

**INFLUENCE OF GOVERNANCE PRACTICES ON PROVISION OF SAFE
LEARNING ENVIRONMENT IN PUBLIC SECONDARY
SCHOOLS IN MAKUENI COUNTY,
KENYA**

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Administration of Machakos University, Kenya**

SEPTEMBER 2025

DECLARATION

Declaration by the Student

This research project is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other university or for any other award.

Signature.....

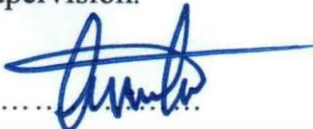
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DEDICATION

I dedicate this project to my spouse, Michael Mutie and children, Mutheu Ng'alu, , Eva Ng'alu and Evans Ng'alu for their continued support and encouragement during my studies.

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TABLE OF CONTENT

DECLARATION.....	ii
DEDICATION.....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT.....	iv
TABLE OF CONTENT.....	v
LIST OF TABLES	viii
LIST OF FIGURES	ix
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS	x
ABSTRACT.....	xi
CHAPTER ONE	1
INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 Overview	1
1.2 Background to the Study	1
1.3 Statement of the Problem	5
1.4 Purpose of the Study	6
1.5 Objectives of the Study	6
1.6 Research Questions	6
1.7 Significance of the Study	7
1.8 Limitations of the Study	8
1.9 Delimitation of the Study	8
1.10 Assumptions of the Study	9
1.11 Theoretical Framework	9
CHAPTER TWO	14
LITERATURE REVIEW	14
2.1 Introduction	14
2.2 The Concept of Safe Learning Environment.....	14
2.3 The Concept of Governance Practices	15
2.4 Compliance with Safety Standards/Guidelines and Safe Learning Environment	17
2.5 Stakeholder Participation and Safe Learning Environment	19
2.6 In-service Training Programmes and Safe Learning Environment.....	21
2.7 Summary of Literature Review and Research Gaps	23

CHAPTER THREE	26
RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY	26
3.1 Introduction	26
3.2 Research Methodology	26
3.3 Research Design	26
3.4 Location of Study	27
3.5 Target Population	29
3.6 Sampling and Sampling Techniques	29
3.7 Research Instruments	30
3.7.1 Questionnaire for Secondary School Teachers.....	30
3.7.2 Interview Guide for Principals and Members of School BoM.....	31
3.7.3 Document Checklist Analysis Guide for the Researcher	31
3.8 Piloting of Research Instruments	32
3.8.1 Validity of Research Instruments	32
3.8.2 Reliability	33
3.9 Data Collection Procedures	33
3.10 Data Analysis Procedures.....	34
3.11 Ethical Considerations.....	34
CHAPTER FOUR.....	35
PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS, INTERPRETATIONS AND DISCUSSION	35
4.1 Introduction	35
4.2 Response Rate	35
4.2.1 Gender of the Respondents.....	36
4.2.2 Level of Education of Respondents.....	37
4.2.3 Age of Teachers.....	39
4.2.4 Respondents' Work Experience	40
4.3 Provision of Safe Learning Environment.....	42
4.4 Compliance with Safety Standards/Guidelines and Provision of Safe Learning Environment.....	45
4.5 Stakeholder Participation and Provision of Safe Learning Environment.....	56

4.6 In-service Training Programmes and Provision of Safe Learning Environment	66
CHAPTER FIVE	74
SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	74
5.1 Introduction	74
5.2 Summary of Research Findings	74
5.2.1 Provision of Safe Learning Environment	74
5.2.2 Compliance with Safety Standards/Guidelines and Provision of Safe Learning Environment	75
5.2.3 Stakeholder Participation and Provision of Safe Learning Environment....	76
5.2.4 In-service Training Programmes and Provision of Safe Learning Environment.....	77
5.3 Conclusions	78
5.4 Recommendations of the Study.....	79
5.5 Suggestions for Further Research	80
APPENDICES	88
Appendix I: Introduction Letter	88
Appendix II: Informed Consent Form.....	89
Appendix III: Questionnaire for Secondary School Teachers.....	89
Appendix IV: Interview Guide for Principals and Members of School Board of Management	93
Appendix V: Document Checklist Analysis Guide for the Researcher	95
Appendix VI: Introduction Letter from the School of Postgraduate Studies of Machakos University.....	96
Appendix VII: Authorization Letter from National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation, NACOSTI	97
Appendix VIII: Research Authorization Letter from County Commissioner, Makueni	98
Appendix IX: The Map of Makueni County	99

LIST OF TABLES

Table 3.1: Target Population of the Study	29
Table 3.2: Sampling Matrix	30
Table 4.1: Response Rates	35
Table 4.2: Distribution of the Respondents by Gender.....	36
Table 4.3: Respondents' Level of Education	37
Table 4.4: Respondents' Ages in Years	39
Table 4.5: Respondents' Work Experience	40
Table 4.6: Provision of Safe Learning Environment	42
Table 4.7: Teachers' Views on the Influence of Compliance with Safety Standards and Guidelines on Provision of Safe Learning Environment	46
Table 4.8: Teachers' Views on the Influence of Stakeholder Participation on Provision of Safe Learning Environment	57
Table 4.9: Teachers' Views on the Influence of In-service Training Programmes on Provision of Safe Learning Environment.....	67

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1: The Conceptual Framework	11
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

BoM	Board of Management
CDE	County Director of Education
INSET	In-Service Trainings
MOE	Ministry of Education
NACADA	National Authority for the Campaign Against Alcohol and Drug Abuse
KICD	Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development
TSC	Teachers' Service Commission
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USA	United States of America

ABSTRACT

Governance practices adopted by schools play a key role in ensuring safe learning environment in schools. However, in public secondary schools in Makueni County, the situation is quite different with cases of accidents to learners and staff as well as destruction of school infrastructure being on the rise. Thus, the purpose of this was to investigate the influence of governance practices on provision of safe learning environment in public secondary schools in Makueni County, Kenya. The objectives were; assessing the influence of compliance with safety standards and guidelines, stakeholder participation and in-service training programmes on provision of safe learning environment. The study was guided by the Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory. The study adopted mixed methodology and applied quantitative and qualitative approaches. A descriptive research design was employed to collect and analyze data using questionnaires and interview guides. The target population comprised 400 principals, 3769 teachers and 5600 members of school BoM in public secondary schools in Makueni County totaling 9769 respondents from which a sample of 379 respondents was obtained using Yamane's Formula. Stratified sampling was used to create nine strata based on the number of sub-counties in Makueni County. From each sub-county, five principals and 20 members of school BoM were selected using purposive sampling. However, simple random sampling was applied to select 26 teachers. Questionnaires were used to collect quantitative data from teachers whereas interview guides were used to collect qualitative data from principals and members of school BoM. There was also document checklist analysis guide for the researcher. Piloting was conducted among 38 respondents from a sample of public secondary schools in Makueni County to establish validity and reliability. Validity was ascertained with the help of university supervisors and experts in educational administration. Reliability was determined using split-half technique and a reliability index, $r = 0.725$, between two 'halves' was obtained using Cronbach Alpha Method, which indicated high internal reliability. Data analysis began by identifying common themes. Qualitative data were analyzed thematically along the study objectives and presented in narrative forms. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages. Statistical Packages for Social Science (SPSS Version 29) was used to analyse data was presented using tables and percentages. The study revealed that provision of a safe learning environment poses significant challenges in many public secondary schools. Many of these schools have reported various incidents of accidents and injuries affecting both staff and students, alongside recurrent damage to physical facilities. This is partly attributed to the failure of such public secondary schools to adhere to safety standards and guidelines, rare stakeholder participation as well as irregular in-service training programmes on how to create safe learning environment in schools. Thus, the study recommends that principals should ensure that schools comply with safety standards and guidelines, establish a structured safety audit and monitoring system to ensure continuous compliance with safety standards and guidelines. They should actively engage all stakeholders in collaborative decision-making to ensure a safe learning environment. Principals should regularly conduct specialized training sessions on conflict resolution, mental health awareness and emergency preparedness for staff and students.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

This chapter outlines the study background, statement of the problem, purpose, objectives, research questions, significance, limitations, delimitations and assumptions of the study. Additionally, this chapter presents both theoretical and conceptual frameworks and provides operational definitions for key terms.

1.2 Background to the Study

A safe learning environment is an integral and indispensable component of the teaching and learning process. Actually, no meaningful teaching and learning can take place in an environment that is unsafe and insecure to both learners and staff. Good governance practices are essential for the success of any school. It is therefore important that school administrators facilitate safe and secure school environment. A safe and secure school environment enhances quality teaching and learning in educational institutions (Maxwell, Reynolds, Lee, Subasic & Bromhead, 2017).

According to Arum (2019), if students feel unsafe in school, they are less able to concentrate in class and perform poorly in assessments because feelings of safety are positively related to both behavioral and academic outcomes. This corroborates the assertions of Lussier and Fitzpatrick (2016) that a safe school is the foundation of a good education because when students feel safe, they learn better, teachers can become more effective when they know students are under control and can concentrate on their work. Although learning institutions provide security to staff and learners, many learning institutions around the world are experiencing potential threats to students' and staff safety (UNESCO, 2018).

The United States of America has established a guide for prevention and response to school safety (Federal Government of the United States of America, 2016). These include training school personnel on how to detect, prevent and respond to a violent individual within a school environment, security controls such as access controls, security procedures such as lock down and evacuation as well as rapid response to an incident in schools (Janel, 2017). In Spain, Díaz-Vicario and Sallán (2017) explored the concept of safety in learning institutions. It was noted that creating safe and healthy environments was not always an explicitly endorsed principle or goal for schools. However, all members of the educational community were involved in ensuring adequate levels of school safety and diverse management.

Organizational actions and measures were implemented to ensure physical, emotional and social safety which consequently influenced teaching and learning processes in schools. Van Jaaveld (2011) opined that there is a deep-rooted culture of violence in South African schools that has made schools unsafe and insecure. In response to school safety concerns, the Ministry of Education has developed safety measures and policies to be implemented by schools to improve school safety. Obegbulem (2011) affirms that, to overcome or minimize student mortality and injury rates in learning institutions, school administrators are mandated to plan, organize and facilitate communication and training on safety measures.

Sekiwu and Kabanda (2014) assert that several hazards in schools are attributed to failure to implement safety policies in Uganda. They established that school fires cost the lives of 20 students and two adults, thus the Minister for Education and Sports reported that the Inspector General of police had identified lack of safety provisions as being the main contributing factor to this disaster.

Kenya has a history of tragic school safety incidences blamed on failure to implement safety policies. Cases of mortality rates attributed to failure of implementing safety standards have been on the rise and, thus the Ministry of Education compiled a Safety and Standards Manual for use in all Kenyan schools Ministry of Education, 2018). The Safety and Standards Manual comprises of the following safety issues: safety in physical infrastructure, safety in school environment, health and hygiene safety, food safety, safety against alcohol, drug and substance abuse, safety in teaching and learning environments, social-cultural environment of the school, safety of children with special needs, safety against child abuse, transportation safety, school community relations and safety on school grounds (MoE, 2008).

The Manual embraces diverse issues that have influence on the safety of learners, personnel, parents and the catchment communities around the schools. Nthenya (2011) contends that in 2001, 68 students died at Kyanguli Secondary School in the then Machakos District due to dormitory fire. The deaths were attributed to lack of emergency exit doors and overcrowded dormitories. The death of eight girls at Moi Girls' High School in 2017 in Nairobi County was attributed to overcrowded dormitories and lack of fire extinguishers (Achuka, 2017). Cherono (2018) reported that seven students were injured at Jamhuri High School in Nairobi which was attributed to a religious related confrontation that broke out among the students. This is an indication that school safety is a national concern.

Daily Nation Wednesday, June 29, 2022 contends that thirteen Kakamega High School students were injured after they fell from the first floor of a building block as they left their classrooms. The injuries were attributed to a commotion that ensued when two students who tugged each other were pushed and the steel guard rails on the stairs came

off the stairs to the ground. The safety of the structure and design of the guard rails was questionable. The Daily Nation Newspaper of 4th Feb 2022 indicated about the stampede in Kakamega Primary school, in Kenya's Western region, where fourteen school children, nine girls and five boys died and dozens were critically injured. Some attributed the cause of the stampede to the pupils being barred from using one of the two stair cases in the building, which had been reserved for parents creating a surge. This questioned the safety of the learners in the three-storey building with respect to compliance of safety standards. This is an indication that school safety is a national concern.

In Makueni county, fire razed down a Maiani Girls mega dormitory in Mukaa sub-county where nothing was salvaged, however, no injuries were reported (Education News, 29th May 2021). A similar incident had earlier been reported in Mukaa Boys High School that left a dormitory in ashes and a consequent torching of two cubicles in another dormitory (Education News, 29th May 2021). KBC Nyaga (2021) reported about a 132-bed capacity dormitory that was burnt at Makindu Boys Secondary School in Makindu Sub-county, Makueni County where 7 students were found culpable. Teachers have an integral role in school safety because they are charged with the responsibility of helping students because they are in charge of classrooms full of students.

When an act of violence, terror or natural disaster occurs, teachers must be able to recognize threats, provide proper guidance should an attack take place or appropriately respond and address issues in the aftermath. It is imperative that they (teachers) be properly trained and confident in their ability to act, should the need arise (Lee, 2018). Teachers must also be provided with detailed instructions, on what to do, where to stay,

where there is closest exit and how to account for all students. The more tools and knowledge a teacher have, the stronger their ability will be to properly analyze the situation and make sound decisions to protect their students (Bal, 2021). Munyiri, Thinguri and Edabu (2020) found that in public secondary schools of Nairobi County, hiring of security personnel was an aspect of disaster risk management which is most influenced by school resource allocation. It is against this background that this study assessed the influence of governance practices in provision of a safe learning environment in public secondary schools in Makueni County, Kenya

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Governance practices contribute significantly to improving status of safety in schools. However, in many public secondary schools in Makueni County is quite different since provision of safe learning environment has been a challenge owing to many incidences of accidents, injuries, food poisoning and death still being reported. In the same token, cases of accidents in schools are on the increase and has become a great concern to education stakeholders. A report authored by Joint Monitoring Project (2022) indicates that cases of unsafe schools have been on the rise with 45.7% of injuries to students, 34.1% cases of food poisoning and 13.8% cases of attack from sanitation-related diseases. This paints a picture of deteriorating state of students' safety in public secondary schools.

To mitigate these challenges, there have been several legal and policy interventions by the government to improve the situation. The republic of Kenya 2013, has addressed the issue of children's rights to free and compulsory education. The TSC Act 2012, in its third schedule protects learners from sexual harassment and flirtation by their

teachers and together with this the government also banned corporal punishment through a circular (MoE, 2018).

Despite all these interventions and even with the publishing of the Safety and Standards Manual by the Ministry of Education in 2008, cases of insecurity and lack of safety are still rampant in schools. Thus, this study sought to investigate the extent to which governance practices influence provision of safe learning environment in public secondary schools.

1.4 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to examine the influence of governance practices on the provision of safe learning environment in public secondary schools in Makueni County.

1.5 Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives were;

- i. To establish compliance with safety standards guidelines on safe learning environment in public secondary schools in Makueni County.
- ii. To examine the influence of stakeholder's participation on safe learning environment in public secondary school in Makueni County.
- iii. To determine the influence of in-service training programs on safe learning environment in public secondary schools in Makueni County.

1.6 Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions;

- i. What is the extent of compliance with safety standards guidelines on safe learning environment in public secondary schools in Makueni County?
- ii. What is the level of influence of stakeholder's participation on safe learning environment in public secondary schools in Makueni County?

