

Influence of School Policy and Guidelines on Promotion of Child-Friendly Schools Model in Public Primary Schools in Meru County, Kenya

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Abstract

Good governance practices in learning institutions are important for effective management, positive learning experiences, improved school systems and quality of learning outcomes. The objective of the study was to establish the influence of school policy and guidelines on promotion of child-friendly schools' model in public primary schools in Meru county, Kenya. The study was founded on transformational leadership theory by Burns (1978), and social systems theory (Katz & Kahn, 1978). A correlational design in a mixed methods approach was adopted, integrating both quantitative and qualitative methods. Target population was 6,814 individuals, comprising of 647 headteachers, 647 chairpersons of boards of management, and 5,520 teachers in public primary schools in Meru county. Slovin's formula was used to select a sample of 378 individuals. Self-designed questionnaires with closed ended items were used to collect quantitative data from teachers and headteachers. Qualitative data was obtained from chairpersons of boards of management through interview guide. Descriptive statistics were used for quantitative data analyses. Qualitative data was analyzed in thematic content analysis. Inferential statistics were conducted through correlation analysis using Pearson's product moment correlation coefficient for the purpose of testing the hypothesis. The findings revealed that school policy and guidelines significantly and positively influenced promotion of CFS model ($r(286) = 0.16, P < 0.05$). The study therefore recommended that teachers needed more specific training on learners' gender dynamics and unique learning needs of both boys and girls with the aim of achieving truly gender responsive and supportive learning environments. Further, the Ministry of Education through the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development ought to develop a specific training module focusing on the components of CFS, with the aim of enhancing teacher specific skills towards holistically promoting quality education.

Keywords: School Governance, School Leadership Practices, School Policy and Guidelines, Child-Friendly Schools, Effective School Management, Quality Learning Outcomes.

1. Introduction

In its framework guiding the implementation of child-friendly schools (CFS), UNICEF (2009) described such schools as learning systems that are child-seeking, actively identifying and seeking inclusion of disadvantaged children, and observing their rights and wellbeing. According to UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS) (2019), close to 258 million children of primary school age were out of school by the end of 2018. The purpose of CFS is clearly spelt out in the five dimensions of the framework, which emphasize on inclusion in accessing education; effective teaching and learning; health and safety of children; responsiveness and gender sensitivity; and engaging families and community (UNICEF, 2009). The framework conforms to the United Nation's Convention on the Rights of the Child, which was virtually ratified by all countries across the world except the United States (Mehta, 2015).

School policy entails establishment of predictions for norms and specific behavior aimed at guiding the daily functioning of a learning institution in order to have an effective and safe place for learning (Mettler, 2016). In the context of school management, good governance involves putting in place a set of responsibilities, policies, procedures and practices exercised by learning institutions to provide strategic direction in order to achieve the intended learning goals. School policy and guidelines provide directions to students, teachers and support staff on requisite code of behavior and therefore ensure responsive, preventive, and supportive measures for safeguarding quality learning experiences in school as envisaged in CFS framework (Kepe, 2014).

Despite various policies and programmes being developed and implemented both at the global and national levels, guaranteeing safety, protection and observing rights of children has to date remained a serious challenge. Children still continue to experience numerous forms of abuse, neglect, punishment, inequalities, and various forms of ill-treatment within school settings (Thomas, et al., 2018).

Researchers have explored on school governance practices related to school policy and guidelines and its association in advancing child-friendly learning spaces. According to Malta et al. (2014), some of the issues affecting children's mental and physical health included discipline related behaviours such as schoolyard bullying. Malta et al. (2014) found out that parental involvement in disciplinary procedures in Brazilian schools seems to be an effective approach for controlling bullying. However, Malta et al (2014) argue that severe and punitive disciplinary procedures seem to escalate the problem since they predispose students to aggressive conflict resolution mechanisms.

Studies in many developing countries, including in Sub-Saharan Africa indicate that strides have been made to achieve child-friendly schools' model. However, many countries still have numerous challenges in implementing the model and many children continue to miss out or attend school under difficult circumstances. In South Africa, a study by Devnarain and Mathias (2011) showed that nearly a third of girls attending school have been sexually assaulted in school, mostly in school toilets that are located far away from the main school building.

