Safety policy implementation and risk reduction in Day Public Primary schools in Nandi North Sub-County, Kenya.

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Abstract

 Threats to school safety have continually affected school attendance and enrollments. Many children are vulnerable to physical and psychological safety within the school environment. Some of the safety challenges occur due to negligence by the school administration and others through insufficient support from stakeholders. This study, using descriptive research design, purposed to examine how safety policy implementation has influenced risk reduction in Public Primary schools in Nandi North Sub County. Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory informed the study. Yamane's formula and simple random sampling techniques were used to select 74 out of 175 Day Public Primary schools. Purposive sampling technique was used to select one head- teacher, one senior teacher and a PTA chairperson from each of the 74 schools. All the eight zonal Quality Assurance and Standards Officers were also included in the study. The observation schedule, questionnaire and interview guide were used for data collection. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and presented in form of frequency tables, percentages and bar graphs. The findings showed that all the 74 schools had put in place strategies to promote children's safety. However, they lacked secured gates, water for hand washing after toilet visit, first aid kits, fire extinguishers and lightning arrestors. The study recommended that the government should ensure that all public primary schools are given sufficient funds to cater for children's school safety needs. This will, in turn, lead to risk reduction in schools. It will lead to achievement of Sustainable Development Goals particularly Goal Four which ensures inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning.

 Key words*: Child friendly school, physical safety, psychological safety. risk reduction, safety policy, school safety.*

1. Introduction

Safeguarding children is the process of protecting them from abuse or neglect, preventing impairment of their health and ensuring that they are growing up in a safe and nurturing environment (Bruce, 2010). UNESCO (2013) advocates for protection of learners and school staff from harm. This view rests on three pillars: safe learning facilities, school disaster management and risk reduction which, when fully implemented, promotes school safety. According to Gray and Lewis, (2015) National Centre for Education Statistics (NCES) collected, analyzed, and reported data on education in the United States and other nations. NCES found that public schools adopted various safety and discipline practices, 93 percent of which enabled controlled access to school

buildings during school hours, 75 percent used security camera(s), 68 percent required by faculty and staff to wear badges and 58 percent enforced a strict dress code Njunge (2015) opined that Kenya's Ministry of Education's school safety guidelines for disaster and risk reduction should give a blueprint map of all buildings, classrooms, dormitories and hallways. Njunge added that there should be a telephone tree list including names of employees, teachers and parents for contacts in case of emergency.

Safety encompasses aspects such as physical and psychological safety; where the former entails protection from bodily harm while the later means protection from bad feelings. When learners feel physically and psychologically safe in a school set up, they are likely to stay in school and participate in school programmes. As a result they develop holistically and exploit their full potential towards self-actualization. Learners depend on adults to meet their basic needs including food, water, shelter, and clothing. They also depend on them for protection from harm. Feelings of safety allow children to build meaningful relationships, become confident, and attain their full potential (Kabiru and Njenga, 2009). Schools cannot expect children to learn if they do not feel safe. In line with Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory, this study investigates safety as a necessary pre-requisite to learner success in enrolment and transition through school.

1.1. Literature Review

A safe school environment mitigates threats that can physically or psychologically harm learners (Kimani, 2016). There is need, therefore, to build and upgrade those facilities that promote safe and inclusive learning environments for all learners for sustainable development.