- iii. How do in-service training programmes influence safe learning environment in public secondary schools in Makueni County?

1.7 Significance of the Study

The study may benefit different individual and authorities in different ways. For instance, school administrators, teaching and non-teaching staff and students may find the study useful in gaining an insight on the need to adhere to safety standards and guidelines in their respective schools in orders to enhance school safety. Policymakers at the Ministry of Health may find the study useful in developing policy framework on provision of emergency facilities such as firefighting equipment, alarm systems, first aid facilities and training of staff in disaster management.

School administrators may be informed about how to deal with various safety issues in order to have a safer school and therefore better performance. Moreover, the results of the study may shed light on how to reduce instances of school fire, riots, strikes, suspensions, expulsions and other disruptive actions that cause suffering to both the students and school's teaching and learning practices. Teachers may also benefit from this study since proper implementation of the recommendations is likely to create an environment conducive to their teaching rather than to have their attention divided due to lack of school safety. Students who are the direct recipients of the output of this study may also benefit from the study since they may understand the importance of ensuring a safe social environment that may probably lead to their safety and proper learning.

Ministry of Education and Ministry of Health may benefit from this research on matters pertaining workability of the policies formulated and their impact on academic performance. The Kenyan government may benefit from this research since it promotes

positive attitude towards health and environmental protection as stipulated in goal 8 of the national goals of education. The study may be used by other scholars as a guide and point of reference in school safety studies.

1.8 Limitations of the Study

The study encountered quite a number of limitations. For example, the respondents, particularly, the school BoM members were, at first, concealing crucial data fearing that the information obtained could be used against them. To overcome this limitation, they were assured that the data collected would be used for research only and their identity would be concealed. It was also anticipated that getting the principals would be difficult due to their busy schedules. This was overcome by early booking of appointments and adjustment of time for data collection where necessary. Accessing critical documents on the status of safety of students like the number of accidents and infrastructure destroyed posed a challenge, but the researcher provided all research permits that authorized collection of data and created rapport with the respondents.

1.9 Delimitation of the Study

The study was conducted only in public secondary schools in Makueni County. Private secondary schools in the County were not included in the study since they are differently governed. Governance practices in all public secondary schools is uniform and is guided by policies issued by the Ministry of Education and the Basic Education Act (2013). The governance practices in private schools are influenced a lot by the wishes of the directors and so there is no uniformity. The target population was drawn from school principals, teachers and BoM members since they are the school administrators. The study was delimited to three aspects of governance which include ensuring adherence to safety standards, participation of stakeholders and organization

of in-service safety trainings. The study was conducted between July and September 2024.

1.10 Assumptions of the Study

In the study, it was assumed that teachers, principals and school board members had basic form of knowledge on school safety that may help them to achieve the study objectives. All the schools had a safety standard policy to ensure school safety, and compliance level vary among public secondary schools.

1.11 Theoretical Framework

The study was guided by Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory developed in 1943 and modernized in 2010 by a team of psychologists such as Ed Diener of the University of Illinois in United States of America. This theory argues that while people aim to meet basic needs, they seek to meet successively higher needs in the form of a pyramid. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs has often been represented in a hierarchical pyramid with five levels. The four levels (lower order needs) are considered physiological needs, while the top level of the pyramid is considered growth needs. The fact that lower-level needs must be satisfied before higher order needs can influence behavior.

According to Pfeifer (1998), to develop and learn, we need to make sure that we maintain safety be it in lives or in our jobs. We need certain steadiness in our lives and we need to be well organized in every aspect in our daily lives such as feeling secure where ever we are. Safety constitutes one of the essential human needs, as postulated by Abraham Maslow in his hierarchy of needs theory on human motivation (Maslow & Lowry, 1979). In this work, the researcher addressed occupational, safety and health

which builds on and improves Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory, thus prioritizing safety.

This theory is relevant to this study because it prioritizes safety as the second level after basic human needs. In regard to this study, for a school to achieve its education mission it is important to make students feel safe and secure. Depriving students of a safe and secure learning environment is simply denying them their fundamental human right. Students need to feel safe in the environment in which they are learning without external threats because if they feel like they could potentially be harmed, this level of achievement would not be met. It is imperative that all educational administrators promote a safe learning environment in all institutions.

1.12 Conceptual Framework

In this study, the conceptual framework was based on governance practices such as compliance with Ministry of Education Safety Standards and guidelines, stakeholder participation and in-service training programmes which constituted the independent variables whereas safe learning environment in public secondary schools constituted the dependent variables. Students' discipline, culture and attitude constituted intervening variables as shown in Figure 1.1;

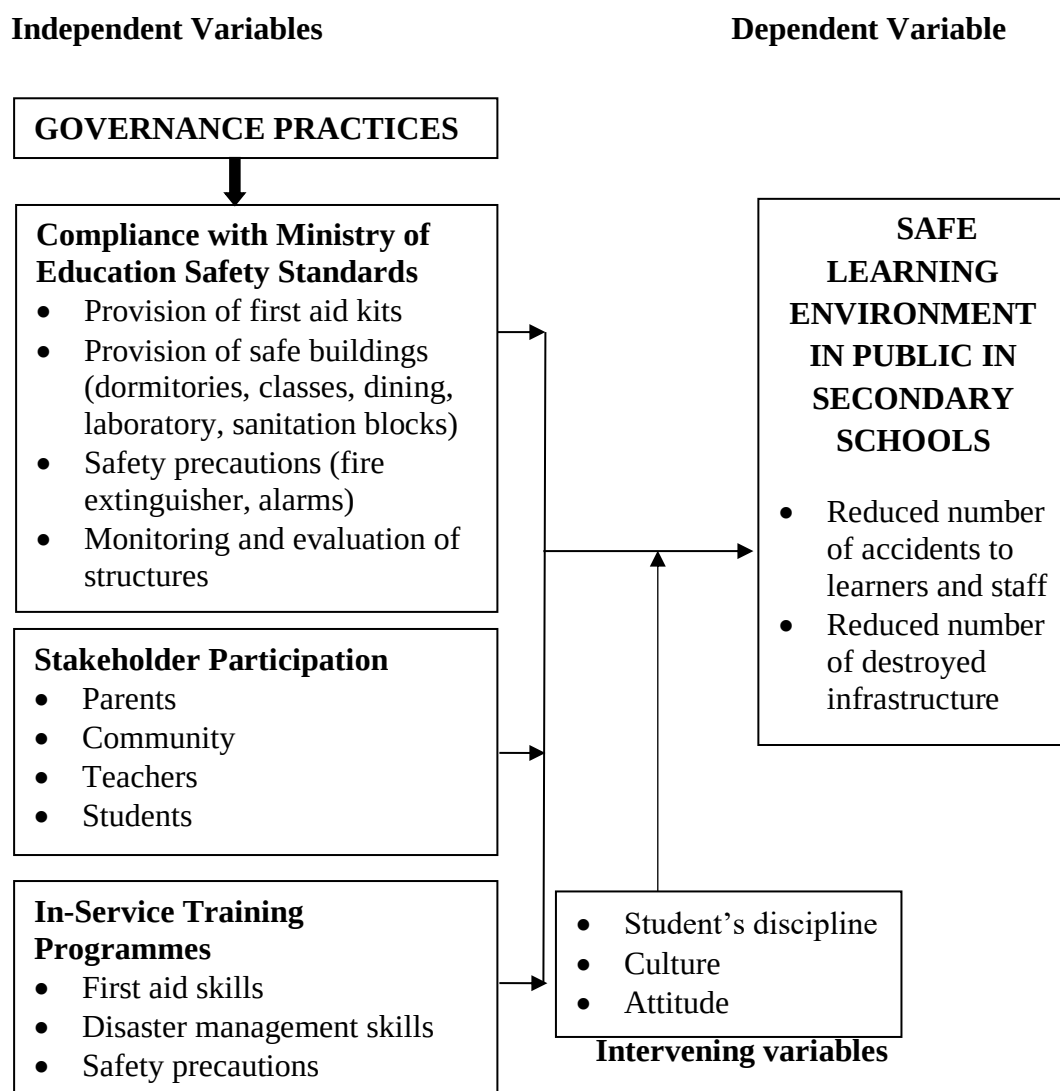


Figure 1.1: The Conceptual Framework

Source: Researcher (2025)

Figure 1.1 shows the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. It shows how governance practices such as ensuring compliance with Ministry of Education safety standards, involving stakeholders in governance and in service training on safety measures may result to a safe learning environment. When students and teachers are in a safe environment, that comprises of safe school compound, safe classrooms, safe dormitories and have a functional First Aid kits there will be quality teaching and learning, hence, improved performance. However, there are some intervening factors such as attitude, culture, student's discipline and natural calamities. Despite well laid out governance structures implementation may be hindered by negative attitude of teachers, students and parents whereas different cultures may also be in conflict with school policies. Even with well laid down safety measures, natural calamities like floods may also compromise the safety of learners.

1.13 Operational Definition of Terms

Compliance to the Ministry of Education Safety Standards and Guidelines: refers

to meeting the laid down laws and protocols by regulatory bodies as per Safety Standards Manual for Schools in Kenya.

Governance Practices: a set of activities undertaken by public secondary schools to ensure that safe learning environment is created in the schools.

Guidelines: recommended practices that the school should undertake to meet the safety standards.

In-Service Training Programmes: are activities undertaken by public secondary schools to equip teachers with knowledge, skills and competencies on how to ensure safety in schools.

Safe Learning Environment: refers to a well-managed school setting that is free of potential hazards whether physical, psychological or social, that promote teaching learning process.

School Safety: the measures undertaken by the students, staff, parents and other stakeholders to either reduce or eradicate risky conditions or threats that may cause accidents, bodily injury as well as emotional and psychological distress.

Stakeholder Participation: refers to involvement of learners, teachers, parents, local community members, sponsors, Parents-Association members and the School Board of Management in realizing a safe learning environment.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides the literature on the concept of safe learning environment, concept of governance practices and the influence of compliance with safety standards and guidelines, stakeholder participation and in-service training programmes on provision of safe learning environment. The researcher presents divergent views which are critical to different authors who raised various versions related to the issues being investigated. It also provides a summary of the literature review citing the research gaps identified during the review.

2.2 The Concept of Safe Learning Environment

A safe learning environment is a fundamental foundation for effective education, fostering an atmosphere that nurtures the holistic development of students. It extends beyond mere physical safety to encompass emotional, psychological, and social wellbeing. A well-managed school setting is characterized by an absence of potential hazards and a deliberate effort to promote a conducive teaching learning process. Physically, safety in a learning environment involves ensuring that the school infrastructure is sound, free from structural deficiencies, and equipped with necessary safety measures. This includes proper lighting, secure building structures, and well-maintained facilities to prevent accidents and injuries.

Adequate fire safety measures, emergency exits, and first aid provisions contribute to the physical well-being of students and staff. According to Nussbaum (2019), psychological safety is equally vital in creating an environment conducive to learning.

This encompasses strategies to address issues such as bullying, discrimination, or any form of harassment.

A safe learning environment recognizes the importance of mental health, providing support mechanisms for students facing challenges. This includes access to counseling services, initiatives to reduce stress, and awareness programs to promote mental well-being. Socially, a safe learning environment is built on a foundation of inclusivity and respect for diversity (Kumar, O'Malley & Johnston, 2021). It promotes positive relationships among students and between students and teachers.

Inclusive policies and practices ensure that every student, regardless of background or abilities, feels accepted and valued within the school community. This inclusivity fosters a sense of belonging, contributing to a positive social environment. Effective governance practices play a pivotal role in establishing and maintaining a safe learning environment. Policies and procedures need to be in place, regularly updated, and consistently enforced. Additionally, strong leadership that prioritizes safety, communication, and collaboration among stakeholders contributes to the overall success of creating a secure educational setting.

2.3 The Concept of Governance Practices

Governance is a set of responsibilities and procedures exercised by an institution or government to provide strategic direction to ensure educational objectives are achieved through effective and efficient use of resources, accountability, and participation of people in decision making. Good governance in education is concerned with how a school system composes the policies; allocate funds, teacher preparation, and general school administration (Khalique, 2018). School governance is therefore responsible for school effectiveness, quality, and accountability.

Good governance is a major factor in improving the quality of education. Poor governance results to various challenges facing the educational system in the developing countries particularly in Kenya. In education, ineffective governance derails educational standards leading to inefficiency in service delivery, poor student performance and the accompanying corruption (Abdullahi, 2018). He further states that improved governance has been known to go a long way in curbing mismanagement, demonizing corruption and ultimately improving overall efficiency in offering educational services.

Secondary school governance practices describe the framework that guides the school Boards of Management in fulfilling its mandate in the management of schools. The Kenya Government established the Board of Management under the Education Act Cap. 211 in 1968 which is currently the Basic Education Act (2013). According to Education Act Cap 211, the Board of management has specific powers in the task of managing secondary schools. The BoM has a common seal and may use or be used in its corporate name. The Board of Management governs secondary schools and manage teachers according to stipulation of the TSC Act. They also manage the school according to the code of management approved by the Ministry of Education (MoE) and the Human Resources development.

The Basic Education Act (2013) stipulates that the Boards of management membership should consist of a maximum of 14 members including the principal who serves as the board's secretary. The Board governs through meetings and delegation. The Board delegates most of its functions to committees; academic standards committee, quality and environment committee, discipline, ethics and integrity committees, Audit committees and human rights and students' welfare committees. Most of the day-to-

day governance is delegated to the school principal who is the Board's secretary and the school's chief executive officer. Some of the roles of Board of management includes to promote the best interest of the institution and to ensure its development.

2.4 Compliance with Safety Standards/Guidelines and Safe Learning Environment

Safety Standards Manual is a document that the school should use to maintain a Safe, Secure and Caring environment that fosters teaching and learning. UNICEF (2009) proposes that schools should have resources and procedures in place to deal swiftly and decisively with specific dangers to children health and safety like warning systems, training teachers and students in simple first-aid skills, installing fire extinguishers and emergency lighting, scheduling evacuation drills and creating designated assembly points, safe areas and ways of calling for assistance. Ogunyemi (2019) assessed the enforcement of health and safety standards in primary and nursery schools in Nigeria.

The sample comprised of 97 teachers. Data was collected using questionnaires and observation schedules. Findings showed that the classroom spaces and playground did not meet the specified minimum standards for a learning institution. Generally, the teachers perceived the governance practices as not efficient enough to enforce health and safety standards. Marowanidze (2016) examined the extent of fire hazards in secondary schools in Zimbabwe. This study adopted a case study research design. The sample was 53 respondents which included 35 students, four head teachers, ten teachers, and four key informants. Data was collected using questionnaires, interviews, focused group discussions, observations and documentary analysis.

Findings showed that the secondary schools faced various fire related hazards which were related to grass fires, poor waste management, poor housekeeping and electric

faults. Wanderi (2018) sought to find out the status of school safety and how it influenced the teaching and learning process in public secondary schools in Nairobi and Nyeri counties, Kenya. The study adopted a descriptive survey design. The target population was 293 principals and deputy principals, 50155 students and two County Quality Assurance & Standards officers. Stratified and simple random sampling was used in sampling the study respondents. Data was collected using questionnaires and interview schedules.

