The Relationship between Student Safety Practices and Retention in Public Secondary Schools in Kisii County, Kenya

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ABSTRACT:

The purpose of the study was to investigate the relationship between students' safety practices and students' retention in Public Secondary Schools in Kisii County, Kenya. The study was guided by Vroom's expectancy and McGregor's X and Y theories. A conceptual framework involving the variables under investigation was drawn at the end of the literature review. The research employed a survey research design in conducting the study. The study was conducted in Kisii County. The target population was 354 Public Secondary Schools with a population of 115,683 composed of Principals, Deputy Principals, Students and School Head Cooks. A sample of 35 Public Secondary Schools was selected for the study using a Multi-stage sampling technique. The study sample was 525 respondents comprised of 420 students, 35 Deputy Principals, 35 Principals and 35 Head Cooks. Questionnaires, document analysis and interview schedules were used in data collection. Experts in the area under study validated the instruments. A coefficient of 0.8 in both the students' and Deputy Principals' questionnaires was obtained. Descriptive and inferential statistics was used in analysing quantitative data, while qualitative data was analyzed thematically. The study findings advocated that there was a strong and positive correlation between student safety practices ($r=.689$) and student retention in public secondary schools in Kisii County, Kenya. Tables, pie charts, bar graphs and textual forms were used in the present the findings. This study was significant because it provides new knowledge on how principals can improve student management practices to improve student retention.

Key Terms: Student Safety Practices, Principals, Retention rate, Public Secondary Schools

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Introduction

Student retention in public secondary schools in Kisii County has been chronically low over the years as attested by statistics in Table 1. This is despite the Government's effort to improve the retention rate of students in secondary schools through the introduction of Free Day Secondary Education (FDSE) funding. Thus, the problem that this study sought to address was the persistent low retention rate of students in Public Secondary Schools in Kisii County. Though the problem of student retention is all over the country (Muganda et al., 2016), it is more pronounced in Kisii County because it has been persistent over the years. Nationally, students' retention rate at secondary school level stands at 90 per cent (Republic of Kenya, 2017) while in Kisii County, the rate stands at 67 per cent against the expected retention rate of 100 per cent (Kisii County Director of Education's [CDE's] Office, Kisii 2018). A report from Kisii County Education Conference (Kisii County Government, 2014) indicated that there is a need for research on the causes of the low retention rate of learners in Public Secondary Schools in Kisii County. Another report by Omae et al. (2017) asserts that policies addressing students' retention in Public Secondary Schools in Kisii County have not been adequately adhered to by principals. Consequently, despite the fact that major strides have been made by the Government of Kenya to improve learners' retention rates in Public Secondary schools through subsidized Free Day Secondary Education (FDSE) Program, the retention rates of learners are still low in Kisii County.

Ngatia (2015) noted that high enrolment or even high levels of access to education without an equal level of retention of students in schools would be an effort in futility. When student retention rates are low, Universal Basic Education (UBE) and Education for All (EFA) initiative may not be achieved (Republic of Kenya, 2013). Besides, the country loses financially in terms of resources involved in financing the education of her citizens. Further still, the Country loses the potential skilled workforce needed in her national target of attaining national development strategies (Lewin, 2008). Therefore, the recommendations of the Kisii County Education Conference (2014) and the persistent trend of low students' retention in Public Secondary Schools in Kisii County prompted the researcher to carry out this study to investigate the relationship between safety and retention of Students in Public Secondary Schools in Kisii County, Kenya.

