

**AN EVALUATION OF THE SAFETY STANDARDS AND ITS IMPLICATIONS ON  
ACADEMIC STANDARDS IN PUBLIC PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN ISINYA DISTRICT.**

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**Abstract**

The importance of safety of school children while at schools is an issue that needs to be given a lot of attention. The safety of learning institutions is a subject of great debate. The safety of the school going pupils/ students whether in primary schools or secondary schools, whether it is a public or private institution should be subjected to scrutiny in line with the quest for the provision of quality education. Whilst this is factual for all children at all levels of education, it is predominantly grave especially for those children who are at the basic education level of education in view of their somewhat gentle ages. Children especially at pre schools and primary schools are the most susceptible to threats such as harassment by their grown-up classmates, terrorization, verbal and physical abuse and all other mode of maltreatment. According to the Odhiambo Task force (2012), the education sector is accountable for the provision and harmonization of edification, instruction, research, teaching guidelines formulation and carrying out of quality assurance at all levels of education. Therefore, there is great need to ensure that all institutions of learning adhere to the basic safety standards at all times. By doing so, schools will conform to being friendly to the learning needs of all learners at all times. This calls for the participation, cooperation and involvement of all stakeholders as the school belongs to all. Many accidents and disasters that have been happening in schools will be put to check or minimized.

**Keywords: safety, policy, school, child, accidents**

## **1.0 Introduction**

School rules and regulations should be developed to address the issue of safety and protection in schools. In acknowledgment of the significant value of safety in schools, it is the responsibility of the Government through the Ministry of Education to devise and come up with ways of institutionalizing and reinforcing safety standards in schools safety. Evaluation should be carried out to establish the extent to which rules and regulations have been enforced or need to be enforced for the sake of security and safety of children while in school premise. Uncertainty for the safety of children can originate from unsuitable school amenities and infrastructure. To add to this list are badly constructed classrooms, playing fields, inadequate number of toilets as per the require ratio, unfriendly toilet amenities, gender insensible location of restroom and bathroom facilities, and insufficient and unsuitable desks and other furniture.

Schools that are said to be successful have exceptional characteristics and processes, which address the needs of all children, at all levels. All schools need to provide safe and accessible physical environments. Schools are responsible for minimizing risks of physical injury and disease transmission by ensuring that adequate safety measures have been put in place. In successful schools, there is an organized, focused and professional environment free from the danger of bodily injury. The learning environment is not repressive but favourable to schooling and learning. All schools, be it in a known civilization or country can be compared to a group of industries whose functions have a cumulative effect on the output of the education system. According to Okumbe (2007), the functional role of a school as an industry is a complex and unique one in the sense that its raw materials are the students, who are animate and have to be transformed into appropriate products whose quality cannot be judged from their external appearance. The product of a school is judged by the way its students perform in the society.

## **2.0 Statement of the problem**

Every child has a right to quality education. The declining education quality in public primary schools can be compromised when the safety of pupils is at stake. It is a decisive move to welcome the idea that, the safety in schools cannot be provided by fences and walls but through participation and involvement of all stakeholders and the community as a whole. The safety of pupils in primary schools should not be compromised nor taken for granted. Schools should be child friendly and offering a conducive environment for learning processes to be effective. It is therefore imperative

for the school administration to build strong ties with the community so as to ensure the safety of children whether in or out of schools.

### **3.0 The Objectives of the Study**

#### **3.1 General objective**

The main objective of the study was evaluate the safety standards and find out the whether they have any implications in the academic performance in the public primary schools in Isinya District.

#### **3.2 Specific objectives**

The study was guided by the following specific objectives:

1. To appraise the safety and secureness of the school environments in public primary schools in Isinya District.
2. To assess the implementation of the safety policy in public primary schools in Isinya District.
3. To examine whether cultural activities like Female Genital Mutilation, early marriages and Moranism has compromised the educational performance in public primary schools in Isinya District.
4. To investigate whether the public primary schools are compliant with the safety requirements for children with special needs and disabilities in Isinya District.

### **4.0 Research questions**

The researcher was guided by the following research questions:

1. How safe and secure are the school environments in public primary schools in Isinya District?
2. How is the safety policy being implemented in public primary schools in Isinya District?
3. How do cultural activities like Female Genital Mutilation, Early marriages and Moranism compromising the academic performance in public primary schools in Isinya District?
4. How have public primary schools complied with the safety requirements for children with special needs and disabilities in Isinya District?