Findings showed that the school physical facilities were not safe and majority of schools' doors and windows were not as per the requirement of safety standards manual. Findings also revealed that school safety influenced teaching and learning processes in schools. Alunga and Maiyo (2019) examined effect of crime prevention measures on students' safety in public boarding secondary schools in Trans-Nzoia County. The study adopted mixed research designs. The target was 20 principals, 143 teachers, 220 students, and 20 school security officers. Simple random and purposive sampling was used to sample the respondents. Data was collected using questionnaires, interview schedule and focus groups.

Findings showed that majority of the schools had not complied with the Ministry of Education safety standards, majority of the teachers, students and non-teaching staffs were not trained and aware of the safety measures. Mong'are (2015) studied the status of safety measures and how it affected performance in public primary schools in Kilifi Sub-County, Kenya. The study employed a descriptive survey research design. The study target was 4797 respondents and simple random sampling was used to select 479 respondents.

Questionnaires and interview schedules were used for data collection. The study revealed that the schools were in pathetic condition because they had not implemented basic safety measures.

2.5 Stakeholder Participation and Safe Learning Environment

Schools are considered as places which provide appropriate learning environment for learners, but the importance of stakeholders cannot be ignored. Indisputably, they contribute significantly to various components of learners particularly in improving their academic performance. Their pivotal role still continues to be recognized by schools as they are essential for the complete development of the personality and career of learners. More so, stakeholders have a very important impact on the learners' growth and development (De Torres, 2021).

Stakeholder involvement means working with people and using the resources as they are and helping them to work together to realize agreed ends and goals (Bartle, 2017). A skilled manager looks for ways in which the interests and ability of each individual can contribute to the good of the whole. Given that the government has provided compulsory education for all, it is imperative that the school management involves all stakeholders in the decision-making process. Compliance of the school safety standards is a major responsibility of the school stakeholders.

Key stakeholders in a school are the principals, teachers, students, support staff, parents, Board of Management, the community surrounding the school and the law enforcement officers (MoE, 2018). Díaz-Vicario and Sallán (2017) studied the best measures to manage school safety in Spain. The study sample included ten school principals, six occupational risk coordinators, 24 teaching and non-teaching staff and 21 parents. Data

was collected using questionnaires, interview schedules, focus group discussions, and document analysis. Findings showed that there are specific practices schools develop in order to maintain good levels of physical safety. The entire educational community was involved in promoting comprehensive school safety, although school principals played a central role in its promotion. Mgomezulu (2016) study on the extent to which the school train prefects in Botswana established that involvement of prefects in the management aspects of the school was high. The involvement of prefects in the management aspects of the school helped to improve discipline in the school.

Sekiwu and Kabanda (2014) investigated the relationship between mutual commitment and management of health and safety in secondary schools in Uganda. This study adopted a cross-sectional survey design. The target was collected from 31 public and private schools. Data was collected from the head teachers, deputy head teachers, teachers, security officers, and school nurses. The findings were that stakeholders were involved in school administration to a very small extent. Ensuring health and safety in the secondary schools demanded for collaboration between school administrators and all stakeholders.

Gichohi (2015) studied the influence of stakeholder involvement on school performance in public primary schools in Nakuru County. The study adopted ex post facto research design. The target population was 60 public primary schools. Simple random sampling was used in sampling 52 schools. Questionnaires and interview guides were used to collect data. Findings revealed that majority of the schools had embraced stakeholder involvement in school governance. The school management committees were very active in decision making process to improve school safety.

Chepkurui (2017) studied influence of school management practices on students' compliance with safety standards in public secondary schools in Kikuyu sub-county, Kiambu County. The study adopted a descriptive survey design. The sample was 17 principals, 17 heads of guidance and counseling, and 2014 student leaders. Data was collected using questionnaires and interview schedules. Findings showed that students' involvement influenced students' adherence to safety standards. Involvement in decision making made them feel they are part of the decision makers and are more likely to follow decisions made by administrators.

2.6 In-service Training Programmes and Safe Learning Environment

According to Okumbe (2015), in service training is the process of providing employees with specific knowledge and skills in order to enable them to perform specific tasks better. It is a short-term process which utilizes procedures by which non managerial Personnel learn technical knowledge. On the job training provides an opportunity for workers to learn in a relevant way. According to Itegi (2012), in service training increases the staff personnel's productivity by helping them to improve the quality and quantity of their work. It develops their productivity which enhances capabilities and their job satisfaction.

In-service training promotes efficiency and effectiveness in their job thus reducing the management problems associated with absenteeism, turnover and job restrictions among the teachers. Musyoka (2021), Health and Safety training programs are concerned with protecting staff and other people affected by what the organization produces and does. It aims at protecting staff against the hazards arising from their employment or their link with the organization. Occupational Health Training Programs deals with the prevention of ill health arising from working conditions. The

safety training should outline the preventive and protective measures to the effect that appropriate precautions shall be taken to ensure that all workplaces are safe and without risk of injury to the safety and health of workers. Emphasis is also made in so far as information and training is concerned to the effect that workers shall be adequately and suitably informed of potential safety and health hazards to which they may be exposed at their work (Kyalo, 2016).

According to the Safety Standards Manual (2008), when safety training is provided for students, indicators for safety such as active participation of school programs, sense of ownership and low incidences of indiscipline are noted. Training such as fire drills, fire marshals, first aid and evacuation procedures in case of a fire break out go a long way in prevention of or lessening the effects of a disaster. Geissler (2015) explored the relationship between teacher training and their perception on school safety. The study employed a mixed methods research design. Data was collected using survey monkeys. Findings showed that more than 50% of the teachers had received training which helped them to feel more confident in responding to risks and violent students. Additional training in safety drills helped them to manage risks better.

Sayedwali (2016) studied effectiveness of teachers In Service Trainings (INSET). Data was collected from 103 teachers using questionnaires. Findings revealed that the teachers yearned for further training and were ready to take part in INSET programs. Both female and male teachers had similar opinions regarding trainers' capabilities and they opined that INSET was very effective in equipping teachers with safety skills. Oguye (2015) investigated extent to which public secondary schools in Borabu, Kisii County had implemented recommended Safety Standards. The study target was 21 secondary schools and stratified sampling was used in sampling 11 schools. The sample

was 11 principals, and 44 teachers. Data was collected using questionnaires, interview schedules, and observation checklists. The study showed that the status of school safety was in a bad state. The main challenge to compliance with safety standards was staff and students' training. Ng'ang'a (2012) study on factors influencing compliance with safety standards guidelines in secondary schools in Nyeri district established that there was no training of students on safety, all the principals were only trained on first aid administration. The study concluded that lack of training of students influenced compliance with safety standards manual.

Makokha, Enose, Simatwa and Were (2021) studied influence of safety standards training on the implementation of safety standards in boarding schools in Rangwe Sub-County, Kenya. The study adopted a descriptive and correlational research designs. The study target was 22 principals, four head teachers of boarding primary schools, 242 teachers in boarding Secondary, and 35 teachers in boarding primary. Data was collected using questionnaires, interview schedule, observation schedule and document analysis guide.

Findings showed that safety standard training influence implementation of safety standards by equipping head teachers, deputy teachers, support staff and students with desired skills and knowledge in the management of school safety standards. It also creates awareness on the importance of school safety standards guidelines and it also provides information on various hazards and their avoidance.

2.7 Summary of Literature Review and Research Gaps

The studies in the literature reviewed have shown that governance practices influence safety standards in learning institutions.

Majority of the schools particularly in Kenya have not complied with safety standards as stipulated by the ministry of education. Wanderi (2018) found that school physical facilities were not safe and majority of schools' doors and windows were not as per the requirement of safety standards manual. Alunga and Maiyo (2019) found that majority of the schools had not complied with the ministry of education safety standards, majority of the teachers, students and non-teaching staffs were not trained and aware of the safety measures. Mong'are (2015) revealed that the schools were in pathetic condition because they had not implemented basic safety measures.

Gichohi (2015) found that school management committees were very active in decision making process to improve school safety. Oguiye (2015) found that the main challenge to compliance with safety standards was staff and students' training. Makokha et al (2021) showed that safety standard training influence implementation of safety standards by equipping head teachers, deputy teachers, support staff and students with desired skills and knowledge in the management of school safety standards.

From the studies, various gaps have been identified; first is the locale gap whereby some studies were conducted in developed countries like Spain in Europe and New Jersey in America. The developed countries have better policies regarding safety standards in learning institutions and their economy is capable of supporting learning institutions to install safety measures. On the contrary learning institutions particularly public secondary schools in a developing country like Kenya depends on well-wishers, parents and the community support to develop school infrastructure. Some these structures like the dormitories are constructed with an urgent need of reducing congestions and safety measures are not always put into consideration. This study focusses on public secondary schools in Makueni county. Scope gaps have been

identified whereby some researchers focused either on nursery schools, primary schools, private schools, or boarding schools. The scope differs with the current study which focuses on public secondary schools. The methodology gap is mainly on data collection tools, research design and sample size. For instance, one study sampled only 57 respondents which is considered very small and might affect study outcomes especially in cases of a low response rate, hence the need for this study.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This section outlines how the study was conducted. It covers research design, the target population, sample size and sampling techniques, research instruments, instrument validity and instrument reliability, data collection, data analysis techniques and ethical considerations.

3.2 Research Methodology

The study adopted mixed methodology and applied both quantitative and qualitative approaches. In this study, the researcher used the strength of both quantitative and qualitative approaches to reinforce each other. According to Creswell (2014), in quantitative method, the researcher asks specific questions and collects quantifiable data from a large number of participants. In this case, data were collected using questionnaires. At the same time, qualitative data were collected by relying on the views of participants and collecting data consisting largely of words from the participants. In this case, data were collected using interviews.

3.3 Research Design

These included a descriptive survey design for the quantitative aspect using questionnaires and a qualitative exploratory design using interviews for in-depth understanding of governance practices and their influence on safe learning environments. This is because according to Creswell (2014), to address the quantitative aspect, descriptive survey research design uses a quantitative research method of collecting quantifiable information to be used for statistical analysis of the sample. In other words, descriptive research design aims at describing the current state of affairs

(Kumar,R, 2012). In the same token, Creswell (2017) asserts that descriptive research design is an established research method that is used extensively in a wide variety of disciplines, particularly in the social sciences by either interviewing or administering a questionnaire to a sample of individuals when collecting information about people's attitude, opinions, habits or a variety of education or social issues.

This design enabled a researcher to closely examine the data within a specific context to get desired descriptive information. Besides, this design was suitable in this study since it resulted in well-validated and substantiated quantitative findings. In this case, data were collected using questionnaires. However, to implement the qualitative method, the phenomenological research design was applied for this is an approach to qualitative research that focuses on the commonality of a lived experience within a particular group. According to Creswell (2014), the fundamental goal of the approach is to arrive at a description of the nature of the particular phenomenon.

In this study, this design was relevant in that respondents had the opportunity to express their views and lived experiences with regard to the influence of governance practices on provision of safe learning environment in public secondary schools. In this case, data were collected using interviews. The results of quantitative and qualitative methods were then merged and triangulated concurrently to provide adequate interpretations of the variables under investigations.

3.4 Location of Study

This study was conducted in Makueni County which has a population of 987, 653 persons and an area coverage of 8, 008.9 km² which translates into a population density of 124 persons per square kilometer (KNBS, 2019). The map of Makueni County is

shown in Appendix VIII. The county lies between Latitude $1^{\circ} 35'$ and $32^{\circ} 00'$ South and Longitude $37^{\circ} 10'$ and $38^{\circ} 30'$ East. Climatic conditions are generally arid and semi-arid. Makueni County has distinctive highlands of Kilungu and Mbooni and the rest is expansive dry lower lands. The main economic activities in this county are subsistence agriculture, charcoal and sand business.

The county has nine sub-counties which are Makueni, Kilungu, Mukaa, Kibwezi, Kathonzweni, Makindu, Mbooni East, Mbooni West and Nzau. It is located in the lower South Eastern region of Kenya. It borders Machakos County to the North, Taita Taveta County to the South, Kitui County to the East and Kajiado County to the west. It has its headquarters at Wote Town which is about 140 kilometers from Nairobi. The county has various categories of schools ranging from national schools to sub-county schools, boys' schools and girls' schools, public and private schools.

The total number of registered public secondary schools as per the MoE data in Makueni County is 400 public secondary schools (MoE Makueni County, 2024). The study was conducted in Makueni County since, as noted earlier, cases of accidents in schools are on the increase and with this, parents, educational administrators and other stakeholders have become more concerned about the safety of the school environment to the learners. The study was conducted in Makueni County given rising concerns over accidents in schools. Kioko and Mungai (2020) reported recurrent unrest and arson incidents damaging school infrastructure in the county prompting this study in Makueni.

3.5 Target Population

The target population comprised 400 principals, 3769 teachers and members of School Board of Management from the 400 public secondary schools in Makueni County totaling 9769 respondents as shown in Table 3.1;

Table 3.1: Target Population of the Study

Respondents	Target Population
Principals	400
Teachers	3769
Members of School Board of Management	5600
Total	9769

3.6 Sampling and Sampling Techniques

In this section, the study highlighted the sampling techniques which were adopted and the procedures for the determination of the sample size. This was suitable since it yielded a precise and finite sample size which was highly representative based on a finite target population at a high confidence level. The researcher used Yamane's Formula for sample size determination to calculate the sample size for this study. The procedure is shown below:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e^2)}$$

Where, n = desired sample size at 95% confidence interval

N= Target Population

e = Margin of error at 5% (decimal equivalent is 0.05)

Thus, the desired sample was:

$$n = \frac{9769}{1 + 9769(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = 379 \text{ respondents}$$

Stratified sampling was used to create nine strata based on the number of sub-counties in Makueni County based.

This sampling method ensured samples obtained were homogeneous, uniform and has a high degree of proportional representation from every stratum. From each sub-county, five (5) principals and 20 members of school Board of Management (4 per sampled school) were selected using purposive sampling considering schools which have had cases of lack of safety for the last five years. However, simple random sampling was applied to select 26 teachers to avoid bias as shown in Table 3.2;

Table 3.2: Sampling Matrix

Respondents	Target Population	Sample Size	Sampling Method
Principals	400	45	Purposive sampling
Teachers	3769	234	Simple random sampling
Members of School BoM	5600	100	Purposive sampling
Total	9769	379	

3.7 Research Instruments

These are tools that were used to gather information about the specific set of themes based on the research objectives. These included questionnaires for teachers, interviews for principals and members of school BoM and document checklist analysis guide for the researcher.

3.7.1 Questionnaire for Secondary School Teachers

The study applied a self-designed questionnaire with both closed and open-ended test items to collect quantitative data from secondary school teachers (Appendix III). This is because, according to Morse (2010), a questionnaire is a research instrument consisting of a series of questions and other prompts to gather information from respondents and is often designed for statistical analysis of the response. In other words, questionnaires are good in data collection because they offer a considerable advantage in administration.

Questionnaires can be administered to a large number of people simultaneously and provide an investigation with an easy accumulation of data. Questionnaires give respondents the freedom to express their views and to make suggestions. The questionnaires are appropriate in the descriptive research design (Bryman, 2012). The questionnaire for teachers had four thematic areas. Part A focused on the demographics, part B on level of compliance with Ministry of Education safety and standards guidelines, part C on stakeholders' involvement, and part D on INSETS. The test items containing 5-point Likert type of questions based on the research objectives were relevant since according to Creswell (2014), the Likert scale illustrates a scale with theoretically equal intervals among responses.