Othman (2016) posits that in the current competitive and globalized education, the reputational fall-out of low student retention can be damaging for institutions of learning. Thus student retention is a global challenge that must be managed accordingly in order for institutions to continue enjoying high reputation world over. As such, global trends in the acquisition of quality education has caused debates on the best student managerial practices which schools should adopt for effective curriculum delivery and improved retention rates (Abdulhakim, 2015). In a school setting, management practices refer to the way the school Managers use the available resources to maximize returns (Chemutai, 2015). They also refer to the methods or techniques employed by the school management to achieve the objectives of the institution in

the most appropriate way (Akande, 2015). In either way, the principal is always considered very vital in the successful functioning of the school (Ndinza, 2015). Examination of literature on student retention, reports that while there are challenges common across institutions of learning, some of the challenges are specific to institutions and the people within those institutions (Evans, 2000). This, therefore, calls for the need to study the relationship between student management practices such as safety retention of Students in Public Secondary Schools. Research by Bryk (2016) on school change techniques in the United Kingdom, suggested that schools should strategize to engage acceptable student management practices that can improve students' retention rates. Such a study is lacking in Kisii County, Kenya.

In the Basic Education Act (Republic of Kenya, 2013), the safety of the learners should be an issue of concern of the school. Thus, the school principal should make sure that the learner is in a safe environment (Republic of Kenya, 2018). Student safety practices may improve or reduce students' retention rate in a school. This student safety can be viewed from several perspectives such as physical safety, mental safety or even health-wise safety. In terms of material security, the school principal must provide learners with a safe, secure and peaceful environment in which learning can thrive (Republic of Kenya, 2013). This notwithstanding, cases of insecurity in schools have been reported across the globe. Dunne et al. (2010), reported about Arkansas' incident; in USA, where the eleven and thirteen years old, fired at their classmates at the playground and killed four girls instantly. In South Africa, Mnyaka (2006) reported that violence is an issue of the

decade. Aluede et al. (2005) also reported that in Nigeria, protests and unrest are regular features in learning institutions. Matsong (2013) also noted that violence was prevalent in Botswana. In Kenya, Kirui et al. (2011) reported that there are growing concerns about student safety issues in secondary schools in Kenya. Migiro (2012) asserts that in some instances of this insecurity, some students lose their life.

In Kenya, many schools experience low retention rates of learners due to student managerial problems (Bryk, 2016; Republic of Kenya, 2017). A study done by Yambo and Tuitoek (2014) in Kisumu District on the effects of principals' decision-making in the management of secondary schools, observed that high performing schools have increased student retention and that principals who practice good management control them practices. Due to poor student management practices, Kenyan schools have witnessed principals being humiliated and ejected from schools due to allegations of poor student management practices (Oteba, 2018).

Although the Kenyan government is providing direct grants to secondary schools through Free Day Secondary Education funding, student retention in schools continue to be low (Orodho, et al., 2014). Thus, retention of learners in schools is a major concern of the government and various education stakeholders in Kenya. As noted by Fernandez and Mateso (2015), when student retention is low, the country fails to achieve Education for All (EFA) as outlined in her Basic Education Act (Republic of Kenya, 2013). Though student retention is a challenge everywhere in Kenya, in Kisii County, it has been a perennial challenge

over the years, and this has raised a lot of concern of many education stakeholders (Obure, 2013). In many open discussion fora on education standards, many scholars have observed that student retention rate in Kisii County is low (Nyagosia, 2010; Ogari, 2010). The problem of low

student retention rate in many Public Secondary Schools in Kisii County necessitated this study. Table 1 shows a summary of the students' retention rate in public secondary schools in Kisii County for the past five years.

Table 1: Students' Retention Rate in Public Secondary Schools in Kisii County for the Period 2014-2018

Year	Form 1	Form 2	Form 3	Form 4	Total	Retention Rate
2014	31,511	25,052	21,303	15,550	93,416	-
2015	35,799	28,476	21,906	16,423	102,604	90%
2016	34,046	30,194	24,119	18,081	106,440	76%
2017	54,886	30,589	25,489	18,837	129,801	60%
2018	51,115	38,339	25,268	23,985	133,621	67 %

Source: Statistics from Kisii County Education Office (2018).

