CHALLENGES FACING HEADTEACHERS IN SECURITY MANAGEMENT IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN KISII COUNTY IN KENYA

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Abstract

Security management in secondary schools is a growing concern in Kenya. The cases of student unrests have been on the rise especially over the last decade and have become more violent and destructive. This study sought to determine challenges facing head teachers in security management in secondary schools in Kisii County in Kenya. The study employed descriptive survey research design. Purposive sampling technique were used to obtain the needed sample of 27 head teachers, 35 prefects, 14 members of the Board of Governors and 20 security guards. Data collected was analyzed using descriptive statistics. The study established that schools in Kisii County face security challenges such as strikes, arson, theft and fighting among students but the majority of Head teachers, BoG members and security personnel are not versed with strategies useful in handling security issues. Most schools are not prepared for disasters management. The study also established that head teachers are highly aware of measures required in improving secondary school security. The study concluded that schools in general need to implement in full the "Safety Standard Manual for Schools in Kenya" guidelines recommended by the Ministry of Education.

Introduction

The safe school study Report conducted in USA in 1978 came up with shocking statistics regarding insecurity in secondary schools. This report indicated that approximately 282,000 learners and 5,200 educators were physically assaulted in American Secondary schools every month (Eliot, Hamburg & Williams, 1998). Since then, there has been a growing concern of this problem worldwide. A comparative study of member states of European Union found out that the rate of insecurity in schools had risen sharply in the past two decades by as much as 50-100% (Hughes, 2004). The situation is not different in Africa. In Lesotho cases of students carrying weapons, assaulting and bullying each other was reported (Brener, Lowry & Barrios 2005). In Kenya, the dawn of 21st century saw an increase in insecurity in secondary schools where students have exhibited excessive unbecoming conducts (MOEST, 2001). In 2007 alone 300 secondary schools were closed after students went on the rampage destroying property and a number of them lost their lives (Kindiki, 2009). Data on Table 1 shows secondary schools that were insecure per province in Kenya. All secondary schools in Kenya are 3,234 out which 250 (7.73%) were insecure. North Eastern, Central and Eastern provinces were the most affected.

Table 1 Schools that Experienced Insecurity by Province in the Year 2000/2001

Province	No. of Schools	Insecure schools	Percentage
Central	630	85	13.50
Coast	151	4	2.60
Nyanza	680	7	1.00
Eastern	626	76	12.40
Rift Valley	625	50	8.00
Western	408	19	4.70
Nairobi	93	2	0.02
North Eastern	21	7	33.30
Total	**3234**	**250**	**7.73**

Source: Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (2001)

Hence, the need to determine challenges facing head teachers in security management of secondary schools in Kenya.

Objectives of the Study

Objectives of the study were to find out the;

    i.   challenges facing head teachers in security management in public secondary schools.

    ii.   measures employed by public secondary school head teachers in security management.

    iii.   measures required to improve security in secondary school

The Sample and Instruments

Purposive sampling and simple random techniques were used to obtain 135 participants, whom 27 were head teachers, 54 prefects, 27 Board of Governors and 27 school security guards. A questionnaire for each of these groups was developed. Forty two percent of the schools were co-educational with both day and boarding students, 27% were co-educational with only boarding students, 23 % were girls' only boarding while 8% were boys' only boarding schools.

Results

Data was collected and analyzed, and the following results obtained;

Age of respondents

The mean age of head teachers was 43.4 years, where 20% of them were within age bracket of 35 to 39 years, 48% within 40 to 45 years, 24% within 46 to 50 years and 8% were above 50 years of age. Mean age for prefects was 17.4 years and that of security guard was 37 years. Age of participants indicates maturity level that is vital in management of security in schools.

Education Level of Participants

Information obtain indicate that 81.5% of the head teachers are Bachelor degree holders while, 18.5% have a Master's degree. This implies head teachers have required education to mann secondary schools. In the case of security guards, 35% had primary level education, 55% secondary while 10% had college education.

Length of Service as Head Teachers in the participating School

Data on Table 2 shows that majority of the head teachers have served at least one year to above 10 years in their schools. This implies that they have stayed long enough in one school to have faced some challenges in security management.