3.7.2 Interview Guide for Principals and Members of School BoM

In this study, the researcher used structured interview guides with open-ended test items to gather qualitative information from principals and members of school BoM (Appendix IV). The interview guide suited this study because it made the principals to open up and give enough information for the study. The questions were on principals' demographics, level of compliance with Ministry of Education safety and standard guidelines, stakeholders' involvement in school governance and INSETS. Interviews were also important for this study since they enabled the researcher to ask probing and supplementary questions in line with the study objectives.

3.7.3 Document Checklist Analysis Guide for the Researcher

In this study, the document analysis guide provided primary data to corroborate the views expressed by different participants regarding the study objectives. In this case, the researcher undertook an analysis of the school records to ascertain the status of school safety and governance practices in terms of levels of compliance with safety

standards and guidelines as outlined by the Ministry of Education, extent of stakeholder participation and how often INSETs are organized for teachers on school safety.

3.8 Piloting of Research Instruments

Piloting of research instruments was conducted among 38 respondents from a sample of public secondary schools in Makueni County since according to Kothari (2005), a pilot sample should constitute 10% of the study sample. In this case, this was 10.0% of 379. The purpose of piloting was to check on the suitability and the clarity of the questions on the instruments designed, the relevance of the information being sought and the appropriateness of the language used.

The results of the piloting were also used to pretest the research instruments to validate and ascertain their reliability. It also anticipated the problems or challenges the respondents encounter such as interpretation while filling out the questionnaires and time management for the data collection. In addition, the interview schedules were given trial runs to ensure that questions were worded and drew an appropriate range of responses which assisted the researcher to identify areas of revision.

3.8.1 Validity of Research Instruments

Content validity of the research instruments was achieved through validation by three experts, two supervisors and one professional in Educational Administration and planning at the Machakos University. The validity was assessed by harmonization of the three research instruments since they cover similar overlapping themes that complement each other for accuracy and meaningfulness. The items that were not consistent were rejected and some were changed.

The researcher sought an expert judgment to assess whether questions perfectly represented the concept of study and also sought help from the supervisors to improve content validity.

3.8.2 Reliability

Split-half technique was used to establish the reliability of the test items. In this case, the test items were administered once to a group of respondents and the results divided into two equal parts known as 'halves'. Cronbach Alpha Method was used to establish the reliability index between the two 'halves'. The closer the Cronbach Alpha Coefficient is to 1, the higher the internal consistency of the test items in the scale. In this study, a reliability coefficient, $r = 0.725$, was obtained, which indicated high internal reliability and was acceptable.

3.9 Data Collection Procedures

The researcher sought an introductory letter from The Graduate School of Machakos University and an Authorization Letter and Research Permit from National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI). The researcher also sought an authorization letter from the County Commissioner and County Director of Education, Makueni. After obtaining the research permit and letters of authorization, the researcher booked appointments with the respondents to administer questionnaires and conduct interviews. Questionnaires were administered to the respondents to collect quantitative data with the help of a research assistant who was trained for five days. The duly filled questionnaires were collected and safely stored for data analysis. At the same time, the interviews were conducted to collect qualitative data from the respondents.

3.10 Data Analysis Procedures

Data analysis began by identifying common themes. Relevant information was broken into phrases or sentences, which reflected a single, specific thought. The responses to the close-ended items were assigned codes and labels. Frequency counts of the responses were obtained to generate information about the respondents. Qualitative data were analyzed thematically along the study objectives and presented in narrative forms. Quantitative data were analyzed descriptively using frequencies and percentages with the help of Statistical Packages for Social Science (SPSS Version 29). This tested the relationship between different governance practices and provision of safe learning environment in public secondary schools at 95.0% confidence interval. The quantitative findings were presented using tables.

3.11 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations are essential for any research and are usually put in place to discourage falsifying data but rather encourage truthfulness and quest for knowledge. The researcher adhered to informed consent of the respondents and sensitize them about the nature cum procedures of the research. The researcher assured the participants about utmost confidentiality and privacy of the information obtained from them to enhance openness and most importantly request anonymity of the respondents on the instruments.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS, INTERPRETATIONS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the study. For clarity and chronology, it is arranged according to the four research questions that the study sought to answer. In the first section, however, demographic information about the respondents is presented, because it might be pertinent in interpreting the data that they provided.

4.2 Response Rate

In this study, 234 questionnaires were administered to teachers and, in return, 228 questionnaires were filled and returned. The researcher interviewed 38 principals and 76 members of school BoM. This yielded response rates shown in Table 4.1;

Table 4.1: Response Rates

Respondents	Sampled Respondents	Those Who Participated	Achieved Return Rate (%)
Principals	45	38	84.4
Teachers	234	228	97.4
Members of School BoM	100	76	76.0
Total	379	342	90.2

Table 4.2 shows that principals registered a response rate of 84.4%, teachers registered 97.4% whereas the members of school BoM registered a response rate of 76.0%. This yielded an average response rate of 90.2%, which is consistent with the assertions of Creswell (2018) that a response rate above 75.0% is adequate. This information was important since it allowed the researcher to generalize the study outcomes to the target population.

4.3 Respondents' Demographic Information

The research instruments solicited demographic information from the respondents. This included gender, level of education, age and experience. This was necessary because this variable could influence their ability to supply credible information about the research objectives.

4.3.1 Gender of the Respondents

Information about the distribution of the respondents by gender was collected and the results are shown in Table 4.2:

Table 4.2: Distribution of the Respondents by Gender

Gender	Principals		Teachers		Members of School BoM	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
Male	24	63.2	138	60.5	44	57.9
Female	14	36.8	90	39.5	32	42.1
Total	38	100.0	228	100.0	76	100.0

Table 4.3 shows that majority, 24(63.2%), of the principals were male whereas 14(36.8%) were female. In the same token, majority, 138(60.5%), of the teachers were male whereas their female counterparts constituted 90(39.5%). Similarly, slightly more than half, 44(57.9%), of the members of School BoM were male while female members were 32(42.1%). These data reveal that there was adequate gender parity at all levels of the study and that the extent to which governance practices influence the provision of safe learning environment in secondary schools is of great concern to male and female stakeholders. This indicates that gender differences often shape individuals' experiences, perceptions, and needs regarding school safety. Understanding these variations allows the researcher to assess whether governance policies effectively address the concerns of all students. School safety concerns may differ based on gender.

For instance, female students may be more vulnerable to harassment or lack of proper sanitation facilities, while male students might face different forms of bullying or disciplinary challenges. Without gender-disaggregated data, governance reforms may fail to account for these specific concerns, leading to ineffective or biased policies. Moreover, gender data helps policymakers implement inclusive safety measures. By analyzing governance practices through a gender lens, researchers can determine whether policies are equitably benefiting all students or if adjustments are needed to ensure fairness.

This information is vital for fostering gender-responsive governance, where decision-making considers the needs of both male and female students. Additionally, teachers and administrators benefit from gender-specific insights, enabling them to create strategies that promote a safe learning environment for everyone. Ultimately, collecting gender information enhances policy effectiveness, ensures inclusivity, and contributes to a holistic approach to school safety governance.

4.3.2 Level of Education of Respondents

The research tools elicited information on the level of education of principals, teachers and Members of School BoM. Results are shown in Table 4.3;

Table 4.3: Respondents' Level of Education

Level of Education	Principals		Teachers		Members of School BoM	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
Diploma	0	0.0	50	21.9	25	32.9
Bachelors' Degrees	25	65.8	148	64.9	42	55.3
Postgraduate	13	34.2	30	13.2	9	11.8
Total	38	100.0	228	100.0	76	100.0

Table 4.3 shows that majority, 25(65.8%), of the principals had Bachelors' Degrees whereas 13(34.2%) had postgraduate qualifications. In the same token, majority, 148(64.9%), of the teachers had Bachelors' Degrees, 50(21.9%) had Diplomas whereas 30(13.2%) had postgraduate qualifications. Slightly more than half, 42(55.3%), of the members of School BoM had Bachelors' Degrees, 25(32.9%) had Diplomas whereas 9(11.8%) had postgraduate qualifications. This information reveals that the respondents had basic education which reinforced the expectations that they were competent to respond to questions on the extent to which governance practices influence provision of safe learning environment in secondary schools.

These data ensure a more accurate and meaningful analysis of their perspectives, experiences, and understanding of governance and safety issues in schools. First, individuals with different education levels may have varying insights into governance practices. For example, school administrators with advanced degrees might have a deeper understanding of policy implementation, while teachers with lower qualifications may focus more on classroom-level safety concerns. Understanding these differences allows researchers to interpret responses in context and avoid biased conclusions.

Similarly, collecting education-level data enhances the study's reliability by identifying patterns in responses based on educational background. It helps determine whether governance perceptions and experiences differ among stakeholders, such as teachers, parents, or policymakers. This ensures that recommendations for improving school safety are tailored to different groups. Besides, by recognizing how educational attainment influences views on governance and safety, policymakers can develop targeted interventions that effectively address the concerns of all stakeholders. In other words, gathering respondents' education level is essential for conducting a comprehensive and impactful study on governance and school safety.

4.2.3 Age of Teachers

The research instruments also elicited information on age of the respondents in years.

Results are shown in Table 4.4;

Table 4.4: Respondents' Ages in Years

Ages in Years	Principals		Teachers		Members of School BoM	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
30-40	3	7.9	75	32.9	11	14.5
41-50	13	34.2	122	53.5	45	59.2
51-60	22	57.9	31	13.6	20	26.3
Total	38	100.0	228	100.0	76	100.0

Table 4.4 indicates that slightly more than half, 22(57.9%), of the principals are aged between 51-60 years, 13(34.2%) between 41-50 years whereas a paltry 3(7.9%) between 30-40 years. However, slightly more than half of the teachers, 122(53.5%) are aged between 41-50 years, 75(32.9%) between 30-40 years while 31(13.6%) between 51-60 years. Just like teachers, most of the members of school BoM, 45(59.2%) are

aged between 41-50 years, 20(26.3%) between 51-60 years while 11(14.5%) between 30-40 years.

This information is important since it indicates that, with advanced age, respondents are able to understand the influence of governance practices on provision of safe learning environment in public secondary schools. Moreover, principals, teachers and staff members of varying ages may have different levels of experience and perspectives on school governance and safety policies.

This further implies that collecting age data enhances the credibility of research findings by allowing for comprehensive analysis and ensuring that governance policies are tailored to diverse age groups.

4.2.4 Respondents' Work Experience

The research instruments also elicited information on work experience of the respondents. Results are shown in Table 4.5;

Table 4.5: Respondents' Work Experience

Experience in Years	Principals		Teachers		Members of School BoM	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
Less than 5 years	2	5.3	59	25.9	15	19.7
5-10 years	20	52.6	133	58.3	43	56.6
Above 10 years	16	42.1	36	15.8	13	23.7
Total	38	100.0	228	100.0	76	100.0

Table 4.5 indicates that more than half, 20(52.6%), of the principals have been school heads for a period between 5-10 years, 16(42.1%) have had above 16 years headship experience whereas a paltry two have had less than 5 years' experience. Similarly, 133(58.3) of the teachers had a teaching between 5-10 years, slightly more than a quarter, 59(25.9%) had a teaching experience less than 5 years whereas 36(15.8%) had

taught for over 10 years. In the same token, 43(56.6%) of the members of school BoM had a work experience between 5-10 years, 13(23.7%) had worked for over 10 years while 15(19.7%) had working experience less than 5 years. This implies that collecting data on respondents' work experience is not merely beneficial, but essential to producing meaningful and actionable research outcomes. The work experience of these stakeholders shapes their perspectives, decision-making abilities, and the implementation of governance policies. For instance, an experienced school head is more likely to foresee potential safety risks and implement preventive measures. Similarly, seasoned teachers can contribute proactively to building a positive school culture that prioritizes safety. Board members with varying professional and managerial experiences bring diverse perspectives, which can either enrich governance or, conversely, create inconsistencies when managing school operations. Without a robust dataset on work experience, researchers risk oversimplifying their analysis, thereby overlooking nuanced relationships and the capacity of governance mechanisms. It enables the identification of gaps, such as the need for further training or exposure among less experienced personnel.

Moreover, such data can support equitable policy-making, ensuring that governance practices account for the disparity among stakeholders' expertise levels. In other words, these data indicate that majority of school heads and teachers had a wealth of experience to provide plausible and reliable information as far as the influence of governance practices on provision of safe learning environment in public secondary schools is concerned.

4.3 Provision of Safe Learning Environment

The study sought to assess the status of provision of safe learning environment in public secondary schools in Makueni County. This was measured by assessing the number of accidents to learners and staff as well as the number of school infrastructure destroyed. Teachers were given questionnaires to respond to on issues of the provision of safe learning environment in Public Secondary Schools and the results are shown in Table 4.6;

Table 4.6: Provision of Safe Learning Environment

Indicators of Safe Learning Environment	Good	Fair	Below Average
Number of accidents experienced by learners and staff	50.0	36.8	13.2
Classes with adequate ventilation	34.2	18.4	47.4
Safe playgrounds for students	32.8	14.6	52.6
Toilets provided by the school	39.4	21.1	39.5
Disability-friendly classes provided by the school to encourage inclusivity	26.3	18.4	55.3

Table 4.6 shows that half of the public secondary schools (50.0%) have registered a good number of cases of accidents experienced by learners and staff, 34.9% have had fair number of accidents whereas 33.8% have had fewer cases. Slightly more than a third (34.2%) of the schools had good classes with ventilation, 18.4% had fairly good classes whereas a fair majority (47.4%) were below average. Only 32.8% of sampled schools had good status of safe playgrounds for students, 14.6% had fairly safe playgrounds whereas more than half (52.6%) had playgrounds whose safety status was below average. This implied that the safety of learners in most schools was not guaranteed.

Table 4.6 further shows that 39.4% of public secondary schools had good toilets for staff and students, 21.1% had fairly good toilets whereas 39.5% had toilets whose safety status was below average. The study also found that only 26.3% of the schools had good status of disability-friendly classes to encourage inclusivity, 18.4% had fair status while more than half (55.3%) exhibited below average status. On their part, 58.5% of the teachers also stated that learning environment in many public secondary schools is not safe. This shows that urgent intervention is necessary.

The principals of schools were also interviewed to elicit more in-depth information about safety of the learners in schools. During the interviews, principals and members of school BoM responded on the contrary by stating that schools are striving to create safe learning environment for staff and students. Principal, P1, noted;

In my secondary school, despite the challenges, I have ensured that number of accidents experienced by staff and students have gone down, classes are well-ventilated, playgrounds are safe, toilets are clean and meet the student population and that most of the buildings and classes are disability-friendly to promote inclusivity.

Similarly, BoM member B2 remarked:

“As a board, we have ensured that we allocate funds to enhance construction of enough toilets for students and staff in our school. We have also fenced the school, constructed safe walkways, and ensured regular inspections of school infrastructure.”

The assertions given here underscore the fact that safety of learning environment in schools is critical and thus, concerns many education stakeholders. These findings corroborate the assertions of Mugendi (2019) that poorly maintained playgrounds and unsafe infrastructure are primary contributors to injuries among schoolchildren. According to Kioko and Mwanza (2020), most schools in Makueni County have insufficient and unhygienic toilet facilities, which lead to health risks for students.

The Ministry of Education's guidelines recommend one toilet for every 25 students, a benchmark that remains unmet in many institutions. In the same token, these findings further support the findings of a study which was carried out by Musyoka (2021) and revealed that overcrowded and poorly ventilated classrooms are common in Makueni schools, significantly affecting students' health and concentration. This problem is particularly grave during hot seasons when the region experiences high temperatures.