As evident from the statistics in Table 1, student enrolment in Form one, in all the years, is higher than the enrolment in subsequent Forms in Kisii County, Kenya. The retention rates for students who enrolled in Form one in 2014 and remained in schools in 2015 in Form 2, was 90 per cent. The retention rate decreased from 90 per cent to 76 per cent in 2016. In 2017, the retention rate was 60 per cent. For those students who enrolled in Form one in 2015 and completed their schooling in 2018, the retention rate stands at 67 per cent against the ideal retention rate of 100 per cent. A retention rate of 67 per cent is relatively low, considering the government's effort to improve secondary school student retention rate to 100 per cent (Republic of Kenya, 2013).

Nationally, at the secondary school level, retention rates keep decreasing as one ascends the academic ladder at the secondary school level (MOEST, 2014). Statistics in Table 1 shows that the student retention rate in Kisii County is not

satisfactory despite the Government's policy of having 100 per cent retention of students in schools (Republic of Kenya, 2013). The low retention of students in a school may be due to student migration to other schools, and this may be a problem to a learner because it disrupts the learning process, may bring confusion to a student in terms of syllabus coverage, the learner takes time to adjust to the new environment, and the whole process may lead to a low performance by the learner (Gichohi, 2014). The low retention rate (67 per cent) of students in public secondary schools in Kisii County, Kenya presented the need to carry out this study to provide solutions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Safety Practices and Retention in Public Secondary Schools

In the Basic Education Act (MOEST, 2013), the safety of the learners is an issue of concern of the principal. Thus, the principal should ensure that the learner is in a safe

environment (Republic of Kenya, 2018). Student safety practices, when carried out well, improve students' retention rate in a school. Student safety can be viewed from several perspectives such as physical safety, mental safety or even health-wise safety. In terms of physical safety, the school principal has to provide learners with a safe, secure and peaceful environment in which learning can thrive (Republic of Kenya, 2013). Review of literature reveals that there are widespread safety management issues in institutions of learning across the globe.

Dunne et al. (2010), reported about Arkansas' incident; in USA, where the eleven and thirteen years old, fired at their classmates at the playground and killed four girls instantly. In South Africa, Mnyaka (2006) reported that violence was an issue of the decade. Aluede, et al. (2005) also reported that in Nigeria, protests and unrest were regular features in learning institutions. Matsong (2013) also noted that violence was prevalent in Botswana. In Kenya, Kirui et al. (2011) reported that there are growing concerns about student safety issues in secondary schools in Kenya. Migiro (2012) asserts that in some instances of this student insecurity, some students lose their life. Since there was scanty information about studies that have been conducted on the relationship between the school security and the retention of students in Public Secondary Schools in Kisii County, this study was done to bridge this gap.

Students should also be prepared on how to handle trauma just in case it strikes in a school. Research by David et al. (2007) indicated that Kenyan schools commonly experience traumatic events leading to high rate of post-trauma stress disorders (PTSD). This calls for the

intervention of principals to put in place mechanisms of handling cases of trauma in schools. Mwenga (2011) noted that schools rarely train their students on safety measures, and as to such, most students are not able to handle emergence cases. Trauma cases affect the self-esteem of learners, as observed by Kithela (2016). Kithela posits that high self-esteem students have a high affinity to remain in school than those with low self-esteem. Since there is limited information on a study that has been done to investigate the relationship between disaster preparedness and the retention of students in Public Secondary Schools in Kisii County, this study was conducted to examine this influence and document it.

The school principal should protect learners from acts of bullying, as this causes unnecessary torture. Peguero and Williams (2012), report that the recent surge of bullying-related instances in many schools has caused growing concern among the educators and the government. Lacey and Cornell (2011) reported that school bullying statistics show that 77per cent of students are bullied mentally, verbally and physically. Review of literature reveals that the majority of bullied students eventually drop out of school, thus reducing the retention rate of students in a school (Juvonen, 2011). Due to this fact, school principals are supposed to eliminate cases of bullying in their schools. This study aimed at investigating the relationship between bullying and the retention of students in Public Secondary Schools in Kisii County, Kenya.

