mean=4.19, Standard Deviation=1.00). The study concurs with the study done by Rozo (2019) who articulated that an emergency exit has a clear, safe way to

get out of a building in a school environment. Rozo (2019), also cited that emergency exits provide fast exit in case of emergency such as fire. First responders may also use it as a way into the building, so it is very important to make sure they are ready to use at all times. From interviews, Focused discussion group 2 members noted that

"I am so happy with the fact that whoever planned on the construction of our school considered our safety by the fact that our classrooms have emergency doors to cater for emergencies."

The findings from the study further noted that 40(46.5%) of the respondents strongly agreed, 27(31.4%) agreed, 9(10.5%) undecided, 7(8.1%) disagreed and 3(3.5%) strongly disagreed that the school has no first aid kit to cater for accidents. Moreover, the study showed through mean and standard deviations that the majority of the respondents agreed that the school had no first aid kit to cater for accidents (Mean=4.09, Standard Deviation=1.10). Sherman, (2018) in his study noted that First aid kits in schools are helpful to children who often get into accidents and may need immediate care in order to prevent things from escalating. Whether it is a minor injury or something more serious such as fracture, preventing further complications is paramount. From interviewed member of QASO zone 4 noted that;

"Having tools and supplies around that are meant to take care of people during emergency situations or calamities can make them feel reassured and well taken care of that's why it is always our happiness that every school in our subcounty is supplied with a first aid kit"

Furthermore, the findings noted that 43(50%) of the respondents strongly agreed, 3(3.5%) agreed, and 6(7%) undecided on the statement that windows are not fitted with grills and are open outwards, however, 1(1.2%) disagreed and 2(2.3%) strongly disagreed that the windows were not fitted with grills and are open outwards. The study also showed in terms of Mean and Standard Deviations that the majority of the respondents agreed that the windows were not fitted with grills and are open outwards (Mean=4.34, Standard Deviation=0.85). However, the study differed with the study done by Attems, (2020) who noted that the window grills act as a protective barrier, also sturdy window grill designs can end the fear of children peeking out the window and resulting in a fatal accident as the grill acts a safety net and prevents any mishaps. From the focus group discussion two, group members noted that;

"Failure by the contractor to fit our classroom windows with grills and the fact that they are opened outwards is an added advantage for us in case of any emergency."

Also, the findings showed that 52(60.5%) of the respondents strongly agreed, 26(30.2%) agreed, 4(4.7%) undecided, 1(1.2%) disagreed and 3(3.5%) strongly disagreed that there's the provision of rubbish / dust bins at strategic points to avoid littering of dangerous objects. The study moreover, showed in terms of mean and standard deviations that majority of the respondents agreed that there are provision of rubbish / dust bins at strategic points to avoid littering of dangerous objects (Mean=4.09, Standard Deviation=1.10). The findings from the study concurs with Bano, (2020) who cited that using dustbins is an effective way of reducing trash, keeping your environment clean and maintaining safety to people around. Moreover, dustbins can be used to recycle trash and thus reduce the quantity of refuse. This means lesser trips to garbage dumpsters.

Furthermore, the results from the study noted that, 23(26.7%) of the respondents strongly agreed, 38(44.2%) agreed, 10(11.6%) undecided, 10(11.6%) disagreed and 4(4.7%) strongly disagreed that fire and other security alarms are not placed strategically for use. The study moreover, showed in terms of Mean and Standard Deviations that the respondents agreed that fire and other security alarms are not placed strategically for use (Mean=4.12, Standard Deviation=3.34). Collamore (2019) in his study cited that fire alarm systems automatically

warns everyone that a fire has broken out, thus bystanders, guests or employees inside the premises can respond quickly. Trained personnel may exhaust the fire with fire extinguishers or other occupants can notify emergency responders to send in a team. From focus group discussion three members noted that;

"Our school compound is always sparkling clean for the school management has provided us with rubbish/dustbins at strategic points to avoid littering of dangerous objects. Our teachers teach us the importance of keeping our school compound clean"

From the study also, 28(32.6%) of the respondents strongly agreed, 42(48.8%) agreed, 10(11.6%) undecided, 4(4.7%) disagreed and 2(2.3%) strongly disagreed that the school does not have well trained security guards to ensure safety in case of outside attacks. The study also, showed in terms of mean and standard deviations that majority of the respondents agreed that the school does not have well trained security guards to ensure safety in case of outside attacks (Mean=4.05, Standard Deviation=0.92). The study findings concur with a study by Léonard (2020) who cited that trained guards can identify risks, manage any evolving threats, and tackle security violations in the best manner.