The Ministry of Education in Kenya (MoE, 2015) has a Regulation Act which advocates for school safety measures including: installment of serviceable fire-extinguishers; good security arrangements with provision for both night and day security guards; well-maintained and clean learning rooms; and a properly reinforced fence with an appropriate mechanism for repair and maintenance. Safety measures on school grounds require that classrooms, latrines and play grounds are well-managed and all necessary ownership documents are secured. Possession of legal school ownership documents minimizes possibility of grabbing of school land and property therein. In the past, wrangles related to school land ownership have put learners in harm's way. A case in point is the dreadful protest at Lang'ata Road Primary School (Njunge, 2015) where learners participated in demonstrations to salvage their playground. This resulted in hospitalization of at least ten learners after police used tear gas to disperse them. In another incident, learners from Mbagathi primary school carried their desks and sat across the busy Mbagathi way to protest their loss of one of the pupils through a road accident. These cases raise the question: Should school allow learners to participate in demonstrations of any kind given it compromises their safety? School staff has a duty to protect and preserve the safety, health and wellbeing of children in their care. They must always act in the best interests of the children. When children experience a sense of security in school, they develop a sense of psychological comfort which, in turn, makes them like the school environment. This has a direct bearing in boosting their learning.

In many schools, other safety concern includes sanitation and access to school by strangers without proper scrutiny and provision of visitor's identity cards. Such kinds of safety measures if always availed in schools will help in reducing risks. Studies on child safety done in Australia (specifically Victoria) showed that Public schools did increase their physical security system in a variety of ways. Many schools started to limit access to their property by locking all unmonitored entrances and requiring all visitors to check in at the main office to be issued with identifications that they must put on while in school (Begar, 2002).

Additionally, these schools had specific guards whose duty was to monitor school boundaries and provide two-way radios for staff members responsible for monitoring school activities. School security guards also conducted routine security inspections of the exterior and interior of the school so that incase of any suspicious threat to school safety the matter was reported to school officials or the police immediately (Triplett, Trulson, & Snell, 2001). Walk-through metal detectors were reported to be in use in many inner city schools over the past couple years, while hand-held detectors, surveillance cameras and random weapons screenings were said to be more popular in rural schools. Such security measures are unheard of in day public primary schools in Kenya let alone Nandi North Sub-County- the excuse being insufficient funds to undertake such activities (Omolo and Simatwa, 2010).

The same concern in Australia on   child safety   was extended to campuses where they installed at least twenty-five surveillance cameras in classrooms, playgrounds and parking areas. Many public schools started to enforce rules regarding student's attire. Some public schools demanded that their students wear uniforms so as to help identify intruders more easily (Begar, 2002). In Kenya, learners in all public schools wear uniforms. But only a handful of schools have security cameras or other surveillance gadgets (Omolo and Simatwa, 2010).

In Malawi, the quality and inadequacy of school infrastructure, access to safe water and sanitation services, have contributed to low enrolment and high drop-out rates, particularly for girls. UNICEF, which worked in collaboration with the Government of Malawi   undertook Priorities to upgrade school facilities; build a washroom for senior girls and access for physically challenged pupils (UNICEF, 2011). The idea of separate wash rooms for senior girls and the availability of appropriate physical facilities for the physically challenged children ensured concerned groups got psychological comfort and privacy.

The Government of Kenya has not been left behind in the struggle to ensure schools are child-friendly. Through the Ministry of Education, the government provided schools with guidelines on social and environment standards and also infrastructure that were safe for children. Together with this, it allocated funds for procuring fire-fighting equipment and materials (MOEST, 2008)..

According to GoK (2012), a safe school must have sanitation facilities built up to the required standards and high standards of hygiene maintained. Pit latrines should be at least 15 metres and regularly disinfected. They should also be away from a borehole or well or water supply point. In the construction of sanitary facilities, the following must be observed in relation to numbers. The first thirty learners: 4 closets (holes), the next 270:1 extra closet for every 30 learners, every additional learner over 270:1 closet per 50 learners (MOE 2006).

A study by the National Assessment System for Monitoring Learner Achievement (NASMLA) showed that some schools across the country had inadequate classroom facilities, sub-standard sanitation facilities and unsafe drinking water (KNEC, 2010). This showed that the provision of CFS standards in schools was still a challenge as all these aspects needed to be addressed.