Mugambi (2017) from a study carried out in Meru, Kenya, observes that regardless of increased sensitization on the need for quality learning environment, many challenges still stand in the way of implementation of child friendly schools' model, and that many school curricula are still being developed around a 'traditional' student model, which poses various challenges for different types of learners. The study therefore sought to establish the influence of school policy and guidelines on promotion of child-friendly schools' model in public primary schools in Meru county, Kenya.

2. Literature Review

School policy is an establishment of predictions for norms and specific behavior aimed at guiding the daily functioning of a learning institution in order to have an effective and safe place for learning (Mettler, 2016). School policy and guidelines provide directions to students, teachers and support staff on requisite code of behavior and therefore ensure responsive, preventive, and supportive measures for safeguarding quality learning experiences in school as envisaged in CFS framework (Kepe, 2014). Although child-friendly schools' framework was not adopted in the United States, Jones et al. (2012) suggested that school policies should incorporate programmes such as social and emotional learning (SEL), which is vital for developing and supporting skills like navigating relationships among students, managing negative emotions, and responsible decision-making.

Among the principles of child-friendly schools include promotion of safe, protective and healthy environment. However, indiscipline acts such as bullying can go against these principles since they can affect students' physical health, social, and mental wellbeing. Bullied students have a higher risk for experiencing poor health, interpersonal difficulties, and low self-esteem among other issues (Navarro et al, 2015; Miske, 2010).

In Brazil, Malta et al. (2014) investigated the manner in which bullying impacted on the wellbeing of learners in Brazilian schools. The study reviewed data from 109, 104 young people. The study established that bullying was prevalent among male students, with the highest risk factor of being bullied found among learners aged 13 years compared to those at the age of 16. The study suggested that there was need for educational leaders and other stakeholders such as parents, and the community, as well as mental health professionals to devise a holistic approach towards identification of measures against bullying in schools. Although the study emphasized the need for stakeholder involvement towards addressing cases of

bullying, it did not indicate whether any factors of school policy and guidelines such as antibullying policy were being utilised to address the unwanted behavior.

Studies have also shown that violence in schools can be a major concern, with most common forms of violence arising from students' indiscipline. However, school leaders can promote safety in schools through enactment and enforcement of policies and guidelines such as having zero tolerance to acts of indiscipline, including possession of illegal drugs, alcohol and weapons (Promoting Safe Schools, 2015). This view supported Meyer and Keenan (2018), who opined that school administrations should strive to invent policies that espouse complaint mechanisms in order to mitigate and help protect the rights of children.

In Australia, Cross et al. (2011) examined the effectiveness of a program aimed at promoting child-friendly environment through reining in bullying behavior. The study socio-ecological intervention targeted individual students, family, classroom, and the whole school on controlling bullying and harassment behaviors. Students from schools with well-established complaint mechanisms were less likely to encounter bullying, compared to those that did not employ the intervention. Further, engaging learners in their distinctive social contexts reduced their experiences of harassment and increases their chances of reporting bullying to the school administration. The research however only assessed the effectiveness of antibullying policy and it is not clear how other sub-domains, including school-based teacher professional development would impact on promotion of Child-friendly school model.

Other studies have however indicated that school-based policies that support teacher professional development like teacher competency and appraisal may improve school disciplinary systems, thus promoting child-friendly schools. Abduh and Zainudin (2016), in Indonesia, established that teachers with essential competencies like pedagogic, social, professional, and personality skills positively impacted on students' rights, personal and learning needs. The study found that this factor indeed helped in promotion of CFS model given that well trained and qualified teachers fall under the goals of CFS framework (UNICEF, 2009). Nevertheless, it was not established how such school-based teacher professional development policies could impact on other indicators of CFS such gender responsiveness. Such shortcomings required further investigation and formed part of the gaps that the present study sought to address.

Research indicates that unwanted behaviours and acts of violence in schools is a common problem that leads to violation of the rights of children in the learning environment. In support of this view, Putra et al. (2020) in Indonesia evaluated the progress of implementation of child-friendly school policy in the Indonesian Depok City. The results indicated that implementation of CFS policy had not been well done and violence and indiscipline, including bullying were still common in many schools.