## **5.0 Purpose of the study**

The purpose of the study was to evaluate the safety and secureness of the learning environment in the public primary schools and find out whether or not the safety of the school children has been compromised.

## **6.0 Significance of the study**

The study was found to be significant in that it exposed the importance of ensuring the safety and well being of pupils in school environments where they spend almost three quarter of their time while away from home. Of cognizant importance too, is the fact that on many occasions the safety of pupils in their learning environments is overlooked due to reasons such as ignorance and lack of basic skills in safety training. The educational facilities and the educational system should strictly abide by the rules so as to make schools safe, secure and conducive to the learning process.

## **7.0 Review of related literature**

### **7.1 School safety**

According to the Disaster Risk Reduction Manual (2012), School safety refers to those actions undertaken by learners, staff, parents and other stakeholders to reduce or eradicate unsafe surroundings or threats that may form grounds for accidents, physical harm as well arousing emotional distress. The Disaster Risk Reduction Manual (2012) describes school safety as a essential and very important component of the teaching and learning process. There can be no significant success of the syllabus in a setting that is not safe and secure to both learners and teachers. Threats to school safety can originate from the inside of the schools or from the outside the school surroundings. One key threat to school safety in schools involves accidents. Accidents in schools can be caused by human beings through negligence, insensitivity, unawareness, irresponsibility or inattention on the part of the pupils, teachers, subordinate and non-teaching staff or other actors in general. Another key threat to safety in our school involves violence and harassment. Violence in schools can take many forms such as corporal punishment, sexual assault, twisting or pulling of ears, slapping and pinching. Others forms involve emotional abuse of pupils through verbal abuse by teachers, and harassment, taunting and mocking by fellow pupils (Safety Standards Manual, 2008). Cases of land clashes, ethnic infighting, political hostility and stealing of livestock among neighboring communities like in Mpeketoni ( Lamu county),Mandera, Tana River,

the Pokot and Turkana have subsequently contributed either directly or indirectly to the disruption of teaching and learning in many schools in the country (Daily Nation, June 18 2014).

### **7.2 Secure School environment**

In order to perform efficiently and effectively, a school must be able to afford a future oriented educational direction based on sound organization ideology and techniques. And like safety in factories which is of paramount importance in any factory or industry, so does safety in any school. Also, teachers' behaviors that affect safety, creates an unsafe environment for students. Teachers are supposed to be good role models worth being emulated by their students. These therefore entails that all schools to provide safe psychological environments with no tolerance to sexual harassment, abuse and other forms of juvenile exploitation. Similarly, an indiscipline student force has got adverse effects on the school performance as well as on the co-existence of the students and the school administration.

The existing infrastructures in most of our primary schools are commonly in poor condition due to lack of repairs, lack of funds, poor construction standards and insufficient maintenance. Following the introduction of Free Primary Education (FPE) in 2003, Education values have slumped due to overcrowding and lack of facilities such as desks. Overstretched and congested classrooms make for unhealthy and uncomfortable learning conditions. Insufficient physical facilities and scarcity of teachers in majority of schools were cited as factors affecting high-quality teaching and learning. School infrastructure plays a vital role in the provision of a conducive learning environment as it facilitates the daily operations in the school community. They should comply with the Education Act, Public Works Act and the Public Health Act in terms of size, space, cleanliness and number of learners expected to use those facilities among many other requirements. A hostile school environment is by itself a hazard. It affects learners negatively. A good school setting accommodates the welfare of its pupils. A non-caring school setting disregards the needs of its pupils in particular those with special needs and disabilities.

### **7.3 School safety policies**

Additionally, a school surrounding that does accommodate the interests of its learners or ignores the requirements of its learners, especially those with special needs, girl child and the vulnerable children reflects a non-caring school. School safety policies stipulate what actions should be taken in order to improve the overall safety and protection of school children, with emphasis being placed

on those from diverse backgrounds. Building partnerships with local communities and involving teachers and parents is key to facilitate school safety policies. It has also been reputed that superior healthiness and diet are crucial to competent education among children as such many pupils are not provided for with the necessary diet.

Safety in the schools involves key areas such as the safety on school grounds, physical infrastructure, health and hygiene, school environment, food, safety against drug and substance abuse and teaching and learning environment. Other key areas of safety in schools involves the socio-cultural environment of the school, children with Special Needs and Disabilities, child abuse, transportation , disaster risk reduction and school community relations.