Table 2 Time Served in the School by Head Teachers

Time served	Frequency	Percentage
Below 1 year	2	7.4
1-5 Years	17	63.0
6-10 Years	6	22.4
Above 10 Years	2	7.4
Total	27	100.0

Security Guards' Length of Service in the School

Information on Tabel 3 shows that security guard have stayed long enough in their working school to be able to provide the needed data on challenges that face head teacher in management of security in secondary schools.

Table 3 Time served in the school by security guards

Time served	Frequency	Percentage
Up to 5 years	11	55
6-10 years	5	25
10-15 years	3	15
15 years and above	1	5
Total	**20**	**100**

Security Challenges

Factors that contribute to insecurity in schools are those mainly associated with indiscipline of students; where students, teachers, subordinate staff and school property are at risk of being harmed or destroyed. A total of 63% of school heads reported having experienced security problems in their schools. The result is similar to that of security guards who 70% indicated that they have had security challenges in the school they were guarding.

The nature of security challenges faced by the schools included strikes, theft of (school or students) property by students, subordinate staff and local community, sneaking, fighting among students, arson and trespassers. These factors were ranked by prefects as follows; 63% (stealing), 23.8% (drug abuse), 17.4% (destruction of property), and (5.3%) (assault).

This concurred with what the head teachers, where 78% of them cited indiscipline as a major cause of insecurity in schools with drug abuse being the major cause (38.1%), followed by peer pressure (33.3%), family factors (14.3%), student's home location (urban/rural) (9.5%) and by overloaded curriculum (4.8%). Studies by Ngesu, Ndiku and Masses (2008) and by Otieno and Ofulla (2009) are in agreement with this finding. The most commonly abused drugs are alcohol, cigarettes, bhang and Khat (Miraa). Drug abuse is usually associated with aggressive behaviour, irritability and over excitement among other anti-social behaviours; this leads to violence and destruction of property in schools.

Training on Security Management in Schools

Only 37% of school heads had attended any security management course as compared to 21.4 % of Board of Governors members and 40% of security guards. This indicates that most school heads and BoG members who are responsible for making decisions concerning security in schools may be approaching security issues ignorantly and thereby endangering life and property. Head teachers, security guards and members of the BoG require training on enforcing security system, security management, security preparedness, personnel safety and sounds/alarm/signals systems. It would be a good idea to have a security professional examine the school and provide recommendations on how security can be improved. This may require engaging the local security agents like the police and provide the appropriate resources to keep students, teachers and everyone involved as safe as possible.

The budgetary allocation by the BoGs to security issues is below 10% of the total school budges, only one case allocated 40% of its budget to security management. This is due to competing interests, it is important to appreciate that school security is not something that ought to be last on the budget. Administrators must allocate resources for guards, fencing, and surveillance of school grounds, continued parent/student/teacher education and local community involvement in protecting the school.

Level of Security Mitigation Measures in the Schools

Although almost a half of the schools (48.1%) provide TV/Video entertainment shows to their students, about 63% of school heads think that video shows and some of the TV programs are a source of insecurity in school. This implies that schools may not be giving their learners crucial skills that would help them avoid activities that create insecure environment in schools. Schools are institution that are supposed to assure an individual's socialization or trained to ensure their integration in the society. The education system should inculcate in the youth life skills to guide them to make the right choices in life.

Almost all schools (88.9%) have a guidance and counseling department but slightly more than 40% of these departments are run by teachers who are not qualified in guidance and counseling. About 73% of the prefects believe that the department has helped students improve on their anti-social behavior and as a result improved school security. Only 15.4% of the schools have teachers qualified in disaster preparedness while about 45% of prefects can use a fire extinguisher. This points out at the laxity with which some schools handle safety.

This concurred with Ndiangui, Ocharo and Njoka (2006) findings where they indicated that schools lack disaster preparedness plans which include; fire drills, First Aid Kits, basic training on security; fire extinguishers in key areas and emergency exits.

Almost all the school compounds (96.3%) were fenced using either barbed wires (67%) or live fences (33%). Although establishing a good live fence is very involving, it is stronger and also tends to last longer when compared to barbed wire.