Wanjiku (2011) found out that pre-schools attached to primary schools lacked manned gates. Secured gates provide safety to learners; this therefore fails to concur with Wandawa (2012) who found out that child- friendly environment improves retention levels of pupils in Public Primary schools in Nairobi. To Wandawa 2012, there would be improved discipline and teaching and learning if the government provided more funds to help them maintain safe school environments, particularly in provision of physical infrastructure and installation of safety equipment and materials.

Kang'ethe and Ciera (2017) assert that 2014 and 2015 Uwezo surveys revealed that many primary schools in Kenya were far from achieving the safety promise for all children. Only 20 per cent of

the schools had an operational fire extinguisher. More than half of the schools did not have any member of staff trained on first aid. About 79 % of the schools had piped water. Only 36% had a functional hand washing facility near the toilet with water and soap.

Schools' safety is threatened factors such as: slippery surfaces, poorly arranged furniture, poor lighting and ventilation (MOE, 2008). Limo (2013) noted that schools did not have kits to cater for such accidents. Kemuto (2015) asserted that the unsatisfactory implementation of safety policies was attributable to a variety of factors including inadequate time, inadequate funds, low technical capacity, and a lack of proper coordination and supervision from the Ministry of Education. Nyakundi, Migiro, and Mburu (2012) affirmed that safety standards and guidelines have not been fully implemented in schools in Kenya due to inadequate financial resources, insufficient training for teachers and students on safety standards and a lack of principals' personal initiative to adhere to safety standards.

Alal (2014) reported that about 2500 children in some parts of Kisumu county absent themselves from school because of jigger infestation. This implies that school and classroom environments are poor may and unfriendly to learners' safety. Furthermore parasites such as jiggers cause physical damage to children's bodies, and their feet in particular. Such learners have difficulty in walking to school. The discomfort may also make them not to concentrate in class.

There is need to have enough sanitary facilities in schools for both boys and girls segregated by age (GOK, 2015). Adolescent girls need privacy and water to clean themselves during their menstrual periods. If this lacks, many girls opt to absent themselves from school. Other contributing factors include absence of health care and nutrition and a hostile school environment. Schools must, therefore, uphold safety policy standards to render good learning environment for all learners and hence an avenue for the achievement of for sustainable development goal number four.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Safety in schools is a critical issue globally and of major concern to governments, parents, and learners. Recently, In February 2018, America experienced a mass shooting incident in Florida which led to the killing of 17 people in a school (http://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-02-15). In Kenya, the persistence of safety problems in schools even after the release of the Safety and Standards' Manual poses serious questions that demand urgent answers if insecurity cases are to be avoided in future. On 26th August 2012, eight pupils from Asumbi girls' primary boarding school in Homa Bay were burnt to death (Oduor, 2012). Another most recent was the Moi Girls High tragedy in Nairobi in September 2017 which left ten learners dead (kigotho, 2017). Unsafe schools disrupt learning; contribute to destruction of resources and. worst of all, loss of lives. Unsafe school environments cast aspersions on school heads' competence in school leadership (Kirui, Mbugua & Sang, 2011). When learners are safe, they become motivated and are likely to maintain regular school attendance with important implications on Sustainable Development Goals. It is for this reason that the study sought to find out whether the safety policy implementation has had any influence on risk reduction in Day Public Primary schools in Nandi North Sub County.

1.3. Objective

The objective of this study was to establish the extent to which safety standard guidelines has influenced risk reduction strategies in Day Public primary schools in Nandi North Sub County**.**

3. Methodology
The study based on descriptive research design which according to Creswell, (2014) the design shades light on current issues or problems through a process of data collection that enables them to describe a situation.   The major advantage of this design is that; it provides an opportunity to integrate the qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection. The study targeted all the one hundred and seventy five Public Primary schools, eight zonal QASOs, Public Primary school head-teachers, Public Primary school teachers and all parents in the targeted schools.