The finding from the study further showed that 34(39.5%) of the respondents strongly agreed, 21(24.4%) agreed, 6(6.9%) undecided,17 (19.7%) disagreed and 8(9.3%) strongly disagreed that there is a school nurse to cater for emergencies. The study also, showed in terms of mean and standard deviations that the respondents agreed that there is a school nurse to cater for emergencies (Mean=3.65, Standard Deviation=1.41). The study concurs with Holmes and Sheetz (2016) who cited that school nurses specialize in providing health care support and promoting student health in schools throughout the country. By bridging the gap between education and healthcare, school nurses ensure the safety of students

The findings also showed that, 41(47.7%) of the respondents strongly agreed, 32(37.2%) agreed, 7(8.2%) undecided, 3(3.5%) disagreed and 3(3.5%) strongly disagreed that there are matrons and housekeepers to cater for security of learners in the dormitories. The study also, showed in terms of Mean and Standard Deviations that the respondents agreed that there are matrons and housekeepers to cater for security of learners in the dormitories (Mean=4.22, Standard Deviation=0.99). Matrons according to Bair (2016), keep pupils healthy and safe. They also help in supervising at meal times and bedtimes hence concurs with the findings from the study.

The findings 21(24.4%) of the respondents strongly agreed, 30(34.9%) agreed, and 9(10.5%) were undecided on the statement that lighting arrestors have been appropriately placed in the various physical facilities, however, 20(23.3%) disagreed and 6(6.9%) strongly disagreed that lighting arrestors have been appropriately placed in the various physical facilities. The study also, showed in terms of Mean and Standard Deviations that the majority of respondents agreed with that lighting arrestors had been appropriately placed in the various physical facilities (Mean=3.47, Standard Deviation=1.28). Ahmad (2018) cited that for the safety of lives, electronic items and the building, lightning protection is important in schools. The largest number of lightning casualties occur in open spaces and therefore students on sports fields or in the playground may be at risk during a thunderstorm. From interviewing the focus group, 4 members of the group noted that;

"The purpose of lighting arrestors in our school is to limit the rise in voltage when a communications or power line is struck by lightning or is near to a lightning strike, we thank the school management for ensuring that our schools are fitted with the same in case of lightning."

Finally, the findings showed that 44(51.2%) of the respondents strongly agreed, 35(40.7%) agreed, and 2(2.3%) were undecided on the statement that the school had fenced compound to avoid inversion, 3(3.5%) disagreed and 2(2.3%) strongly disagreed that the school had fenced compound to avoid inversion. The study also, showed in terms of Mean and Standard Deviations that the majority of respondents agreed that the schools had fenced compounds to avoid inversion (Mean=4.35, Standard Deviation=0.88) The findings concur with Woolley, (2021) who cited that schools that do not have adequate fencing around the playgrounds exposed the children in danger of sexual predators, kidnappers and even wild animals. It also recommended that children that try to avoid going to class had an easier way to do that. From focused group 7 the pupils agreed that their school was fenced by making the following statement;
"Our school compound is well fenced to ensure our security"

Model Summary
The coefficient of determination (R^2) and correlation coefficient (R) shows the degree of association between dependent and independent variables. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2
Multiple Regression Model Summary

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
.967[a]	.936	.934	.26533

The results of the regression in Table 2 indicate that R^2 value was 0.936 and R value was 0.967. R value of 0.967 gave an indication that there was a strong linear relationship between dependent and independent variable. The R^2 indicates that explanatory power of the independent variable was 0.936. This implied that about 93.6% of the variation in dependent variable is explained by the regression model.

Regression Model Fitness Test
Model fitness was run to find out if model best fit for the data. The study results were presented in Table 3.

Table 3
Regression Model Fitness Results

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	40.132	1	40.132	570.047	.000[b]
Residual	2.746	39	.070		
Total	42.878	40			

Table 3 shows that the respondents F-statistics produced (F =570.047) which was significant at p=0.000 thus confirming the fitness of the model. This implies that the multiple regression

model was fit for the data. The F value indicates that the variable in the equation are important hence the overall regression is significant.

Regression Model Coefficients
Regression model coefficients were run in order to use the regression equation. The results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4
Regression Model Coefficients

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	.194	.167		1.161	.253
Safety standard measures put in place	.980	.041	.967	23.876	.000

The results in Table 4 revealed that there was positive linear effect of safety standard measures put in place on safety of learners (β_1=.980, p=0.000). This reveals that an increase in safety standard measures put in place leads to increase in safety of learners by 0.980 units. The study findings concurred with Williams et al (2018) who noted that after accounting for demographics and bullying victimization, perceptions of safety increased when students reported positive student and teacher relations, consistent rules, a clean school that is also crowded/noisy, and a sense of school belonging.

Conclusion
The study concluded that safety standard measures be put in place to ensure safety of learners in primary boarding schools in North Rift Region include having; fire extinguishers should be put in place to ensure safety in case of fire, emergency doors in all physical facilities to cater for emergencies. Also, a first aid kit to cater for accidents, on top of that provision of rubbish / dust bins at strategic points to avoid littering of dangerous objects. Fire and other security alarms are not placed strategically for use. Also well-trained security guards to ensure safety in case of outside attacks. Furthermore, school nurse to cater for emergencies further matrons and housekeepers to cater for security of learners in the dormitories and Lighting arrestors have been appropriately placed in the various physical facilities and fenced compound to avoid inversion.

Recommendations
The Ministries of Education, Public Works and Health through their officers in the counties should ensure that as schools are built also the required sanitation facilities should be constructed alongside the classes. Further, enforcement of the set public health and health and safety standards and guidelines should be made part of the performance contracts of the officers to ensure vigilance and enable adherence.

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