The school principal has authority over the school's physical facilities (Emily, & Lydia, 2012). These facilities are meant for student use, and if their conditions are

deplorable, they make learning learner unfriendly and this affects the retention rate of students in the school. Non-availability of adequate physical facilities in a school may also affect learning (Ihuoma, 2012). In research by Nyakundi et al. (2012), it was established that school funds were not being utilized well to avail or improve the status of the school physical facilities. On the other hand, Isa et al. (2014) contended that the school principal should be concerned with school physical facilities by making visits and check-ups of the school facilities. These facilities must also comply with the safety standards of the government (Republic of Kenya, 2018). So far, there is scanty information on studies that have been done in Kisii County on the relationship between the school physical facilities and the retention of students in Public Secondary Schools in Kisii County, Kenya.

The learners' health should be properly maintained in the school. This is because learners' health is the key to successful teaching and learning process in schools, as noted by Lisa (2015). This is because the majority of the people; including students, go to work when they ought to have stayed at home due to sickness (Vroome, 2015). According to Taloyan et al. (2012), sickness prevalence refers to a situation when one goes to work despite illness. Johansen (2015) reported sickness prevalence in the Norwegian study of physicians. In Danish core workforce, more than 70 per cent of sickness prevalence was reported, and the same share was noted in a Canadian service organization (Aronsson, et al., 2014). Kagendo (2013) observed that many students go home every day because they are feeling unwell or even because they have bruised themselves in school. Consequently, learners

should be protected and given necessary medical attention while in school for learning to thrive well (Nyongesa, et al., 2015). Since school health practices by the principal affect students' retention rate in schools, this study was done to investigate the relationship between learners' health and the retention of students in Public Secondary Schools in Kisii County, Kenya.

A good student safety practice should involve assisting students with special needs or disabilities in school. Oriedo (2003) asserts that an actual litmus test for any stable democratic institution is the way that institution cares for and protects its most vulnerable citizens. In developing countries alone, disability related issues affect approximately 50 per cent of the population (Mukuria & Korir, 2006). In Kenya, this group make up to approximately 20 per cent of Kenya's population, according to the 2009 population census (Kenya Bureau of Statistics, 2009). Since education is a critical tool to liberate the minds of people from the shackles of poverty and ignorance, every child should be educated regardless of his or her disability status. More so, research has shown that educated parents handle child disabilities better than their counterparts without education (Sleeper, 1986) do. In the same way, the school principal should handle learners with disabilities with a lot of care. Studies on the relationship between disability handling practices by the school principals and the retention of students in Public Secondary Schools in Kisii County have not been adequately carried out. This study was conducted with intentions to bridge this gap.

RESULTS

Relationship between Student Safety Practices and Student Retention in Public Secondary Schools

369 students participated in the study. The students were provided with questionnaires and requested to indicate

their opinion concerning their agreement or disagreement levels about the relationship between student safety practices and the retention of students in their respective schools. The responses obtained have been indicated in Table 2.

Table2: Students' Responses on Student Safety Practices and Retention in Schools (N=369)

The following safety practices have a positive relationship with the retention of students in my school	SD f %	D f %	A f %	SA f %	Mean	SD
Regular checks on school facilities to ensure their proper functioning and safety	36(9.77%)	21(5.68%)	149(40.38%)	163(44.23%)	3.19	0.81
Ensuring that physically challenged learners are taken care of as required	7(4.14%)	30(8.13%)	234(63.41%)	98(24.32)	3.14	0.85
Ensuring that sick cases among the learners get immediate medical attention	5(1.36%)	11(2.98%)	146(39.57%)	207(56.09%)	3.50	0.50
Providing enough security in the school by engaging the required personnel, e.g. watchmen	9(2.44%)	20(5.42%)	213(57.73%)	127(34.41%)	3.24	0.75
Ensuring that there are no cases of bullying in the school	1(0.67%)	17(4.61%)	207(56.09%)	144(39.02%)	3.34	0.66
Ensuring that students' with special needs are catered for in the school in terms of provision of their special facilities	15(4.06%)	54(14.63%)	197(53.39%)	103(27.92%)	3.05	0.95
Advising learners on how to handle disaster and trauma in case they happen	19(5.14%)	47(12.74%)	125(33.86%)	229(48.26%)	3.80	0.20