The study used Yamane formula to get a sample size of 74 Day Public Primary schools. Stratified sampling technique was used to select schools from the eight zones; Simple random sampling technique was employed to select the 74 Day Public Primary schools to take part in the study. Purposive sampling technique was used to select 74 head-teachers from the sampled schools, and all the 8 Zonal Quality Assurance and Standards Officers. The same purposive sampling technique was used to obtain 74 senior teachers from the sampled schools and one PTA chair person from each of the sampled schools.

The questionnaires were administered to teachers and head-teachers. A structured interview guide was used to gather information from all QASOs and the PTA chairperson. After all the data were collected, they were cleaned. This involved identification of incomplete or inaccurate responses in the research tools. The cleaned data were collated, coded and entered in the computer for analysis using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences. The research results yielded both qualitative and quantitative data. Qualitative data were analyzed using content analysis based on themes emanating from respondents' information and closed-ended questions were analyzed quantitatively. After analysis, data were presented in tabular form using frequencies, percentages and   bar graphs.

4. Findings
The influence of school safety measures on implementation of safety policy was established using descriptive statistics. The head-teachers and teachers gave their views on this as presented in Table 1.

Table 1 Head teacher's and teacher's views on implementation of safety policy

Statement	Category	Strongly agree		Agree		Undecided		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
		Fre	%	Fre	%	Fre	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Learners are protected from access by unauthorized persons while at school	Head-teachers	18	24.3	47	63.5	2	2.7	7	9.5		
	Teachers	25	33.8	44	59.5	5	6.8				
Learners are always within sight or hearing of school staff at all times	Head-teachers	12	16.2	45	60.8	6	8.1	9	12.2	2	2.7
	Teachers	13	17.6	42	56.8	8	10.8	9	12.2	2	2.7

Learners are not permitted to leave school without the knowledge and permission of school staff	Head-teachers	21	28.4	49	66.2			4	5.4		
	Teachers	33	44.6	28	37.8	4	5.4	7	9.5	2	2.7
School buildings are in good condition	Head-teachers	13	17.6	49	66.2			11	14.9	1	1.4
	Teachers	19	25.7	33	44.6			13	17.6	9	12.2
The school playground is free from any hazards	Head-teachers	7	9.5	21	28.4	4	5.4	37	50	5	6.7
	Teachers	9	12.2	14	18.9	4	5.4	3	4.1	44	59.5
The school has a first aid kit and fire extinguisher accessible at all times	Head-teachers	6	8.1	2	2.7	5	6.8	39	52.7	22	29.7
	Teachers	18	24.3	17	23.0	2	2.7	16	21.6	21	28.4
The school is fenced and has secured gate	Head-teachers	3	4.1	6	8.1	6	8.1	46	62.2	13	17.6
	Teachers	11	14.9	4	5.4			23	31.1	36	48.6

From the study 65(87.8%) of head-teachers and 69 (93.2%) of teachers agreed that learners were protected from access by unauthorized persons while at school, with 7 (9.5%) head teachers and 5(6.8%) teachers disagreeing. This result indicates that learners were protected from access by unauthorized persons in school.

More than half of the head-teachers 57(77%) and 55(74.4%) teachers agreed that learners were always within sight or hearing of school staff. However, 11(14.9%) head-teachers and 11(14.9%) school teachers disagreed. This implies that learners in the study area are safe since they are always within sight of the school staff. There is an assurance of constant safety which, in turn, promotes a sense of psychological comfort in learners. .

About 70 (94.6%) head-teachers and 61(82.4%) teachers agreed that learners were not permitted to leave school without the knowledge and permission of school staff. Only 4 (5.4%) heads and 9 (12.2%) teachers disagreed on this. These findings showed that learners were not permitted to leave school without the knowledge and permission of school staff probably because of the set rules that guided their security in school.