Other common irregularities affecting learners in Indonesian schools included punishment with violence, sexual violations, brawls among students. The study suggested that there was need for holistic interventions in order to foster positive, child-centered learning environment, though implementation of school-based regulations. Some studies indicate that establishment of antibullying policies, providing support to the affected children and initiating relevant professional development programmes to empower teachers can be useful in creating positive learning (Gaffney, 2019).

Rahimi and Karkami (2015) investigated the role of teachers in enhancing discipline in school environment as a way of promoting safety in schools. The study involved 1408 junior secondary school students and used path method in data analysis. The researchers found out that teachers who adopted positive discipline strategies such as recognition were more effective in enhancing discipline and controlling unwanted behaviours such as bullying compared to those who used punitive measures. The study however, failed to specifically demonstrate how such strategies impacted on promotion of CFS standards, which was the focus of the present study.

In India, Thomas et al. (2018) looked into the challenges affecting the provision of positive learning environment as a prerequisite of child-friendly schools' model. The researchers noted that there was need for positive schooling across the country in order to ensure safe, protective, and healthy school environment. It was further argued that such positive learning environments must emphasize on strength-based education and promote inclusiveness, build character strengths and positive school culture. The study however failed to draw direct associations between the dimensions of school policy and guideline and promotion of CFS.

Positive schooling has been associated with helpful teaching strategies devoid of aggression, violent punishment and pressure (UNICEF, 2021). Conversely, positive school culture is found to promote positive social relations, collaboration and socioemotional support, thus averting unwanted negative behaviours such as violence, abuse and bullying in school environment. This fosters respect among learners, staff and the larger school community creating an inclusive learning environment that learners feel accommodated and free to learn (Widodo, 2019).

School managers must however be cautious when implementing policy touching on learner discipline since this may be counterproductive and fail to promote the standards advanced through CFS framework. In South Africa, Kepe (2014), in a qualitative study carried out in the eastern cape examined the perceptions of teachers and learners on corporal punishment

in two high schools in the region. The study arose due to waning students' discipline in secondary schools in that area that affected learners' retention and completion rates in school. It was discovered that schools employed different approaches to maintain student discipline, such as disciplinary hearings, code of conduct, and security and safety committees, which were found to be contrary to the guidelines of the ministry of education.

School-going children in Africa live under chronic adversity caused by serious health issues, poverty, and sexual abuse (Berger et al., 2018). These are extremely stressful conditions that impact negatively on pupils' mental health both at home and in school and therefore there is need for school-based policies for boosting resilience towards improved health and wellbeing of children. In a study carried out in Nigeria, Igbaji and Sadiyya (2017) explored on the role of the teacher towards realization of child-friendly schools in Kano region. The researchers emphasized that a child friendly school should advance spaces of learning that are conducive, and where teachers are friendly and give priority to safety needs and rights of children. The study concluded that the role of a teacher in promoting CFS is to take control of the learning environment, ensuring that children learn in an environment that is safe, devoid of harassment, violence and that promotes the dignity of children.

Teachers have a role of maintaining discipline in the classroom and school environment, thus emphasizing the need for enforcing rules and conduct and having teachers who are skilled in positive discipline procedures (Rahimi & Karkami 2015). The study by Igbaji and Sadiyya (2017), however did not identify the specific rules and guidelines that teachers practiced, and their effect in promoting CFS model. Berger et al. (2018) in Tanzania, evaluated the efficacy of school-based policy in raising the resiliency and promoting prosocial behavior of public primary school pupils. Learners' resiliency was evaluated before and after 8 months by assessing their hyperactivity, somatic disorders, social difficulties, levels of anxiety, and overall school functioning. The findings indicated that the socially adapted school-based policy was effective in promoting learners' resiliency and enhancing prosocial behaviors, which indeed promoted children's health and wellbeing as envisioned in CFS framework.

In Kenya, there is shortage of studies assessing the relationship between implementation of school-based policies and guidelines and promotion of child-friendly schools. However, Kanamba (2014) sought to determine how teachers' preparedness might influence promotion of CFS environment in primary schools in Igembe North in Meru county. The findings revealed that teachers' attitude towards providing a CFS atmosphere was low in the region as rated by headteachers. It was further noted that teachers were non-committal and lacked preparedness on the provision of CFS standards resulting in poor learning outcomes and pupils dropping out of school. The study recommended that teachers needed refresher courses on implementation of child-friendly schools' model. The present study was important for the purpose of assessing how school-based policies and guidelines such as bullying policy, complaint handling mechanisms, and teachers' professional development would impact on promotion of CFS model.