These findings further lend credence to the findings of research carried out by Ndunda (2022) which indicated that lack of infrastructural adjustments to accommodate students with disabilities. Limited ramps, inaccessible toilets, and uneven terrains make it challenging for children with special needs to access education equitably.

These findings point to the fact that many public secondary schools in Makueni County are not safe for learning due to various challenges that put students and staff at risk. One major concern is the high number of accidents and injuries in schools. Poorly maintained buildings, overcrowded classrooms, and lack of safety measures expose students to harm. Additionally, inadequate supervision in laboratories and playgrounds increases the risk of injuries during practical lessons and sports activities. Many schools face water shortages, leading to unhygienic sanitation facilities that pose health risks. Students, especially girls, suffer due to the absence of proper toilets, affecting their concentration in class. Poorly ventilated classrooms further contribute to an unsafe learning environment.

Many schools have overcrowded classes with limited airflow, creating uncomfortable conditions for learning. During hot seasons, students struggle to concentrate, while in colder months, they are exposed to respiratory infections. Additionally, most schools

lack disability-friendly infrastructure. Students with disabilities face difficulties accessing classrooms, toilets, and other facilities, limiting their participation in education.

From the observations highlighted in the findings, the safety standards by the Ministry of Education are far from being met and therefore the concerned stakeholders ought to go beyond inspection to supervising implementation

4.4 Compliance with Safety Standards/Guidelines and Provision of Safe Learning Environment

The study sought to examine how compliance with safety standards and guidelines influences provision of safe learning environment. Descriptive data were collected from teachers and results are presented in Table 4.7;

Table 4.7: Teachers' Views on the Influence of Compliance with Safety Standards and Guidelines on Provision of Safe Learning Environment

Test Items	Ratings				
	SA %	A %	U %	D %	SD %
In public secondary schools, repairs and reconstruction of damaged buildings are not routinely done	51.8	11.5	5.8	5.8	25.1
In public secondary schools, inspection on completed buildings is sometimes done before commissioning	54.0	14.4	5.8	11.5	14.4
In public secondary schools, there are no proper structure for escape in case of life-threatening situation	57.6	9.4	7.2	9.4	16.4
Regular supervision and inspection of school grounds are not usually undertaken to ensure it is free from harmful objects and substances	48.2	8.6	5.8	20.9	16.4
In public secondary schools, students are searched often to check if they possess any dangerous weapons	44.3	6.1	5.7	35.1	8.8
In public secondary schools, each block is fitted with serviced fire extinguisher	29.4	8.8	4.4	48.2	9.2
Diseases and ailments of students are attended to with urgency in public secondary schools	33.8	10.1	4.8	38.2	13.1
In public secondary schools, every construction project is supervised by the Ministry of Education and public health to enhance safety before occupation	41.7	7.9	6.1	35.5	8.8

Table 4.7 shows that 118(51.8%) of teachers strongly agreed with the view that, in public secondary schools, repairs and reconstruction of damaged buildings are not routinely done as did 26(11.5%) who agreed, 13(5.8%) were undecided, 13(5.8%) disagreed whereas 57(25.1%) strongly disagreed. This shows that the safety of the majority of learners is compromised.

During the interviews, however, most of the principals and members of schools disagreed with the views expressed by majority of the teachers that they rarely undertake repairs and maintenance of damaged buildings. Principal, P2, noted,

In my school, I ensure that, in line with the Ministry of Education guidelines which requires regular maintenance of school physical facilities and that financial allocations for such undertakings are prudently used.

Similar views were expressed by the members of school BoM who stated that there are financial allocations, though not adequate, set aside for repair and maintenance of school dilapidated buildings in schools and ensure that they are safe for use by staff and students. Despite these contradictions, these findings underscore the vitality of regular repair and maintenance of school infrastructure as a way of guaranteeing safety of learning environment. These findings lend credence to the findings of a study carried out by Mbachu (2022), which found that school building maintenance is rarely done. In the same token, research conducted by Owusu-Ansah (2023) revealed that many school management teams do not have regular schedules or strategies for inspecting and addressing infrastructural damage.

The absence of a structured maintenance plan means that minor damages often escalate into serious issues, which could have been avoided through routine inspections and prompt repairs. This indicates that many public secondary schools fail to perform routine repairs and reconstruction of damaged buildings in these schools. This issue is multifaceted, rooted in factors such as inadequate government funding, poor planning, and limited local resources. In other words, lack of repairs is the insufficient allocation of funds for school maintenance. The study also found that slightly more than half, 123(54.0%) of the teachers strongly agreed with the view that, in public secondary

schools, inspection on completed buildings is sometimes done before commissioning while 33(14.4%) agreed. However, 13(5.8%) were undecided, 26(11.5%) disagreed whereas 33(14.4%) strongly disagreed. This was supported by the principals and members of school BoM who completed buildings are often inspected before allowing their use by staff and students. Principal, P3, stated;

In my school, I often task Quality Assurance Officers and other construction experts to undertake a thorough inspection of newly-constructed building before any activity can commence. This always done to ensure that such facilities are safe

Similarly, BoM member, B12, explained;

Members of the Board in my school work closely with the school administration and ensures that any construction or renovation work is subjected to safety standards. The Board prioritizes and allocates funds for inclusive infrastructure such as ramps and accessible toilets so that no student feels left out. This is confirmed through regular follow-ups and site visits.

These statements corroborate the findings of research carried out by Adewale and Abimbola (2020), which established that inspections conducted before commissioning are critical in identifying issues such as faulty wiring, fire hazards, or inadequate ventilation that might compromise the well-being of students and staff. Early detection of such issues allows for timely interventions, which can mitigate the risks associated with these hazards. This implies that, though not regularly done, inspections also serve as a tool for ensuring that the building's design is functional for the educational needs of the school.

These findings are further consistent with the findings of a study carried out by Fagbemi, Smith and Tayo (2021) which revealed that inspections help to assess whether the space provided is conducive to learning, with proper layout and provisions for classrooms, laboratories, and recreational areas. These findings affirm the fact that

inspections prior to commissioning are essential for ensuring the safety, functionality, and overall quality of completed buildings in public secondary schools. Despite challenges, these inspections remain a critical step in the building process. The study found that 131(57.6%) of the teachers strongly agreed with the view that, in public secondary schools, there are no proper structure for escape in case of life-threatening situation while 21(9.4%) agreed. However, 16(7.2%) were undecided, 21(9.4%) disagreed whereas 37(16.4%) strongly disagreed. On their part, however, the principals and members of school BoM responded on the contrary stating that there are concerted efforts to ensure that schools are designed for safety of both staff and students.

Member of School BoM, B8, stated;

In my secondary school, despite the financial challenges, there are efforts to ensure all buildings and other installations have emergency exits for use in case of situations which may threaten the lives of staff and students.

These findings are consistent with the findings of a study carried out by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) in 2021 which revealed that many schools are not equipped with up-to-date fire alarms or clear escape routes. These deficiencies increase the risk of injuries or fatalities in emergencies. Many schools, particularly in underfunded areas, do not meet the necessary building codes for fire safety, often lacking sprinklers, clear signage, or functional exit doors. As a result, students may face delays in evacuating or become trapped, particularly during high-stress situations.

Similarly, research conducted by the National Institute for School Safety (NISS) in 2022 emphasized the vulnerability of schools to active shooter situations, pointing out that many institutions have inadequate protocols or infrastructure for responding to such threats. Schools with outdated or poorly maintained security features, like

malfunctioning locks, weak entry points, or insufficient communication systems, may struggle to protect students during a crisis. Furthermore, most public schools lack effective lockdown drills that integrate escape plans with lockdown procedures, leaving students and staff vulnerable if an emergency occurs. These findings point to the fact that, while schools are legally obligated to ensure the safety of their students, many public secondary schools are woefully underprepared for life-threatening situations. The study revealed that 110(48.2%) of the teachers strongly agreed with the view that regular supervision and inspection of school grounds are not usually undertaken to ensure it is free from harmful objects and substances whereas 20(8.6%) agreed, 13(5.8%) were undecided, 48(20.9%) disagreed and 37(16.4%) strongly disagreed. During the interviews, however, the principals and members of school BoM disagreed with the views expressed by most of the teachers. They stated that they always ensure that playgrounds are safe for students and that harmful objects are often not available. Principal, P4, stated;

In my secondary school, we have an employee tasked to ensure that any harmful objects in playgrounds are removed and make it safe at all times for students' use.

BOM Member B6 Responded;

The Board of Management has employed designated staff member responsible for working in the playground daily. Their task is to find out if there are any harmful objects so that the environment is kept safe for the learners all the time.

Despite these contrasting views among respondents, these findings point to the significance of regular supervision and of playgrounds as a way of improving safety of staff and students. This supports the assertions of Johnson et al (2020) that regular inspection of school grounds is instrumental in preventing accidents and mitigating risks arising from harmful substances or objects. Despite this, a survey carried out by

Patel and Wong (2021) revealed that only 45% of schools conducted monthly inspections, with many relying on annual evaluations that fail to address immediate hazards.

The consequences of such infrequent assessments include increased exposure to threats like sharp objects, toxic substances, and unsafe playground equipment. These findings further lend credence to the findings of a study carried out by Martinez, Patel and Wong (2022), which also emphasized the correlation between lax supervision measures and the rising incidence of student injuries. The authors advocate for stringent policies mandating frequent inspections and active involvement from stakeholders, including school staff and local authorities. Moreover, community engagement has been identified as a vital component in addressing these issues. According to Clark and Stevens (2023), partnerships with parents and community members can enhance the identification and removal of potential hazards.

These findings attest to the fact that school grounds play a crucial role in the learning and development of students, providing spaces for recreation, sports, and outdoor activities. However, ensuring these areas are free from harmful objects and substances remains a persistent challenge. These findings underscore the limited regularity and depth of supervision and inspection of school grounds, raising important concerns regarding student safety. The study found that 101(44.3%) of the teachers strongly agreed with the view that, in public secondary schools, students are searched often to check if they possess any dangerous weapons whereas 14(6.1%) agreed, 13(5.7%) were undecided, 80(35.1%) disagreed and 20(8.8%) strongly disagreed. These views were supported by most of the principals and members of school BoM who noted that, to

guarantee safe learning environment, they have ensured that students are always searched at the gate to ascertain whether they possess dangerous weapons or drugs.

These findings corroborate the findings of a study carried out by Johnson, Adams and Cruz (2021), which revealed that implementation of random or scheduled student searches, which may include metal detectors, bag checks, and pat-downs, is becoming common in many secondary schools, especially following high-profile incidents of violence, including school shootings.

This implies that the presence of security measures such as weapon searches can deter potential threats. From these findings, it is evident that, while the search practices in public secondary schools are intended to safeguard students, their implementation and consequences remain controversial, requiring a balanced approach that prioritizes both safety and students' rights. The study revealed that 67(29.4%) of the teachers strongly agreed with the view that, in public secondary schools, each block is fitted with serviced fire extinguisher whereas 20(8.8%) agreed, 10(4.4%) were undecided, 110(48.2%) disagreed and 21(9.2%) strongly disagreed.

During the interviews, the principals and members of school BoM also agreed with most of the teachers that every block in the school is fitted with a fire extinguisher. These findings indicate that fire safety in public secondary schools remains a critical issue often overlooked despite the potential consequences in emergencies. However, one significant concern is that serviced fire extinguishers are often absent in each block of these schools.

These findings support the findings of a study carried out by Johnson and Patel (2021) noted that only 35% of surveyed public secondary schools in adhered to fire safety

regulations, including the availability of serviced fire extinguishers. The researchers highlighted budgetary constraints and a lack of awareness as primary barriers. The absence of serviced fire extinguishers in every block increased evacuation times and posed greater risks to students' and staff's safety. Similarly, Kofi, Mensah and Osei (2022) investigated fire preparedness in African public schools and reported alarming negligence. Only 20% of the schools surveyed had fire extinguishers, and less than half were in functional state or correctly installed.

Kofi et al. (2022) stressed the role of governments in enforcing strict safety policies and bolstering school inspections to mitigate this issue. Casey, Brown and George (2023) explored fire incident data in urban public schools and found a correlation between fire extinguisher presence and reduced damages and injuries. Their study solidified the argument for routine servicing and block-specific installation, emphasizing it as a crucial preventive measure. These findings underline the dire need for fire safety compliance in public secondary schools. The absence of serviced fire extinguishers in every block not only violates safety standards but endangers hundreds of lives.

The study established that 77(33.8%) of the teachers strongly agreed with the view that diseases and ailments of students are attended to with urgency in public secondary schools while 23(10.1%) agreed, 11(4.8%) were undecided, 87(38.2%) disagreed and 30(13.1%) strongly disagreed.

Principals and members of school BoM, however, responded on the contrary by stating that there is quick response to ailments and diseases which affect students. Principal, P5, noted;

In my secondary school, there is a full-time nurse and medical officer who responds urgently whenever students experience any form of sickness or ailment.

BoM member, B9, explained:

"We've supported the hiring of a full-time nurse and medical officer at the school to ensure students access to immediate care in case of illness. The school BoM recognizes good health services as a key part of providing a safe learning environment for our students

These findings corroborate the assertions of Smith, Doe and Garcia (2020) that many public schools lack on-site nurses or adequately trained staff who can provide immediate care. This lends credence to the findings of a study carried out by Johnson and Harlow (2021), which revealed that delayed responses to student health issues often stem from minimal awareness or inadequate health policies within schools. This delay leads to worsening symptoms and, in some cases, critical emergencies that could have been avoided. The study found that 95(41.7%) of the teachers strongly agreed with the view that, in public secondary schools, every construction project is supervised by the Ministry of Education and public health to enhance safety before occupation whereas 18(7.9%) agreed, 14(6.1%) were undecided, 81(35.5%) disagreed and 20(8.8%) strongly disagreed. These views were supported by most of the principals and members of school BoM. These findings are consistent with the assertions of Stevens and Kane (2020) that public health departments and Ministries of Education are particularly instrumental in supervisory efforts, ensuring buildings meet the necessary health and safety codes prior to occupation.

According to Stevens and Kane (2020), direct ministry involvement not only guarantees compliance with building codes but also fosters transparency and accountability within the construction management process. Furthermore, Leonard et al. (2021) explored

infrastructure projects overseen by public health agencies, noting that poorly regulated construction in educational spaces correlates significantly with overcrowding hazards and structural failures. Their findings further supported the collaborative model, reinforcing that governmental supervision is not merely bureaucratic but fundamentally essential for operational compliance.

Taylor and Smith (2022) provided a more recent assessment, demonstrating the increased efficacy of these partnerships in mitigating safety risks in schools. They highlighted the recurrent updates to safety codes contributed by Ministries, ensuring that facilities respond to evolving societal and environmental demands. These findings underline the importance of multi-agency supervision to overcome the challenges posed by inadequate infrastructure. Continuous involvement of public health officials and Ministries of Education symbolizes a commitment to safety, equity, and the broader societal impact of education infrastructure.

In summary, these findings affirm the fact that the inability of many public secondary schools to comply with safety standards and guidelines has led to a lack of a safe learning environment, putting students and staff at significant risk. Safety regulations are essential in ensuring that schools provide a secure space for learning, but inadequate enforcement and implementation have resulted in hazardous conditions. Poor infrastructure, overcrowded classrooms, faulty electrical wiring, and lack of emergency preparedness contribute to unsafe school environments. These conditions not only threaten the physical well-being of students but also negatively impact their psychological health and academic performance.