Ensuring that the school is properly fenced	25(6.77%)	9(2.44%)	130(35.23%)	205(55.56%)	3.40	0.60
Ensuring that all people entering the school are registered and directed at the school gate	11(2.98%)	7(4.14%)	126(34.15%)	225(58.46%)	3.53	0.47
Ensuring that classroom doors are opening outwards	8(2.17%)	35(9.48%)	196(53.12%)	130(35.23%)	3.21	0.79
Ensuring that the school compound is clean to avoid incidences of diseases	13(3.52%)	29(7.86%)	108(29.27%)	219(59.35%)	3.44	0.56
Regular repairs and maintenance practices on school property	11(2.98%)	39(10.57%)	128(33.86%)	191(52.59%)	3.35	0.65
Ensuring that the school lavatories are treated with disinfectants regularly	25(6.77%)	38(10.30%)	186(50.4%)	120(32.53%)	3.09	0.91
Ensuring that the school has waste disposal that is well maintained	21(5.68%)	56(15.17%)	125(33.86%)	167(45.29%)	3.19	0.81
Ensuring that the school windows have no grills	41(11.11%)	19(5.14%)	177(47.97%)	132(35.78%)	3.08	0.92

The information in Table 2 shows that 84.61 per cent of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed that regular checks of school facilities had a relationship with the students' retention in secondary schools. These study findings concur with the works of Isa et al. (2014) who contend that the school principal should be concerned with school physical facilities by making visits and check-ups of the school facilities. These facilities must also comply with the safety standards of the government (Republic of Kenya, 2018). On ensuring that physically challenged learners are taken care of as required to improve students' retention, 87.735 per cent of the respondents were in support of the practice. It is observed that the practice of

ensuring that learners with special needs are catered for in the school in terms of provision of their special facilities was the least safety practice in the schools as represented by the lowest mean of 3.05 with a standard deviation of 0.95.

With the practice of ensuring that sick cases among the learners get immediate medical attention, 95.6 per cent of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed that there was a relationship between the practice and retention of students in schools. Majority of the respondents comprising of 92.14 per cent agreed and strongly agreed that providing enough security in the school; by engaging

the required personnel such as the guards, had a close relationship with the students' retention in the school. Further, the fencing of the school compound as a way of improving students' retention in the school was embraced by 90.79 per cent of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed that the two variables were related to each other under consideration. This is in line with Lisa et al. (2014) who posited that school administrators should allocate enough resources for guarding, fencing and surveillance of the school compound for security purposes. On the scrutiny of all visitors coming into and out of the school compound, 92.61 per cent of the respondents concurred and strongly agreed that the practice improves the retention of students in the school.

On ensuring that there are no cases of bullying in the school, 95.11 per cent of the students concurred and strongly agreed that this had a relationship with the retention of students in the school. On ensuring that learners with special needs are catered for in the school, and in terms of provision of their special facilities, 81.31 per cent of the students agreed and strongly agreed that it affected retention in schools. About advising learners on how to handle disaster and trauma in case they happen, the majority of the students comprising of 82.12 per cent agreed and strongly agreed that there was a relationship between the two variables. Only 17.88% of the students were of the contrary opinion. Table 4 shows that advising learners on how to handle disaster and trauma in case they happen, was a major safety practice in schools that can affect student retention as represented by the highest mean of 3.80 and a standard deviation of 0.20. The research revealed that 88.35 per cent of the respondents agreed that the safety of classrooms in terms of doors opening outwards would improve retention. With regard to school windows, the majority of the students (83.75 per cent) agreed and strongly agreed that ensuring windows have no grills was related to the retention of students.