About 62(83.8%) head-teachers and 52 (70.3%) teachers agreed that school buildings were in good condition. About 12 (16.2%) heads and 22 (29.7%) teachers disagreed with this view. This indicated that school buildings of Day Public Primary schools in Nandi North Sub-County were in good condition and hence a safety measure for safety. This view is in line with UNICEF (2006) and Lewis, (2015) which has it that learning environments for children should be protective and a haven for them to grow and learn. Gray and Lewis (2015) stress the need for use of CCTV cameras. Unfortunately this is not a common gadget in most Day Public Primary schools in Kenya and more specifically in the current study area. Environments fitted with surveillance gadgets provide children with both physical and psychological security since they will always be aware that their safety in school is taken care of.

About 61(82.4%) head-teachers and 37(50%) teachers disagreed that school had a First Aid Kit and Fire Extinguisher gadget accessible at all times. However, 8 (10.8%) heads and 35(47.3%) teacher's

agreed. This showed that most Day Public Primary schools in Nandi North Sub-County did not have First Aid Kits and Fire Extinguisher gadgets. This implies that these schools may not be in a position to respond to emergencies. Study findings were not consistent with GOK (2015) and GOK (2013) recommendations on child friendly schools having first aid kits in every class and fire extinguishing gadgets. These are necessary since they enhance risk reduction.

About 59 (79.8%) of head-teachers and 59 (79.8%) of teachers disagreed that their schools were fenced and had a secured gate. Only 17.5% head-teachers and 11(14.9%) teachers agreed while 8.3% were undecided. This finding was not consistent with GOK (2015) and GOK (2013) policy documents which advocate for demarcation and fencing of a school compound, and stress the need for a secure gate.

About 37 (50%) head-teachers and 47(63.5%) of the teachers disagreed that their school playgrounds were free from hazards. However, 28 (37.9%) head-teachers and 23(31.1%) of teachers agreed that the compound had hazards. This implies that school playgrounds were not conducive for children's play. One head-teacher reported that his school boardered a forest and once in a while the school play ground had snakes.

Themes derived from the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) chairpersons' interview responses identified other aspects which help promote risk reduction to include: 65 (87.8%) as a proportion of those who agreed that their schools were fenced while, 9(12.2%) were not in agreement. Majority, 54 (73%) disagreed that their schools had manned gates and   20(27%)   disagreed. Finally, many 72 (97.3%) of them agreed that their schools had a clean environment. This is as presented in table 2

Table 2 PTA Chairperson's response on school risk reduction strategi

ITEM	YES		NO	
	Fre	%	Fre	%
Schools are a fenced	65	87.8	9	12.2
The school gate is manned	20	27	54	73
The school environment is clean	72	97.3	2	2.7

Information is presented in table 3 indicate that; Zonal Quality Assurance and Standards Officers (ZQASOs) identified various safety measures or risk reduction strategies adopted in Day Public Primary school including   fenced Schools; from this response, it was found that 7(87.5%) agreed that schools were fenced but 1(12.5%) disagreed. Another proportion, 3(37.5%) said that Schools had installed lightening arrestors while 6(75%) were not in agreement. In response to whether Head teachers had been trained on emergency preparedness, 3(37.5%) indicated that this had happened while 5(62.5%) were on the contrary. A High proportion (787.5%) responded that their schools maintained a clean environment while a very small proportion 1(12.5%) were not in agreement. The responses from the zonal QASOs like the oher respondents are similar and are in agreement with Kang'ethe and Ciera,(2017),wanjiku,(2011) and Nyakundi etal(2012) who found out that there was still a lot to done in order to realize the promise of curbing risks in Kenyan schools.

Table 3 Zonal QASO's response on school risk reduction strategies

ITEM	YES		NO	
	Fre	%	Fre	%
Schools are a fenced	7	87.5	1	12.5
Schools have installed lightening arrestors	2	25	6	75
Head teachers trained are on emergency preparedness	3	37.5	5	62.5
The school environment is clean	3	37.5	5	62.5

From observation results, safety of a school was evident by clean compound which was available in 68 (92%) of the schools, with 6 (8%) not being up to the expected standard. The lockable school gate was available in 10 (14%) of the schools and not available in 64 (86%) schools. This indicates that most of the schools lacked lockable gates, which is a key component to the provision of security in school (Wanjiru, 2011). School compounds in the study area were thus not safe enough since they lacked lockable gates.