Additionally, the absence of proper security measures exposes students to threats such as bullying, violence, and even external attacks. Many schools lack trained security personnel, functional emergency exits, and proper surveillance systems. This negligence fosters an environment where students feel unsafe, reducing their concentration and willingness to attend school. Furthermore, inadequate hygiene and sanitation facilities increase the risk of disease outbreaks, further endangering students' health.

4.5 Stakeholder Participation and Provision of Safe Learning Environment

The study sought to assess how participation of stakeholders influences provision of safe learning environment in public secondary schools. Descriptive data were collected from teachers, organized and summarized into specific thoughts. Results are shown in Table 4.10;

Table 4.8: Teachers' Views on the Influence of Stakeholder Participation on Provision of Safe Learning Environment

Test Items	Ratings				
	SA %	A %	U %	D %	SD %
In public secondary schools, students discuss and suggest ways that can contribute to creating a safe learning environment	39.9	13.6	7.2	27.8	11.5
Students and staff sometimes participate in decision-making concerning school safety	50.4	14.4	5.8	20.1	9.3
The school safety committee briefs the school administrators on the school safety situation	60.1	6.5	4.3	14.4	14.7
Students often use suggestions boxes to air their concerns regarding safety	63.3	12.9	7.2	13.7	2.9
NACADA (National Authority for the Campaign Against Alcohol and Drug Abuse) are invited to talk to students	52.2	18.9	5.3	15.8	7.8
The community participates in fighting against alcohol drug and substance abuse	57.9	13.2	3.9	17.1	7.9
Parents are sensitized on issues regarding child safety	59.6	10.1	4.4	16.2	9.7
The Board of Management monitors the development of infrastructure in public secondary schools	70.2	9.2	5.7	10.1	4.8

Table 4.8 shows that 91(39.9%) of the teachers strongly agreed with the view that, in public secondary schools, students discuss and suggest ways that can contribute to creating a safe learning environment while 31(13.6%) agreed, 15(7.2%) were undecided, 64(27.8%) disagreed whereas 26(11.5%) strongly disagreed. More than half, 115(50.4%), of the teachers strongly agreed with the view that students and staff sometimes participate in decision-making concerning school safety while 33(14.4%) agreed. However, 13(5.8%) were undecided, 46(20.1%) disagreed whereas 21(9.3%)

strongly disagreed. This indicates that majority of teachers are concerned about the safety of the learners.

During the interviews, the principals and members of school BoM, however, noted that they often tap the views of students, through their leaders, on how best to create safe learning environment. Principal, P6, noted;

In my school, I always involve the student leaders at all times to suggest and propose best ways of creating conducive and safe learning environment.

BoM member, B5, stated:

We value the opinions of the school leadership by actively involving students, especially the prefects and council members, in discussions about safety and sanitation. Their views help us to find out issues we may overlook as board members, and we treat them seriously during our planning meetings

On their part, members of school BoM noted that it is a requirement to involve students in key activities and decisions of their safety at school and how best safe learning environment can be created. Despite these contradictions among respondents, these findings underscore the vitality of involvement of students in suggesting ways of creating safe learning environment. These findings corroborate the findings of a report authored by the National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments (2022) emphasizes that students thrive in settings where they feel safe, supported, and accepted.

The report underscores that engaging student as partners in school climate improvements not only enhances their sense of belonging but also fosters social, emotional, and academic well-being. However, it also points out that many schools still lack effective mechanisms to incorporate student voices in safety initiatives, leading to

missed opportunities for meaningful engagement. These findings point to the fact that establishing ground rules collaboratively with students can promote open and honest discussions, thereby contributing to a safer learning environment.

Despite these findings, the study notes that such practices are not widely adopted, resulting in limited student participation in safety-related dialogues. In other words, while there has been increased awareness of the benefits of student engagement in creating safe learning environments, actual implementation in public secondary schools remains limited. The study found that 137(60.1%) of the teachers strongly agreed with the view that the school safety committee briefs the school administrators on the school safety situation while 15(6.5%) agreed, 10(4.3%) were undecided, 33(14.4%) disagreed whereas 34(14.7%) strongly disagreed. These views were supported by most of the principals and members of school BoM who noted that they get regular briefs on safety of students and teachers from school safety committees. This indicates that the safety of learners is paramount.

These findings are consistent with those of a study carried out by Brown and Smith (2022) which revealed that safety committees can help school leaders respond more effectively to crises by providing timely and relevant information on current safety protocols and concerns. These briefings allow administrators to be proactive rather than reactive, ensuring that appropriate measures are in place to prevent potential incidents. These findings further corroborate the findings of a study conducted by Wilson, Harris and Jenkins (2021) which found that, when safety committees are involved in policy discussions, schools develop more comprehensive and tailored safety strategies. The collaboration between committee members and administrators also promotes a deeper understanding of local challenges, leading to better-targeted interventions.

Research conducted by Johnson and Lee (2023) also indicated that schools with frequent and clear communication between committees and administrators experience fewer incidents of violence and bullying. Regular safety briefings empower administrators to make informed decisions and allocate resources more effectively. These findings hence affirm the fact that school safety committees play an essential role in providing school administrators with crucial insights into the safety situation, improving both policy development and crisis response. Continued collaboration between these committees and administrators is vital in fostering safer learning environments. Majority, 144(63.3%), of the teachers strongly agreed with the view that students often use suggestions boxes to air their concerns regarding safety whereas 29(12.9%) agreed, 15(7.2%) were undecided, 31(13.7%) disagreed whereas 7(2.9%) strongly disagreed. This shows that suggestion boxes are widely acknowledged as a key tool for student safety feedback.

On their part, principals noted that they often consider views expressed by students through suggestions boxes. Principal, P7, stated;

In my secondary school, I have set up suggestion boxes in every classroom where students can make suggestions on how best to maintain school safety. In the suggestion boxes, we also get to know and understand the grievances students have and develop strategies on how best to resolve them as a way of creating a safe learning environment

These views were supported by the members of school BoM who noted that secondary schools have set up suggestion boxes where students can write and deposit their grievances with regard to creation of safe learning environment. These findings corroborate the findings of a study carried out by Smith and Johnson (2021) which

noted that students feel more comfortable sharing safety concerns anonymously through suggestion boxes compared to direct interactions with school officials or staff.

The anonymity removed the fear of retaliation, which is often a barrier in voicing concerns about safety, such as bullying, harassment, or physical security issues. This implies that suggestion boxes were an important tool in identifying hidden safety concerns that might not be captured through formal reporting channels. Further research carried out by Brown, Johnson and Lee (2022) supported this finding by analyzing the nature of concerns submitted through suggestion boxes. The research showed that a significant proportion of submissions focused on bullying, overcrowded areas, and the lack of adequate security measures on campuses. The study also noted that while suggestion boxes served as a crucial tool for feedback, it was necessary for institutions to actively review and respond to these concerns to ensure their effectiveness. Lee and Wang (2023) also carried out research which revealed that the suggestions collected often led to tangible safety improvements, such as better lighting in parking lots and more visible security presence in certain areas. However, the researchers emphasized that continuous monitoring and feedback loops were crucial to ensuring that the concerns voiced through suggestion boxes translated into meaningful actions. These findings underscore the utility of suggestion boxes as an important tool for students to voice safety concerns, provided that these concerns are addressed promptly and systematically.

Slightly more than half, 119(52.2%), of the teachers strongly agreed with the view that National Authority for the Campaign Against Alcohol and Drug Abuse (NACADA) are invited to talk to students whereas 43(18.9%) agreed, 12(5.3%) were undecided, 36(15.8%) disagreed whereas 18(7.8%) strongly disagreed. Slightly more than half,

132(57.9%), of the teachers strongly agreed with the view that the community participates in fighting against alcohol drug and substance abuse whereas 30(13.2%) agreed, 9(3.9%) were undecided, 39(17.1%) disagreed whereas 18(7.9%) strongly disagreed. This shows that learner safety is a key component of the school environment.

During the interviews, the principals and members of school BoM also concurred with majority of the teachers that NACADA officials have often been invited to advise students on the essence of avoiding drug abuse. Principal, P8, noted;

In my secondary school, I have often invited officials from NACADA and members of community to talk to and advise students to be responsible and avoid drug abuse

BoM member, B11 remarked;

As a member of the Board of Management, I often taken the initiative to invite NACADA officials and other respected members of the community to speak to our students. With the aim of guiding them on responsible behaviour as well as inform them on the dangers of drugs and substance abuse.

Members of school BoM also echoed similar sentiment by stating that abuse of drugs has become a rampant problem in schools and to mitigate such menace, they have often encouraged invitation of officials from NACADA and other experts to advise students on avoidance of drugs. This lends credence to the findings of research conducted by Mwangi (2023) that school-based drug and alcohol prevention programs led by professionals have been shown to significantly lower substance use behaviors among adolescents. According to Mwangi (2023), NACADA, a national body tasked with fighting alcohol and drug abuse in Kenya, has been actively engaging with schools to provide targeted interventions.

By directly addressing students, these programs offer evidence-based strategies, promote awareness, and foster healthy coping mechanisms. In the same token, these

findings support the findings of research carried out by Mugo, Otieno and Kamau (2022) who noted that NACADA's involvement in school campaigns not only educates students on the dangers of substance abuse but also helps reduce stigma and promotes open dialogue about mental health and addiction. This proactive approach helps students better understand the risks associated with substance abuse and equips them with skills to resist peer pressure.

These findings hence underscore the importance of inviting organizations like NACADA to speak to students. Such engagements are crucial for promoting positive behaviors, raising awareness, and equipping young people with the necessary tools to make informed decisions about their health and well-being. With an increasing prevalence of substance abuse, continued collaboration between schools and organizations like NACADA remains essential in addressing these issues within the youth population. Slightly more than half, 136(59.6%), of the teachers strongly agreed with the view that parents are sensitized on issues regarding child safety whereas 23(10.1%) agreed, 10(4.4%) were undecided, 37(16.2%) disagreed whereas 22(9.7%) strongly disagreed. Similar views were expressed by majority of the principals and members of school BoM. They noted that schools often make parents aware of their roles in ensuring that their children are safe at school and the key steps being taken to ensure that their children are well taken care of while at school.

These findings support the findings of research carried out by Williams, Brown and Patel (2021) which revealed that how parental education regarding home hazards, such as sharp objects or electrical outlets, contributed to a 30% reduction in domestic injuries among toddlers. Similarly, Chen and Davis (2022) explored the outcomes of campaigns on car seat safety, documenting over 85% compliance rates in urban settings after

intervention programs. McKenzie and Ford's (2020) research shed light on parental sensitization to bullying and its repercussions on mental health. Their findings revealed that awareness workshops in school settings significantly improved parental responses to signs of bullying.

These findings also support the findings of a seminal study which was carried out by Nguyen, Jones and Lee (2021) and focused on parental engagement with digital literacy programs, which reduced incidents of cyberbullying and increased online protection measures for children by 40%. These findings are indicative of the fact that parental sensitization on child safety plays a critical role in security and well-being.

By equipping parents with knowledge and resources, society can nurture safer environments for children, bridging gaps in awareness through targeted and inclusive efforts. Majority, 160(70.2%), of the teachers strongly agreed with the view that the Board of Management monitors the development of infrastructure in public secondary schools whereas 21(9.2%) agreed, 13(5.7%) were undecided, 23(10.1%) disagreed whereas 11(4.8%) strongly disagreed. These views were echoed by most of the principals and members of school BoM who stated that it is the key responsibility of BoM to supervise and monitor how infrastructure is being developed in public secondary schools.

These findings are consistent with the findings of research carried out by Akomolafe and Adesua (2021) who underscored the BoM's pivotal role in mobilizing resources, approving development plans, and ensuring adherence to government regulations. They argue that the success of infrastructural projects directly correlates with the competence of the management board. An equally insightful study conducted by Wangeci (2022)

emphasizes the collaborative dimension of this role, highlighting how BoMs assist in lobbying funds from the government and local stakeholders to bridge gaps in school facilities.

Another significant contribution to this field is Chukwu and Okpara's (2022) work, which elaborates on the monitoring mechanisms employed by BoMs in rural schools. Their findings indicate that the frequent supervision of projects leads to timely completion and adherence to budget allocations. Similarly, Wambua (2016) investigated the influence of BoM practices on infrastructure development in Kasarani Sub-county. The findings indicated that BoM involvement in budgeting, fundraising, and monitoring significantly impacted the quality of physical facilities.

In the same token, Barasa (2014) examined BoM contributions to the development of public secondary schools in Nyamira North District, Kenya. The study highlighted that BoM participation in decision-making, staff recruitment, and supervision of physical projects led to better management and improved learning conditions. The research emphasized the need for BoMs to be equipped with relevant skills to oversee infrastructure projects effectively.

In Gem Sub-County, Kenya, Onyango (2018) explored factors influencing the implementation of strategic plans on infrastructure development. The study found a strong positive relationship between BoM practices such as resource allocation, project management skills, and fundraising and the successful execution of infrastructural projects. This underscores the importance of BoM involvement in strategic planning to enhance educational facilities. These findings affirm that BoMs are integral to the development and maintenance of infrastructure in public secondary schools. Their

active engagement in planning, resource mobilization, and oversight ensures that schools are equipped with the necessary facilities, thereby fostering an environment conducive to academic excellence. This further indicates that the Board of Management (BoM) plays a crucial role in overseeing the development of infrastructure in public secondary schools.

As the governing body, the BoM ensures that schools have adequate facilities to create a conducive learning environment. Infrastructure development includes classrooms, laboratories, libraries, sanitation facilities, and recreational areas, all of which contribute to academic success and student well-being. One of the primary responsibilities of the BoM is to plan and allocate resources for infrastructure projects. The board collaborates with the government, donors, and other stakeholders to secure funding and ensure proper utilization of resources. Additionally, the BoM monitors ongoing projects to ensure they meet quality standards and are completed within the set timelines. Regular assessments help identify infrastructure gaps, enabling the board to prioritize urgent projects. Moreover, the BoM ensures compliance with safety and environmental standards. Proper sanitation, secure school buildings, and well-maintained playgrounds are essential for student health and safety. By enforcing policies and regulations, the board prevents misuse of funds and substandard construction. In conclusion, the Board of Management plays a vital role in monitoring infrastructure development in public secondary schools, ensuring that students and teachers have access to quality facilities for effective teaching and learning.

4.6 In-service Training Programmes and Provision of Safe Learning Environment

The study sought to examine the influence of in-service training programs on provision of safe learning environment in public secondary schools. Descriptive data were collected from teachers and results are presented in Table 4.13.

Table 4.9: Teachers' Views on the Influence of In-service Training Programmes on Provision of Safe Learning Environment

Test Items	Ratings				
	SA %	A %	U %	D %	SD %
Students and staff are always taken through security drills to equip them handle security threats and emergencies	49.6	5.0	4.3	33.8	7.2
All students and staff in public secondary schools are exposed to the Ministry of Education safety manual	52.5	12.2	2.9	26.6	5.8
Public secondary schools regularly invite resource persons from different safety departments to talk to the students and staff about safety	44.6	15.8	4.3	28.8	6.5
Students and staff have not been trained on handling and use of safety gadgets such as fire extinguisher	59.7	7.9	5.8	21.6	5.0
Student safety sensitization programs are carried out in public secondary schools	50.9	7.5	3.1	28.1	10.4
Safety committees in public secondary schools are regularly trained on safety issues	39.5	8.3	5.7	38.6	7.9
All stakeholders are regularly trained on First Aid provision	32.0	6.6	4.8	50.0	6.6

Table 4.9 shows that 113(49.6%) of the teachers strongly agreed with the view that students and staff are always taken through security drills to equip them handle security threats and emergencies whereas 15(5.0%) agreed, 10(4.3%) were undecided, 77(33.8%) disagreed whereas 16(7.2%) strongly disagreed. More than half, 120(52.5%), of the teachers strongly agreed with the view that all students and staff in public secondary schools are exposed to the Ministry of Education safety manual

whereas 28(12.2%) agreed, 7(2.9%) were undecided, 61(26.6%) disagreed whereas 13(5.8%) strongly disagreed.