3. Materials and Methods

The objective of the study was to determine the influence of school policy and guidelines on promotion of child-friendly schools' model. A correlational design and a mixed methods approach were adopted, integrating both quantitative and qualitative methods. Target population was 6,814 individuals, comprising of 647 headteachers, 647 chairpersons of boards of management, and 5,520 teachers in public primary schools in Meru county. Slovin's formula was used to select a sample of 378 individuals. A self-designed questionnaire with closed-ended items was used to collect quantitative data from teachers and headteachers. Qualitative data was obtained from chairpersons of boards of management through interview guide. Descriptive statistics were used for quantitative data analyses, while inferential statistics were done through correlation analysis through correlation coefficient measure for the purpose of testing the hypotheses.

4. Results

Following data collection phase, 288 forms out of the 306 that were administered to the respondents were found to meet the criterion for inclusion in data analysis. This represents a response rate of 94%, implying that the return rate was acceptable for generalization of the results to the population, given that Fincham (2008) recommends a rate of not less than 80% for survey researches involving schools and colleges. The results on gender distribution indicated that 56.1 percent of headteachers were male while 43.9 were female. The gender distribution for teachers was almost equal, with the number of male teachers being slightly higher (50.9%) compared to 49.1 percent of their female counterparts. The results indicated that there was a fair distribution of both male and female teachers and head teachers.

Description of School Policy and Guidelines and Promotion of Child-Friendly Schools Model

The scores on the measures of school policy and guidelines on promotion of CFS were obtained and analyzed in order to establish the mean and standard deviations of each of the test items. The results of this part of the descriptive statistics is reported as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Means and Standard Deviations of School Policy and Guidelines Scores

Variable	Measure	Mean	SD
School Policy Guidelines	&School-based rules and conduct have helped enhance safety and protection of children and staff	4.30	.88
	Owing to rigorous rules and guidelines on bullying, all learners now enjoy safety and protection in school	4.04	1.02
	Establishment of complaint mechanism within the school has made the school more secure and increased gender sensitivity	4.07	.77
	School-based conflict handling mechanism plays a critical role in safeguarding gender equality	4.07	1.07
	Organizing teachers' professional development activities has enhanced the principle of fairness, thus improving gender responsiveness	4.01	1.10
Valid N (listwise)			

Note. $N = 288$.

According to the results in Table 1, the statement that school-based rules and conduct had helped enhance safety and protection of children and staff received the highest mean score of 4.30 ($SD = 0.88$). The results reinforce the views by Kepe (2014), that school policy and guidelines play a pivotal role in promoting safety of students and staff since they act as a guide for code of conduct. Such school-based policies ensure that there are preventive measures against different forms of misconduct such as bullying and discrimination, thus serving as supportive mechanisms towards establishment of conducive learning environment.

The findings further indicate that the statement that establishment of complaint mechanism within the school made the school more secure and increased gender sensitivity had the second highest mean score of 4.07 ($SD = 0.77$). The findings support those of Meyer and Keenan (2018), in United States who found that good complaints mechanism policy was instrumental in promoting the rights of learners. This rating was similar to that of the statement that school-based conflict handling mechanism played a critical role in safeguarding gender equality, which also had a mean score of 4.07 ($SD = 0.77$). This reinforces the findings by Cross et al. (2011) in a study carried out in Australia, which found that schools that had put in place guidelines for handling complains had low rates of harassment compared to those that failed to employ such procedures.

The findings of the present study imply that implementation of complaint mechanisms and procedures for reporting, investigating and addressing any form of misconduct helps the administration to get to the root of the issues being raised, such as harassment and gender discrimination. This finding is also consistent with Plan International (2018) report that establishment of feedback and complaint handling can be essential in promoting gender and inclusive learning environment.