About ensuring that the school compound is clean to avoid incidences of diseases, 88.62 per cent of the students agreed and strongly agreed that there was a relationship with retention. 11.38 per cent of the students disagreed and strongly disagreed that there was no relationship between the two variables. In addition, majority of the respondents comprising of 86.45 per cent agreed and strongly agreed that regular repairs and maintenance practices on school property had a positive relationship with the retention of students in the schools. When asked whether ensuring that the school lavatories are treated with disinfectants regularly could affect retention of students, 82.93 per cent of the students agreed and strongly agreed on the relationship. On ensuring that the school has waste disposal that is well maintained, 79.15 per cent of the students strongly agreed and strongly agreed that this could affect positively on retention of students in a school. Those who disagreed and strongly disagreed with the practice were only 20.85 per cent of the respondents.

However, these study findings of student safety practices are a complete departure from the works of Dunne, et al. (2010), who laid emphasis on violence in schools that reported about Arkansas' incident; in USA, where the eleven and thirteen years old, fired at their classmates at the playground and killed four girls instantly. In South Africa, Mnyaka (2006) reported that violence was an issue of the decade. Aluede, et al. (2005) also reported that in Nigeria, protests and unrest were regular features in learning institutions. Matsong (2013) also noted that violence was prevalent in Botswana. In Kenya, Kirui et al. (2011) reported that there are growing concerns about student safety issues in secondary schools in Kenya. Migiro (2012) asserts that in some instances of this student insecurity, some students lose their life. The study sought to determine the correlation between the Student Safety Practices and retention of Students in Public Secondary

Schools in Kisii County, Kenya, by doing Pearson's Correlation Coefficient analysis. Table 3 shows the results of Pearson correlation analysis between student safety practices and students' retention in Public Secondary Schools in Kisii County, Kenya.

Table 3: Correlation Analysis for Student Safety Practices and Retention

Pearson correlation (r)	Student safety practices	Student retention
Pearson correlation	.689**	1
Sig. (2-tailed)	.0001	.
N	466	
** Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)		

The analysis of the Pearson Correlation Coefficient in Table 18 shows that there was a strong and positive correlation ($r=.689$, $p\text{-value}<0.05$) between Student retention

(dependent variable) and Student Safety Practices (independent variable) in Public Secondary Schools in Kisii County, Kenya. Since the p-value was less than 0.05 level of significance used, it was concluded that the correlation coefficient was statistically significant.

Relationship between Student Safety Practices and Student Retention

The study sought to investigate the relationship between student safety practices and student retention in Public Secondary Schools in Kisii County, Kenya. Using an interview schedule, Principals were interviewed as to whether there was any relationship between student safety practices and students' retention in Public Secondary Schools in Kisii County, Kenya. 32 principals participated in the study. Table 28 shows the Principals' responses as to whether there was any relationship between student safety practices and student retention rate in public secondary schools in Kisii County, Kenya.

Table 4: Principals' Responses to the Relationship between Student Safety Practices and Retention in Schools

Principals		
Response	Frequency(f)	Per cent (%)
Yes	31	96.88%
No	1	3.12%
Total	32	100

Majority of the principals comprising of 96.88 per cent agreed that there was a positive relationship between student safety practices and student retention in public

secondary schools in Kisii County, Kenya Only 3.12 per cent of the Principals disagreed. This finding is consistent with the Basic Education Act (Republic of Kenya, 2013), that

postulates that safety of the learners is an issue of concern of the principal. Thus, the principal should ensure that the learner is in a safe environment (Republic of Kenya, 2018). Student safety practices, when carried out well, improve students' retention rate in a school. Student safety can be viewed from several perspectives such as; the physical safety, mental safety or even health-wise safety. In terms of physical safety, the school principal has a duty to provide learners with a safe, secure and peaceful ecosystem in which learning can thrive (Republic of Kenya, 2013).