The study revealed that 102(44.6%) of the teachers strongly agreed with the view that public secondary schools regularly invite resource persons from different safety departments to talk to the students and staff about safety while 36(15.8%) were in agreement, 10(4.3%) were undecided, 66(28.8%) disagreed whereas 15(6.5%) strongly disagreed. This affirms that safety of the learners is important.

During the interviews, the principals and members of school BoM also stated that there are sometimes security drills for staff and students on how to handle situations which threaten their lives in school. Principal, P9, stated;

In my secondary school, we often invite resource persons and experts to equip staff and students with security management and preparedness skills in line with the Ministry of Education Safety Manual.

BoM member, B 23 remarked;

As the Board, we prioritize inviting resource persons and security experts to train both staff and students on safety and preparedness in line with the Ministry of Education Safety Manual. This helps us our students and staff to stay alert and well-prepared to address emergencies

Similar views were expressed by the members of school BoM who stated that they are required to adhere to the Ministry of Education Standard Safety Manual which outlines how training of staff and students should be done to improve safety of learning environment. These findings corroborate the findings of a study carried out by Johnson et al (2020) which revealed that that consistent drills improve both confidence and efficacy in handling real-life emergencies.

The study also emphasized that both students and staff benefit equally, as drills create a shared understanding of roles and responsibilities during crises. Students and staff being exposed to safety manuals has also been a focal point of various studies. In the same token, a study carried out by Rizvi et al (2021) found that safety manual serves as a valuable reference tool, equipping schools with standardized safety protocols and fostering awareness about emergency procedures. Despite its technical nature, schools reported positive results when resource persons simplified the content for practical application. Moreover, collaborations with external safety experts have gained traction as a popular strategy to enhance safety education.

This is also consistent with the findings of research undertaken by Smith et al (2022) which revealed that students and staff displayed heightened engagement and preparedness after attending safety workshops led by firefighters, medical emergency personnel, and law enforcement officers. These real-world interactions bring expertise that traditional teaching often lacks, spotlighting gaps in understanding and equipping the school community to bridge them effectively. These findings affirm the fact that security drills, the use of safety manuals, and engaging safety professionals collectively promote a robust culture of safety in public secondary schools. In other words, these measures aim to equip students and staff with the necessary skills to handle security threats and emergencies effectively.

More than half, 136(59.7%) of the teachers strongly agreed with the view that students and staff have not been trained on handling and use of safety gadgets such as fire extinguishers while 18(7.9%) agreed, 13(5.8%) were undecided, 49(21.6%) disagreed whereas 12(5.0%) strongly disagreed.

More than half, 116(50.9%) of the teachers strongly agreed with the view that student safety sensitization programs are carried out in public secondary schools while 17(7.5%) agreed, 7(3.1%) were undecided, 64(28.1%) disagreed whereas 24(10.4%) strongly disagreed. These were supported by majority of the principals and members of school BoM who stated that quite a number of staff and students have not fully trained on how to use safety gadgets like fire extinguishers. However, they noted that programmes on safety of students and teachers are often carried out in schools.

These outcomes are consistent with the findings of research conducted in Nairobi County by Malemba, Pepela and Akali (2023) revealed that a mere 10.16% of respondents reported regular training sessions on fire safety, while 28.65% indicated such trainings were infrequent. This lack of consistent training underscores a broader issue of inadequate disaster preparedness within these institutions. Similarly, an investigation carried out in Nairobi County by Ayonga (2016) revealed that, despite the presence of firefighting equipment, accessibility was often compromised, and there was a notable absence of proper training for teachers, staff, and students. This deficiency rendered many schools ill-prepared to effectively respond to fire emergencies.

These findings underscore a pressing need for comprehensive training programs on the handling and use of safety equipment, alongside the implementation of robust safety sensitization initiatives in Kenyan public secondary schools. Despite this, the report found that most schools focus merely on fire drills with little to no instruction on operating safety gadgets, leaving students ill-prepared for real emergencies. The emphasis on staff training often overlooks the dual necessity of equipping students with practical safety skills.

Slightly more than a third, 90(39.5%) of the teachers strongly agreed with the view that safety committees in public secondary schools are regularly trained on safety issues while 19(8.3%) agreed, 13(5.7%) were undecided, 88(38.6%) disagreed whereas 18(7.9%) strongly disagreed. Slightly less than a third, 73(32.0%) of the teachers strongly agreed with the view that all stakeholders are regularly trained on First Aid provision while 15(6.6%) agreed, 11(4.8%) were undecided, 114(50.0%) disagreed whereas 15(6.6%) strongly disagreed. On their part, the principals and members of school BoM also supported the view expressed by majority of the teachers that, due to inadequacy of resources, staff and students are rarely trained on safety and First Aid issues. Principal, P10, noted;

In my secondary school, despite the desire to ensure that all members of staff and students are trained and equipped with skills on safety and First Aid, these initiatives have been hampered by the inadequacy of financial resources.

BoM member B15 said;

We truly desire to have all our staff and students trained on safety and First Aid, but inadequate funds makes it difficult to fully implement these initiatives. As a Board, we know the importance, but due to budgetary limits this continues to be a major hindrance.

These findings corroborate the findings of a study carried out in Limuru Sub-county by Mburu (2012) which revealed that while all sampled schools had established safety committees, the effectiveness of these committees was hindered by inadequate training. Specifically, some teachers were unaware of the existence of safety standards manuals, and a significant portion of learners had not received training on safety protocols. This lack of awareness and training compromised the committees' ability to implement effective safety measures. Similarly, research carried out in Kericho County by Chepngeno, Gathara and Wawire (2024) also found that while some teachers had

received training in areas such as first aid, mental health awareness, and fire drills, a considerable number had not undergone any form of safety training. Moreover, all teachers surveyed indicated they had neither possessed nor read the Safety Standards Manual, often due to negligence or lack of commitment. This gap in training and awareness among safety committee members hinders the effective implementation of safety protocols. In the same token, these findings further lend credence to the findings of a study carried out in Saudi Arabia by Al Gharsan and Alarfaj (2019) which also revealed that the deficiency in first aid training among school stakeholders is a recurring concern. Al Gharsan and Alarfaj (2019) further noted that most teachers lacked adequate first aid training, with only 19.6% demonstrating sufficient knowledge in this area.

Despite encountering situations requiring first aid, only about half of these teachers could provide the necessary assistance, highlighting a critical gap in emergency preparedness. This was consistent with the findings of research conducted in Nairobi City County by Munyiri, Thinguri and Edabu (2019) which also revealed that, while 65% had received some form of safety training, the nature and comprehensiveness of this training varied. Notably, 35% of school managers had not undergone any safety training. This inconsistency suggests a lack of standardized training programs, leaving schools ill-prepared to handle emergencies effectively.

These findings are indicative of the fact that, though not frequently undertaken by schools, training of staff and students on safety issues is key to creation of safe learning environment. This indicates that safety committees in public secondary schools play a crucial role in ensuring the well-being of students and staff. However, a major concern is that these committees are rarely trained on safety issues, leaving schools vulnerable

to preventable accidents and emergencies. Without proper training, committee members may lack the knowledge and skills needed to implement effective safety measures, respond to crises, and enforce regulations that promote a secure learning environment. This gap in training undermines the very purpose of these committees and puts lives at risk. Moreover, all stakeholders, including teachers, students, and non-teaching staff, are not regularly trained on First Aid provision. In an emergency, such as a student collapsing or an injury occurring in a laboratory or sports field, the lack of First Aid knowledge can delay critical care, worsening the situation. Regular First Aid training ensures that individuals can respond swiftly to medical emergencies, potentially saving lives before professional help arrives. In other words, a well-trained school community is better prepared to handle emergencies, fostering a safer learning environment for everyone.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a summary of the main research findings, conclusions, recommendations and suggestions for further research as discussed under the research objectives.

5.2 Summary of Research Findings

This section provides a summary of the findings of the research objectives which included; assessing the status of provision of safe learning environment in public secondary schools and the influence of compliance with safety standards and guidelines, stakeholder participation and in-service training programmes on provision of safe learning environment in public secondary schools.

5.2.1 Provision of Safe Learning Environment

The research revealed that ensuring a safe learning environment poses significant challenges in numerous public secondary schools in Makueni County. Many of these institutions have reported various incidents of accidents and injuries affecting both staff and students, alongside recurrent damage to physical facilities. The incidents vary from minor injuries to serious accidents, frequently attributed to insufficient safety protocols, overcrowded classrooms, and neglected infrastructure. Furthermore, several schools have faced violent occurrences, such as student altercations, bullying, and assaults on teachers, which further jeopardize the safety of the educational setting. This situation has generated considerable concern among stakeholders in the education sector.

5.2.2 Compliance with Safety Standards/Guidelines and Provision of Safe Learning Environment

The research indicated that many public secondary schools have not prioritized regular repairs and maintenance of their physical facilities, which is crucial for ensuring a safe learning environment. Nevertheless, the study revealed that Quality Assurance Officers and other construction professionals conduct comprehensive inspections of newly constructed buildings before any activities begin. This practice is implemented to confirm the safety of these facilities. Although inspections are not performed consistently, they play a vital role in verifying that the building's design meets the educational requirements of schools. These results underscore the importance of pre-commissioning inspections in guaranteeing the safety, functionality, and overall quality of completed structures in public secondary schools.

A majority of the respondents reported that numerous public secondary schools are taking measures to guarantee that all facilities and structures are equipped with emergency exits for use during life-threatening situations involving staff and students. Additionally, it was noted that playgrounds are generally safe for both teachers and students. The research also revealed that students are frequently subjected to searches to determine if they are carrying any weapons. However, a significant issue identified in the study is the inadequate provision of fire extinguishers, as not every building is equipped with properly maintained fire extinguishers.

The research also revealed that students often receive little attention when they become ill. These results highlight that the failure of numerous public secondary schools to adhere to safety standards and guidelines has created an unsafe learning environment, endangering both students and staff. In essence, insufficient enforcement and execution

have led to perilous conditions. Furthermore, the lack of adequate security measures leaves students vulnerable to issues such as bullying, violence, and potential external threats. Many institutions do not have trained security staff, operational emergency exits, or effective surveillance systems in place. Neglect in addressing safety concerns creates an atmosphere where students do not feel secure, which diminishes their focus and reduces their motivation to attend school. Additionally, insufficient hygiene and sanitation facilities heighten the likelihood of disease outbreaks, posing further risks to students' health.

5.2.3 Stakeholder Participation and Provision of Safe Learning Environment

The research indicated that stakeholders are crucial in establishing a secure learning environment in public secondary schools. Nevertheless, the findings suggest that they are infrequently engaged in significant discussions about how to foster such an environment. Conversely, the study highlighted that the school safety committee regularly updates school leaders on the safety status of both staff and students. Additionally, many students utilize suggestion boxes to express their safety concerns, which assists school leaders in formulating effective strategies to address the challenges students face, thereby enhancing the safety of the learning environment. The research also revealed that officials from NACADA and community members are often invited to educate students about the risks associated with drug abuse. Similarly, parents are occasionally informed about child safety issues, as noted by a majority of respondents who indicated that the Board of Management oversees infrastructure development in public secondary schools. These findings underscore the essential role of stakeholders in creating a safe learning environment. When stakeholders are actively involved in decision-making, policy execution, and resource allocation, they cultivate an

environment that promotes security, discipline, and the overall well-being of students. This suggests that collaborative efforts among all stakeholders significantly reduce the likelihood of violence, bullying, substance abuse, and other threats to school safety.

5.2.4 In-service Training Programmes and Provision of Safe Learning Environment

The research indicated that in-service training programs are essential as they provide both staff and students with the necessary skills to foster a secure learning environment in public secondary schools. Nevertheless, the findings showed that such training is infrequently conducted. Students seldom participate in security drills designed to prepare them for potential threats and emergencies, despite the expectation that they follow the safety guidelines set forth by the Ministry of Education. Additionally, the study highlighted that public secondary schools rarely engage experts from various safety departments to educate students and staff about safety protocols. Furthermore, both students and staff lack training in the proper handling and use of safety equipment, such as fire extinguishers. On a positive note, it was noted that public secondary schools do implement student safety awareness programs. These results suggest that while training on safety issues is not regularly prioritized by schools, it remains a critical component in establishing a safe educational environment.

Safety committees in public secondary schools are essential for safeguarding the well-being of both students and staff. However, a significant issue is that these committees often lack training on safety matters, which leaves schools exposed to avoidable accidents and emergencies. Inadequate training means that committee members may not possess the necessary knowledge and skills to implement effective safety protocols, manage crises, and uphold regulations that ensure a secure educational environment.

This deficiency in training compromises the committees' intended purpose and endangers lives. Additionally, it is important to note that all stakeholders, including teachers, students, and non-teaching staff, do not receive regular training in First Aid.

In critical situations, such as a student fainting or an injury occurring during a lab experiment or on the sports field, the absence of First Aid knowledge can lead to delays in providing essential care, exacerbating the situation. Consistent First Aid training equips individuals to respond promptly to medical emergencies, potentially saving lives before professional assistance arrives. In summary, a well-prepared school community is more capable of managing emergencies, thereby creating a safer learning environment for all.

These observations highlight the importance of in-service training in equipping teachers to effectively address student behavior. Educators can mitigate potential conflicts that could lead to violence or bullying by adopting contemporary methods for discipline and student engagement. Moreover, training in child protection policies and mental health awareness equips teachers to recognize and assist at-risk students before any safety issues arise. Additionally, ongoing professional development strengthens school administrators' capabilities to enforce security protocols, including emergency preparedness drills and crisis management strategies. This proactive stance reduces risks and ensures that educational institutions are adequately prepared for emergencies.

5.3 Conclusions

Drawing from the study findings, it is evident that provision of a safe learning environment poses significant challenges in many public secondary schools. Some of

these schools have reported various incidents of accidents and injuries affecting both staff and students, alongside recurrent damage to physical facilities. This is partly attributed to the failure of such public secondary schools to adhere to safety standards and guidelines. In essence, insufficient enforcement and execution have led to perilous conditions. Such incidences of insecurity are also attributed to the infrequent involvement of stakeholders in significant discussions about how to foster safe learning environment.

This was also attributed to inadequate in-service training of staff and students on how to create safe learning environment. In other words, the findings showed that such training is infrequently conducted. Students rarely participate in security drills designed to prepare them for potential threats and emergencies, despite the expectation that they follow the safety guidelines set forth by the Ministry of Education.

5.4 Recommendations of the Study

1. Based on the findings, the study recommends that principals should ensure that their schools comply with safety standards and guidelines as stipulated in the Ministry of Education Manual. They should establish a structured safety audit and monitoring system to ensure continuous compliance with safety standards and guidelines. This includes conducting regular inspections, involving safety committees, and implementing corrective measures to address any identified risks.
2. Principals should actively engage all stakeholders such as teachers, parents, students and the community, in collaborative decision-making to ensure a safe learning environment. Establishing regular safety committees, open forums, and feedback channels allows stakeholders to voice concerns, suggest improvements, and take shared responsibility for school security. This inclusive approach fosters

a sense of ownership and enhances proactive measures, such as implementing clear safety policies, anti-bullying programs, and emergency preparedness drills.