According to the Disaster Risk Reduction Manual (2012), schools should enact school safety policies to ensure safe, protective and inclusive learning environments. A safe and protective school has high enrolment, retention and completion rates, an improved academic performance and all round character development. Additionally, safe and protective schools has active community participation, adequate and well maintained amenities, visibly demarcated school fields with appropriate fence and school gate, without drugs and substance abuse and has little occurrence of disruptive behavior.

## **8.0 Methodology**

The study employed the quantitative method of research to collect data. Questionnaires were issued to the respondents who were mostly teachers and head teachers of the various primary schools that were picked randomly.

## **9.0 Results and discussion**

The research mainly focused on investigating the safety and security situation in the public primary schools as to whether the regular primary schools have conformed or not to the required safety standards as depicted by the safety policy. The study also attempted to address the issue of cultural activities and their impact on the safety of children in primary schools. The first objective was to investigate the safety and secureness of the environments in public primary schools. The study found out that 71% of the respondents said that the schools are not safe and secure with 29% admitting that schools are safe and the secure. The table below gives credence to the above sentiments.

**Table 1: Safety and secureness of schools**

<b>Response</b>	<b>frequency</b>	<b>%</b>
Safe and secure	4	29
Not safe and secure	10	71
<b>Total</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>100</b>

The respondents were also asked to state the threats to safety and secureness of school environments. The following table shows the results.

**Table 2: Threats to safety and secureness of school environments**

<b>Response</b>	<b>frequency</b>	<b>%</b>
Lack of adequate health care	7/14	50
Accidents	5/14	36
Wild animals	5/14	36
Harmful cultural practices	4/14	29
Hostile school environments	1/14	7

According to the above table, 50% of the respondents say that lack of adequate health care is the single most threat to safety and secureness of school environments. Most of the schools do not have dispensaries at their disposal to manage pupils in cases of accidents. Wild animals and accidents at 36% took the second slots of threats to schools.

The second objective was on the implementation of the safety policies in the schools.

**Table 3: Implementation of safety policies in schools**

<b>Response</b>	<b>frequency</b>	<b>%</b>
Yes	5	36
No	9	64
<b>Total</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>100</b>

According to the above table, it is evident that most of the public primary schools (64%) have not implemented the safety policy measures as required by the Ministry of Education.

**Table 4: Availability of the safety standards manual in schools**

Response	frequency	%
Yes	6	43
No	8	57
<b>Total</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>100</b>

According to the above results, it is evident that most of the public primary schools (57%) do not have the safety standards manual for schools in Kenya. The *safety standards manual* provides guidelines for safety of children in and out of the school environment in addition to giving ways of addressing threats to learners in and out of school.

**Table 5: Availability of the safety sub-committees in schools**

Response	frequency	%
Yes	0	0
No	14	100
<b>Total</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>100</b>

The above results clearly show at 100% that, majority of the public primary schools have not constituted safety sub-committees whose major responsibility is to oversee the safety of the schools.

The third objective was concerned with examining the effects of cultural activities on education in the public primary schools. The table below presents the findings.

**Table 6: Harmful cultural activities practiced around the schools**

Response	frequency	%
Female Genital Mutilation	7	50
Early marriages	7	50
<b>Total</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>100</b>



In table 6, Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and Early Marriages were cited as the two most common harmful cultural practices being practiced around the schools. The respondents additionally said that these harmful cultural activities leads to pupils especially girls dropping out of school, affects pupils performance in schools, as well as it may lead to death (FGM) due to bleeding or when giving birth (as an adult).

The last objective sought to find out whether the public primary schools have complied with or put in place the safety requirements for children with Special Needs in Education.

**Table 7: Compliance to safety requirements for children with Special Needs in Education**

Response	frequency	%
Yes	3	21
No	11	79
<b>Total</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>100</b>

According to the above table, majority of the schools at 79% have not put in place or complied with the safety requirement for children with Special Needs in Education.

### Conclusion

Many of our public primary schools have not conformed to the safety standards as required by the Ministry of Education in Kenya.

### Recommendations

1. All schools should be made or forced to adhere to the safety standards policy at all times in addition to having in possession of at least two copies of the *Safety Standards Manual for Schools in Kenya*. The safety of pupils should not be compromised under any circumstance.
2. Each public primary school should have in place a safety policy document which is known and owned by all including the parents.
3. Pupils should be taught drills on flood safety, safety during lightening, landslides, strong winds and fire out breaks.

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