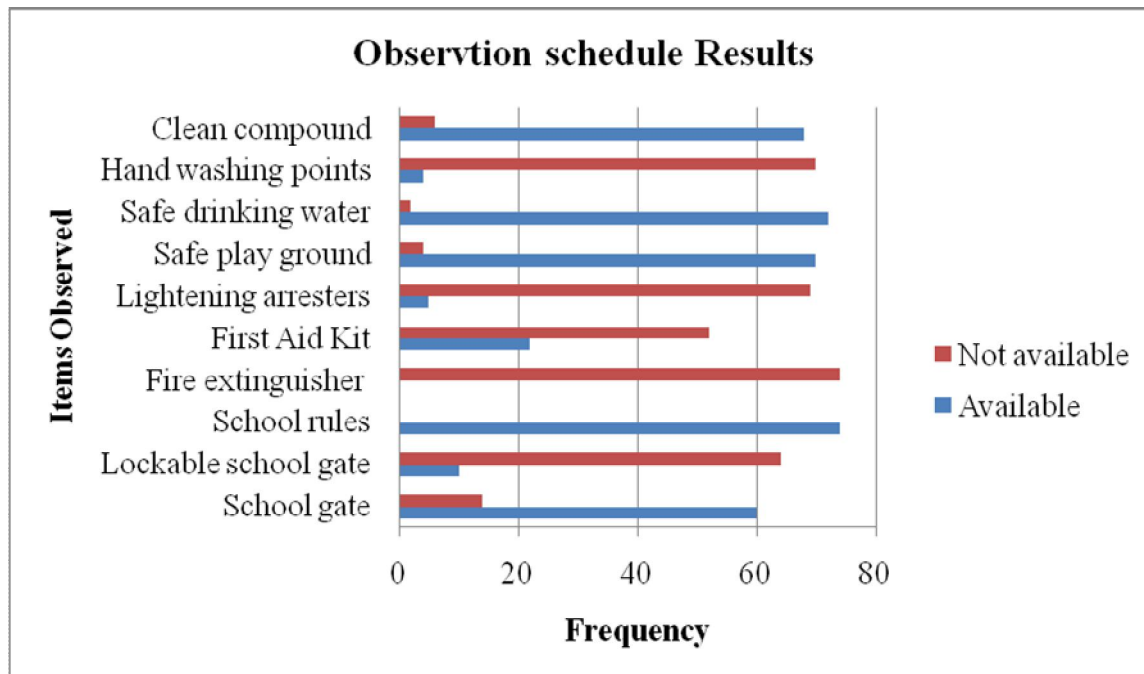**Findings are summarized presented in Figure 1.**

Fig. 1 Observation Schedule Results

5. Conclusions

All 74 schools in the present study were protected from access by unauthorized persons. Learners were always within sight or hearing of school staff. They were not permitted to leave school without the knowledge and permission of school staff. School buildings and washrooms were in good condition. Learners had adequate space to work and play freely. Schools were fenced but did not have secured gates. School play grounds did not have adequate protection. The schools also had access to clean and safe drinking water, but the same commodity was not available for hand washing after visiting the toilet. Most schools lacked First Aid Kits, lightning arrestors and fire extinguishing gadgets. Most teachers were not trained on emergency preparedness and risk reduction. The study therefore indicated that the safety policy has not been fully implemented in schools Day Public Primary in Nandi North Sub County.

5.1. Recommendation

Based on the findings of the present study, the following recommendations were made:
- Schools' safety measures should be enhanced;
- School management should ensure that their schools have a first aid kit and fire extinguisher gadgets accessible at all times; and
- School should construct a secured gate.
- The government should provide funds for full safety policy implementation
- Teachers should be trained on risk reduction and emergency preparedness

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