As shown in the results, the statement that owing to rigorous rules and guidelines on bullying, all learners enjoyed safety and protection in school was rated with a mean score of 4.04 ($SD = 1.02$). The high mean implies that rules and guidelines put in place to rein in misconducts and cases of indiscipline such as bullying were effective in dealing with such misconducts. The results lend credence to those of Malta et al. (2014) in Brazil that implementation of strategies for addressing acts of violence such as bullying could enhance safety and well-being of learners. The findings further agree with a report by Promoting Safe Schools (2015) that stated that enforcement of school-based rules such as those aimed at achieving zero tolerance to acts of indiscipline can be helpful in promoting safety of children in schools.

Lastly, the statement that organizing teachers' professional development activities enhanced fairness, thus improving gender responsiveness was rated with a mean score of 4.01 ($SD = 1.10$). Despite being the item with the least score, the rating was still fairly high, implying that schools had put in place principles of supporting continuing professional development for teachers. The findings also imply that such strategies were somewhat helpful in promoting fairness and genders responsiveness. This finding however contradicts that of Kanamba (2014) in a study carried out in Igembe North in Meru, Kenya in which headteachers rated teachers' attitude poorly with regard to implementation of CFS atmosphere.

Further analysis was conducted in order to group the scores of school policy and guidelines into different categories, putting into consideration the number of the participants whose levels of agreement were high or low on the scale as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Agreement Levels of School Policy and Guidelines Scores

E		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Low	127	44.1
	High	161	55.9
	Total	288	100.0

Note. N = 288

Table 2 indicates that majority (55.9%) of teachers and headteachers were categorized as having rated the influence of school policy and guidelines in promoting child-friendly schools’ model with high agreement levels, compared to 44.1% of those who reported low agreement levels. Based on the number of participants with high agreement levels, the results imply that to a certain degree, school-based policies and guidelines played a significant role in implementation of child-friendly learning environment.

The findings support those of Mugai (2019), which established that school-based policies aimed at supporting integrity and responsiveness were essential for promotion of principles of child-friendly schools’ model in Embu County. The findings are consistent with Kepe’s (2014) views in South Africa that school-based policy and guidelines can be effective in providing guidelines and measures aimed at safeguarding quality learning experiences as envisaged in CFS framework.

Hypothesis Testing

To test the relationship between the two variables, the following null hypothesis was advanced:

H₀₂: School policy and guidelines have no statistically significant influence on promotion of child-friendly schools’ model in public primary schools in Meru County.

The scores of school policy and guidelines and the means of promotion of child-friendly schools’ model were subjected to bivariate Pearson r correlation in order to test the possibility of relationship as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Correlation Matrix for School Policy and Guidelines and Promotion of Child-Friendly Schools Model Scores

		School Policy and Guidelines	Promotion of CFS Scores
School Policy and Guidelines	Pearson Correlation	1	.16**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.005
Promotion of CFS Scores	Pearson Correlation	.16**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.005	

Note. N = 288.

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

As demonstrated in Table 3, the correlation matrix indicates that a significant positive relationship was established between the ratings of school policy and guidelines and promotion of child-friendly schools’ model scores ($r(286) = 0.16$, $P < 0.05$). This implies that improvement and gains made in establishment of school policy and guidelines, such as anti-bullying policy, conflict handling mechanisms, and rules and conduct resulted in safe and positive learning environment. It can therefore be inferred that implementation of school-based policy and guidelines enhanced the standards of safety and protection of learners, subsequently promoting CFS model. Thus, the null hypothesis that school policy and guidelines have no statistically significant influence on promotion of child-friendly schools’ model is rejected. The results are in line with those of Kinyanjui (2019), in a study carried out in Nairobi and Kajiado counties, which found a statistically significant relationship between implementation of school-based policies, such as protection, safety and nutrition, and the quality of learning.

Qualitative Analysis

Several themes emerged from the responses of chairpersons of the boards of management with regard to the relationship between school policy and guidelines and promotion of CFS model. The participants were prompted to describe some of the school-based policies and guidelines established by the management in their schools. Among the themes that emerged from the responses include “Requirement to adhere to school rules,” “Adherence to school uniform,” “Anti-bullying policy,” and “Guidelines for capacity development.”