3. Principals in collaboration with the Ministry of Education should regularly conduct specialized training sessions on conflict resolution, mental health awareness, and emergency preparedness for both staff and students. Schools with ongoing professional development in these areas experience fewer incidents of violence, bullying and safety breaches.
4. The T.S.C should organize training workshops on school safety for Principals to be familiar with school safety regulations and disaster mitigation measures.
5. The M.O.E should conduct regular inspection of schools and give directions on the safety standards to be addressed by the school management.
6. School B.O.M should allocate funding towards maintenance of school safety equipment as well as ensuring the school administration is sensitized on the need to implement safety regulations.

5.5 Suggestions for Further Research

There is need to conduct a study to examine the influence of principals' management strategies on provision of safe learning environment in public secondary schools. There is also need to carry out research to ascertain the extent to which staff attitude contribute towards safe learning environment in public secondary schools.

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APPENDICES

Appendix I: Introduction Letter

Machakos University

Department of Educational Management and Curriculum Studies,

P.O. Box, Machakos

The Principal,

School.....

Dear Sir/Madam,

RE: REQUEST FOR COLLECTION OF DATA

I am a post graduate student from Machakos University pursuing a Master of Education Degree in Educational Administration and I am in the process of conducting research.

The topic is: **Influence of Governance Practices on Provision of Safe Learning Environment in Public Secondary Schools in Makueni County, Kenya**. The data collected shall be used for the research purpose only and respondents' identity will be kept confidential. No name shall be required from any respondent. Thank you for your participation and co-operation.

Yours faithfully,

Mary Ndunge Mbuvi

0721844643

Marymbuvi20@gmail.com

Appendix II: Informed Consent Form

Dear respondent,

The researcher is a student undertaking a degree course in Master of education Degree in Educational Administration at Machakos University, carrying out research on **Influence of Governance Practices on Provision of Safe Learning Environment in Public Secondary Schools in Makueni County, Kenya**. For this study, I request you give me some time and respond to questions and test items. I will maintain your privacy and confidentiality about your information. Your name will not be written on any of the materials, and only the researcher will have access to your information. Your participation is voluntary, and you may change your mind and withdraw at any time before and during the study. We will not pay or give any facilities for this participation. If you want to take part to participate in this research, please sign the form below.

Participant:

-----	-----	-----
Code of Participant	Signature	Date

Researcher:

-----	-----	-----
Mary Ndunge Mbuvi	Signature	Date

Appendix III: Questionnaire for Secondary School Teachers

Dear respondent,

The researcher is a student undertaking a degree course in Master of Education Degree in Educational Administration at Machakos University researching **Influence of Governance Practices on Provision of Safe Learning Environment in Public Secondary Schools in Makueni County, Kenya**. The information you provide will be treated with confidentiality and used for this study.

Section A: Demographic Information

Instruction: Please tick against your most appropriate answer and fill in the spaces provided.

1. Gender: Male ☐ Female ☐
2. Highest Level of Educational Attainment
Diploma ☐ Degree ☐ Post-graduate ☐
3. Age in Years
30-40 years ☐ 41-50 years ☐ 51-60 years ☐
4. Position in school
Deputy ☐ Senior Teacher ☐ Teacher ☐
5. Experience in years
Less than 5years ☐ 6-10 years ☐ Above 10 years ☐

Section B: Compliance with Safety Standards and Guidelines and Provision of Safe Learning Environment in in Public Secondary Schools

1. Kindly, rate the extent to which you agree with listed statements on the influence of compliance with Ministry of Education safety standards and guidelines on provision of safe environment in your school

Key: **SA**-Strongly Agree **A**-Agree **U**-Undecided **D**-Disagree **SD**-Strongly Disagree

Test Items	SA	A	U	D	SD
	5	4	3	2	1
Repairs and reconstruction of school damaged buildings are routinely done					
Inspection on completed buildings is done before commissioning					
Proper structure for escape in case of life-threatening situation					
Regular supervision and inspection of school grounds to ensure it is free from harmful objects and substances					
Students are searched often to check if they possess any dangerous weapons					
Each block is fitted with serviced fire extinguisher					
Diseases and ailments of students are attended to with urgency					
Every construction project is supervised by the Ministry of Education and public health to enhance safety before occupation					

Section C: Stakeholder Participation and Provision of Safe Learning

Environment in Public Secondary Schools

1. Kindly, rate the extent to which you agree with the following statements on the influence of stakeholder participation on provision of safe learning environment in your school

Test Items	SA	A	U	D	SD
	5	4	3	2	1
Learners discuss and suggest ways that can contribute to creating a safe school environment					
Students and staff participate in decision making concerning school safety					
The school safety committee briefs the school administrators on the school safety situation					
Students often use suggestions boxes to air their concerns regarding safety					
NACADA (National Authority for the Campaign Against Alcohol and Drug Abuse) are invited to talk to students					
The community participates in fighting against alcohol drug and substance abuse					
Parents are sensitized on issues regarding child safety					

The Board of Management monitors the development of infrastructure					
--	--	--	--	--	--

Section D: In-Service training Programmes and Provision of Safe Learning

Environment in Public Secondary Schools

1. Kindly, rate the extent to which you agree with the following statements on the influence of in-service training programmes on provision of safe learning environment in your school

Test Items	SA	A	U	D	SD
	5	4	3	2	1
Students and staff are taken through security drills to equip them handle security threats and emergencies					
All students and staff are exposed to the Ministry of Education safety manual					
The school regularly invites resource persons from different safety departments to talk to the students and staff about safety					
Students and staff have been trained on handling and use of safety gadgets such as fire extinguisher					
Student safety sensitization programs are carried out in the school					
The school safety committee is regularly trained on safety issues					
All stake holders are regularly trained on First Aid provision					

Thank you,

Mary Ndunge Mbuvi

Appendix IV: Interview Guide for Principals and Members of School Board of Management

Dear respondent,

The researcher is a student undertaking a degree course in Master of Education in Educational Administration at Machakos University researching **Influence of Governance Practices on Provision of Safe Learning Environment in Public Secondary Schools in Makueni County, Kenya**. The information you provide will be treated with confidentiality and used for this study.

Section A: Demographic Information

1. Gender:.....
2. What is your highest level of education?.....

Section B: Compliance with Safety Standards and Guidelines and Provision of Safe Learning Environment in in Public Secondary Schools

1. To what extend have you complied with safety and standard guidelines?
.....
.....
2. How has compliance with safety standards and guides influenced provision of safe learning environment in your secondary school?
.....
.....
3. Which measures would you suggest to enhance compliance with safety standard guidelines?
.....
.....

Section C: Stakeholder Participation and Provision of Safe Learning

Environment in Public Secondary Schools

1. Which stakeholders do you involve in the school governance?
.....
.....
2. To what extent has stakeholder participation influenced provision of safe learning environment in your secondary school?
.....
.....

Section D: In-service Training Programmes and Provision of Safe Learning

Environment in Public Secondary Schools

1. How often does the school conduct training for the teachers and students on safety measures?
.....
.....
2. How has training of staff on safety influenced provision of safe learning environment in your secondary school?
.....
.....

Thank you,

Mary Ndunge Mbuvi

Appendix V: Document Checklist Analysis Guide for the Researcher

The statements below are concerned with compliance with safety standards in secondary schools. Please tick the one that best describes your opinion.

	Facilities	Availability/Condition	Tick appropriately
1	School Compound	Fenced	
		Partially fenced	
2	Condition of school compound	Neat	
		Fairly neat	
3	Safety of the school compound	Dangerous	
		Landscaped and Safe for children	
		Presence of Trees	
4	Condition of Playground	Grassed and well kept	
5	Classroom	Clean, Safe and well maintained	
		Suitable size and well ventilated	
		Doors and windows open outwards	
6	Dormitories	Space between beds	
		Grills on windows	
		Doors opening outwards	
7	Sources of water	Pipe borne water	
		River	
		None	
8	Toilet facilities	Water cistern	
		Ventilated improved pit	
		Pit toilet	
		None	
9	First Aid Kit	Not available	
		Available and stocked	
		Available and not stocked	
10	Fire extinguishers	Available and serviced	
		Available and not serviced	
		available	

**Appendix VI: Introduction Letter from the School of Postgraduate Studies of
Machakos University**



MACHAKOS UNIVERSITY
OFFICE OF THE DEAN GRADUATE SCHOOL

Telephone: 254-(0)735247939, (0)723805929

Email: graduateschool@mksu.ac.ke

Website: www.machakosuniversity.ac.ke

P.O Box 136-90100

Machakos

KENYA

REF. MksU/ASA/GS/3/3

4th July, 2024

The Director,
National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation
P.O Box 30623,
NAIROBI

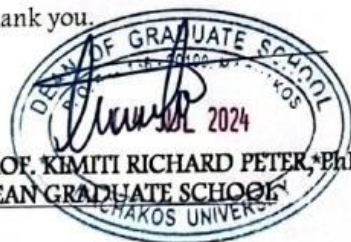
Dear Sir

RE: MARY NDUNGE MBUVI (E55-2791-2019)

The above named is a masters student in the second year of study and has cleared coursework. The University has cleared her to conduct a research entitled: **"Influence of Governance Practices on Provision of Safe Learning Environment In Public Secondary Schools in Makueni County, Kenya."**

Kindly assist her with a Research Permit in order to undertake the research.

Thank you.



PROF. KIMITI RICHARD PETER, PhD
DEAN GRADUATE SCHOOL

KRP/sk



ISO 9001:2015 CertifiedCo-creating Sustainable Futures

Appendix VII: Authorization Letter from National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation, NACOSTI

 REPUBLIC OF KENYA Ref No: 377692	 NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION Date of Issue: 30/July/2024
RESEARCH LICENSE	
	
This is to Certify that Ms. Mary Ndunge Mbuvi of Machakos University, has been licensed to conduct research as per the provision of the Science, Technology and Innovation Act, 2013 (Rev.2014) in Makeni on the topic: INFLUENCE OF GOVERNANCE PRACTICES ON PROVISION OF SAFE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN MAKUENI COUNTY, KENYA for the period ending : 30/July/2025.	
License No: NACOSTI/P/24/38335	
 Director General NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION	
Applicant Identification Number 377692 Verification QR Code	
	
NOTE: This is a computer generated License. To verify the authenticity of this document, Scan the QR Code using QR scanner application.	
See overleaf for conditions	

**Appendix VIII: Research Authorization Letter from County Commissioner,
Makueni**



**OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
MINISTRY OF INTERIOR AND NATIONAL ADMINISTRATION**

Telegram:
Telephone:
Fax:
Email: makuenicc@yahoo.com

**COUNTY COMMISSIONER
MAKUENI COUNTY
P.O. Box 1-90300
MAKUENI**

Ref: MKN/CC/ADM.6/1 VOL.VI/20

8th August, 2024

**Ms. Mary Ndunge Mbuvi
MACHAKOS UNIVERSITY**

RE: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION

Reference is made to Director General National Commission for Science Technology and Innovation Research License **Ref. No. NACOSTI/P/24/38335** dated **30th July, 2024** on the above subject.

You are hereby authorized to undertake research on **"Influence of Governance practices on provision of safe learning environment in public Secondary Schools in Makueni County"** for the period ending **30th July, 2025**

By a copy of this letter all Deputy County Commissioners are requested to give you the necessary assistance.

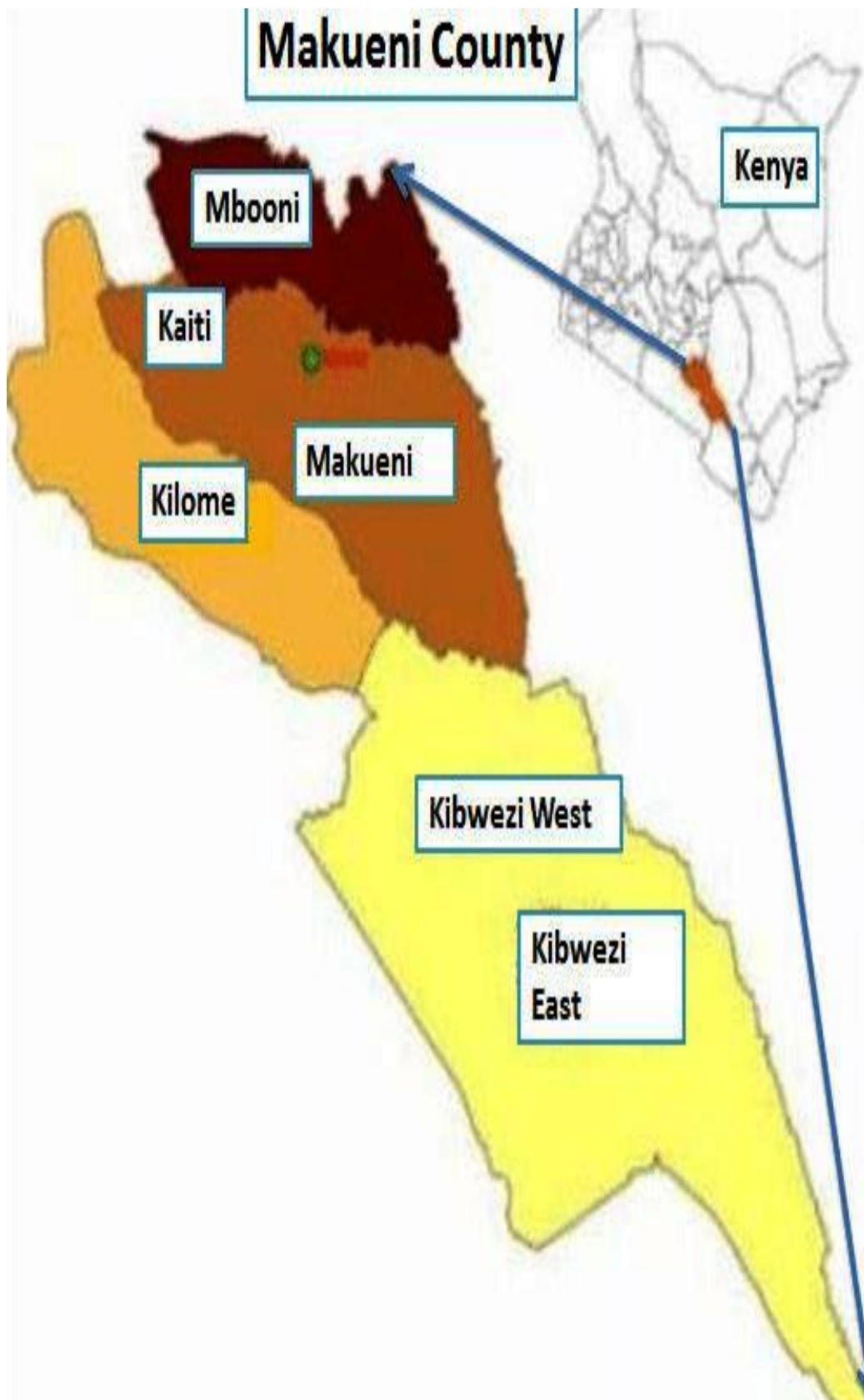


**N. J. KIMUTAI
FOR: COUNTY COMMISSIONER
MAKUENI**

**C. C.
County Director of Education
MAKUENI**

**All Deputy County Commissioners
MAKUENI COUNTY**

Appendix IX: The Map of Makueni County



Source: IEBC (2012)