The respondents comprising of Principals opined that student safety practices had a positive relationship with student retention in their respective secondary schools. In one school, Principal P14 indicated that “*student safety was crucial in improving student retention in schools because it guarantees them safety from outsiders*”. Once students feel secure, they are comfortable learning in that secure environment. Another Principal P25 observed that “*student safety ensured that students’ property and lives are properly taken care of. This creates a feeling of contentment among*

learners leading to high retention levels in the schools”. In another school, Principal P26 noted that “*student safety was even a Ministerial directive and therefore all schools need to offer maximum security to learners and institutions of learning so as to guarantee improved student retention*.” Another Principal P27 respondent opined that “*school safety included; built school fences, secure classrooms and dormitories, doors and windows which are opening outwards and many other aspects*”. Another Principal P28 averred that “*schools with robust student safety measures enjoyed high student retention compared to those that don’t have these safety interventions*.”

This theme of student safety is in line with the works of Jailam and Suleiman (2014), Vroome (2015), Taloyan, et al., (2012), whose themes were school physical facilities’ utilization, safety standards adherence and health of learners while in school. Student safety while in school, therefore, influence the retention of students in the school. This ensured that students were safe and secure while undertaking their studies in the schools.

Regression Analysis of Student safety practices

Table 5: Model Regression Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		t	Sig.	Co linearity Statistics	
	β	Std. Error			Tolerance	VIF
Constant	1.553					
student safety practices	.113	.055	2.059	.046	.447	2.240

Note. a. Dependent Variable: Retention

b. Independent variable: Student Safety Practices

The values for the regression weights are as follows:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \varepsilon$$

Whereby, Y= Dependent variable (Retention of students)

β_0 = Constant (Y Intercept)

β_1 = Model parameters (regression coefficients or change in Y)

X_1 = Student Safety practices

ε = Stochastic term (Error term)

Based on the regression coefficients results shown in Table 18, the regression model equation can be written as follows:

$Y = 1.553 + 0.113X_1 + \varepsilon$. From the model, it was also established that a unit increase in students' safety practices would cause an increase in student retention in public secondary schools by a factor of 0.113. Thus, there was enough evidence to conclude that there was a significant relationship between student safety practices and the retention of students in public secondary schools in Kisii County, Kenya. In order to establish the predictive capacity of student safety practices on student retention, the absolute p-value ($p = 0.046$) of the regression coefficient of student safety practices was compared with the level of significance of the study. Since the p-value was less than the level of significance of the study critical t-value ($p < 0.05$), it was concluded that student safety practices were significant predictors of student retention in public secondary schools in Kisii County, Kenya. Consequently, the null hypothesis that there was no statistically significant relationship between student safety practices and students retention in public secondary schools in Kisii County, Kenya, was rejected. These findings are consistent with the Kenyan report dubbed Republic of Kenya (2018) that emphasizes that student safety practices when carried out well improve student's retention rate in a school.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

From the study findings, it was revealed that there was a statistically significant relationship between student safety practices and retention of students in Public Secondary Schools in Kisii County, Kenya. This led to the rejection of the null hypothesis that there was no statistically significant relationship between student safety practices and retention of students in public secondary schools in Kisii County, Kenya. Hence, it was concluded that providing enough security in the school by engaging the required personnel, ensuring that there are no cases of bullying in the school, ensuring that the school is properly fenced, ensuring that the school has waste disposal that is well maintained, regular repairs and maintenance practices on school property, advising learners on how to handle disaster and trauma in case they happen, ensuring that learners with special needs are catered for in the school in terms of provision of their special facilities, regular checks on school facilities to ensure their proper functioning and safety, are among the student safety practices that create a conducive environment for student learning, thus influencing the student retention in Public Secondary Schools in Kisii County.

Recommendations

The study also recommends that school management should provide enough security in the school by engaging trained security personnel and by addressing all security concerns in the school. Also, the school management has a duty to ensure that there are no cases of bullying in the

school as such cases demotivate learners, thus affecting their retention. Additionally, the government should conduct regular checks in schools to assess the standards of school facilities to ensure their proper functioning,

safety and security by ensuring that schools are properly fenced and that they comply with policy guidelines from the Ministry.

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