It emerged that many schools had formulated and were enforcing various rules and guidelines aimed at promoting discipline and supporting positive behaviors. Through such school-based policies and regulations, school managers felt that the practices that they put in place enhanced safety and made schools a better place for improved learning experience. In support of these views, one of the chairpersons of the boards of management, BOMC19 explained:

“We have a school code of conduct comprising of a set of rules and regulations that governs students as well as members of staff. For students, there are rules and regulations such as adhering to school uniform and dress code, addressing and

treating other students and teachers with respect, and use of proper language at all times” These views were supported by yet another participant, BOMC49, who explained:

“The management has established numerous rules and guidelines meant to make the school a better and safe learning environment. Among such regulations are that students required to dress appropriately so that there is orderliness, and to make sure that their dressing does not interfere with their learning. To enhance safety for everyone, children are required to only be in areas and sections of buildings where they have been scheduled or are expected to be. Stealing others’ property is prohibited. No student is allowed to bring electronic devices, such as mobile phones, radios, etcetera to school. No objects of any form should be brought to school without teachers’ permission.”

The findings have indicated that schools have established rules and guidelines aimed at discouraging student misconduct, such as stealing, cursing, bullying and discriminating against others. This implies that based on improved orderliness, and the resultant safe learning environment, learners are able to grow healthier, not only physically, but socially and emotionally. These findings lend credence to those of Navarro et al. (2015), in Spain who observed that incorporating guidelines aimed at reining in misconducts such as bullying, enhanced learners’ physical health, social relations, mental wellbeing, and self-esteem.

The participants also explained the significance of formulation of school-based policy and guidelines for professional development on the learning environment. Some of the themes that came to the fore include teachers’ increased motivation, teamwork, collegiality and improved school discipline. In one of the responses, participant BOMC03 asserted: *“We have elaborate guidelines about supporting teachers’ in their professional development because this has a direct effect on children’s learning experience. There are structured continuous learning programmes established by the management, such as seminars, collegiality in form of experience exchange sessions, teamwork activities and so on”*. These sentiments were supported by another participant, BOMC20, who observed: *“With the professional development plans that we have in place, teachers get to gain new skills in their work, including content delivery, classroom management and handling students’ discipline. As a result, this improves the quality of teaching and learning, makes the school safer and more child-friendly, and ultimately motivates and makes teachers happier in their work.”*

Essentially, these findings imply that when such teachers benefit from the aforementioned professional development programmes, they are likely to become motivated and committed to their work, resulting in improved quality of learning. They are also likely to have better skills in dealing with cases of indiscipline among the learners, leading to safer, protective and more conducive learning environment. These are key standards of child-friendly schools’ model.

The findings are in line with those of Abduh and Zainudin (2016), in a study in Indonesia, which showed that school-based programmes aimed at promoting professional development enhanced teachers’ pedagogic, and interpersonal skills, resulting in improved students’ rights and learning needs. These factors were linked to positive results in implementation of CFS model based on the fact that skilled and well-trained teachers are among of the prerequisites of CFS model as spelt out in the United Nations’ framework (UNICEF, 2009).

The findings on implementation and influence of school policy and guidelines were however inconsistent with those of Putra et al. (2020) in Indonesian based study, whose results revealed that CFS policy had not been well implemented and that acts of violence and indiscipline, including bullying were rampant in in many schools, thus rendering the learning environment unsafe. Similarly, the findings also contradict those of Kanamba (2014), with regard to school-based professional development policy. The study carried out in Meru County Kenya, established that teachers still lacked preparedness and were non-committal in preparation of CFS model. Nonetheless, while the study was carried out in an area with similar demographics and characteristics of the participants, it focused on a much smaller region of a sub-county and the results may not be generalized for the entire county.

5. Discussion of the Results

The descriptive and inferential results indicated that establishment of school-based policies and guidelines for bullying, complaint handling mechanisms and professional development programmes positively influenced learners’ safety, gender responsiveness, and gender equality. These findings agree with those of Abduh and Zainudin (2016) in a study carried out in Indonesia. The authors established that school-based programmes that focused on teachers’ social, professional and personality skills impacted positively on children’s rights and learning needs.

These findings are also consistent with those of Rahimi and Karkami (2015) that by adopting and practicing positive and non-punitive disciplinary measures, teachers promoted safety of learners as well as the larger school community. This was also found to rein in acts of unwanted behaviours such as bullying, fights, and brawls among the students. The findings also agreed with those of Berger et al. (2018) in a study conducted in Tanzania, which found that school-based policies aimed at promoting discipline and social relations were helpful in enhancing prosocial behaviour, and learners’ general well-being.

The qualitative findings further reinforced the outcomes of quantitative analysis. The chairpersons of the boards of management who were interviewed affirmed that schools had established policies, rules and guidelines for enhancing

orderliness, discipline and safety in the learning environment. The participants explained that they had put into operation various school-based policies aimed at preventing violence, bullying, stealing destruction of property and discrimination.

From the interview responses, the participants stated that the aim of implementing such guidelines was to make school a better place so that children can feel safe and know that their rights are protected. These findings imply that school-based policies and guidelines were taken seriously as part of good governance practices for promoting CFS model. The finding lends credence to Cross et al. (2011), as reviewed in the literature, in their Australian based study that learners from schools with well-established school-based policies and guidelines were less likely to face acts of violence. The study established that policies such as complaint response procedures, and those aimed at preventing bullying helped reduce harassment, and increased the propensity for reporting cases of bullying and threats.

Both quantitative and qualitative findings revealed the existence of relationship between school-based policy and guidelines and promotion of CFS model. Most of the interviewees kept emphasizing the significance of different components of school-policy and guidelines on improving the learning environment and learners' well-being. The participants were categorical that implementation of school rules and guidance was key to enhancing school discipline, thus controlling cases of indiscipline, violence, threats, bullying and discrimination. The participants also underscored the importance of policies and guidelines related to teachers' professional development. The findings revealed that this component was essential for motivating teachers, equipping them with skills requisite for promoting discipline and effective classroom management,

The findings suggest that such school-based guidelines played a key role in improving school systems, and making such schools more child-centered, gender sensitive, and safe and protective for all learners. These findings concur with Abduh and Zainudin (2016) that equipping teachers with necessary competencies such as pedagogic, social and personality skills enhanced children's rights', discipline and quality of learning.

The findings of the present study, however contradict those of Putra et al. (2020) in Depok City Indonesia, in a study that found implementation of child-friendly schools' policy to have been poorly implemented. The study found that the existing school rules and guidelines had little effect in addressing student indiscipline, bullying and other acts of violence common in schools.

The findings of the present study do not also entirely agree with those of Kepe (2014) in South Africa, which revealed that some school-based policies can be counterproductive especially those targeted toward improving students' discipline. It was recommended that schools should base their guidelines on those provided by the Ministry of Education. The findings also contradict Kanamba's (2014) study carried out in Igembe North in Meru county, Kenya, which found teachers to have had a low attitude regarding implementation of CFS standards. The study also found that teachers lacked preparedness on implementation of CFS standards, implying that schools did not have effective programmes for teachers' professional development.

6. Conclusions

It was concluded that school-based policies and guidelines are fundamental practices for guiding the functioning of a school into becoming an effective and safe place for learning. The descriptive results showed that the highest influence was on enhancing safety and protection of learners. From inferential statistics, it was concluded that school policy and guidelines had positive and significant influence on promotion of child-friendly schools' model. This implied that the increased gains in implementation of school-based policies and guidelines, such as school rules and regulations, anti-bullying policy, and conflict handling mechanisms enhanced safe and positive learning environment. Further the qualitative findings showed that formulation and enforcement of school rules enhanced school discipline, pupils' positive behaviours, orderliness and learning experiences. Thus, it was concluded that improved orderliness, and subsequent safe and positive learning environment promoted learners' health and well-being.

7. Recommendations

It was found that the measure on whether teachers' professional development contributed to enhancing the principle of fairness towards gender responsiveness was poorly rated. The study therefore recommends that teachers need more specific training on learners' gender dynamics and unique learning needs of both boys and girls with the aim of achieving truly gender responsive and supportive learning environments. Further, the Ministry of Education through the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD) needs to develop a specific training module focusing on the components of CFS, with the aim of enhancing teacher specific skills towards holistically promoting quality education. Future studies may be replicated in other counties to establish whether similar results may be achieved.

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