The schools are however within the Ministry of Education stipulations in the school safety manual. It states that a school should have "Clearly demarcated school grounds with proper fencing and secure gates/boundaries" (GoK, 2008). About 82% of the schools reported that they do not have qualified security personnel. However, findings from the security guard interviews reveal that 40% of the respondents reported having trained as security guards while 50% had previously worked as security guards before joining the school. This means that some schools hire security personnel with no formal training or experience and this may affect the professionalism with which they approach their work. Most of school heads (67%) were of the opinion that their security guards are not well remunerated and motivated.

This implies that the schools are aware that they do not pay their workers well probably due to budgetary constraints. However, unsatisfied guards are likely to compromise security by being sloppy, engaging in other money making ventures such as supplying drugs to students or even colluding with criminals. Few school heads meet their security personnel monthly (37%), weekly (33.3%), daily (18.5%), yearly (7.4%)and never (3.7%). This needs improvement to allow proper actions at the right time and promptly. According to the security guards regular issues discussed in such meetings include being reminded to always report suspicious matters, briefing on the security situation in the school, emphasizing handing and taking over of duty, importance of staying alert and discussing the equipment required (torch, whistles, arrows and uniform).

The BoGs of the schools meet once per term on average and when asked how frequently they discuss security issues in those meetings 42.9% reported that they discuss the issue in all the meetings while, 57.1% discuss such issues only when insecurity arises. This means that more than half of BoGs are not proactive when it comes to security matters but tend to react to the situation. It would be important for the BoG as the policy makers to emphasize prevention rather than "cure".

Causes of Insecurity according to Head Teachers

Fifty two percent of the school heads blame the general insecurity in their schools on the society. A statement by catholic bishops attributed to the spate of indiscipline among students which seemed to sanction the use of violence in solving disputes. Another issue identified is the over-emphasis on material gains rather than morality and ethical standard which has impacted negatively on the youth. Leaders and parents should serve as role models for the youth. This means that the behaviour of the youth is usually a reflection of the society.

Therefore, parents, teachers, government among other stakeholders should all contribute and meaningfully too, in checking this malaise. School head teachers indicated the following family factors as responsible for student violence and aggression in their schools, parents siding with pupils who behaved badly in schools (highly placed parents or guardians may intimidate principals and teachers) (33%), lack of a role model at home (21%), parent's marital instability (17%), parents who smoke and drink (17%) and parents giving excess pocket money to their children (12%).

Effects of Insecurity in Secondary School

The most widespread effect of insecurity in schools was cited as incurring additional costs for maintaining security (64%), emotional and physical safety of learners (61.5%), learning and completion of syllabus (57.7%), students' truancy/absenteeism (46.2%), destruction of school property (34.6%), loss of life/injuries (26.9%), students' low enrolment(26.9%), under utilization of school resources (26.9%) and students transferring from the school affected (26.9%).

The outcomes of insecurity are varied and have widespread ramifications on the economic, physical and psychosocial dimensions. A vicious cycle was noted, where one factor leads to the other but the net effect is leaving the individuals, schools and the society in a worse-off state.

Measures Employed by Head Teachers to Manage Security in Schools

The second objective set out to establish the measures employed by secondary school head teachers in security management.

About 82% of the school heads have initiated security management measures since joining their schools. About sixty six percent of the schools have suggestion boxes with 72.4% of prefects affirming that students use these boxes to air their grievances; schools have tried to open up channels of communication with students. Sixty seven percent of schools have in place a school safety program as required by the Ministry of Education, but, 88.8 % of these face challenges in the implementation of the programmes. Schools are at risk of disasters including fire which therefore means that without any form of preparedness, such disasters can lead to unnecessary injuries and loss of life.

All the schools have a code of conduct, 56% of head teachers indicated that they involved their students in formulating the code, but only 35.5% of prefects accepted that they were involved in formulating the code conduct. This implies majority of students were not involved in the formulation of the code of conduct hence they may view it as oppressive and an imposition thereby creating grounds for violent protest. The school safety manual emphasizes the need of involving all stakeholders in ensuring safety within the schools. About ninety two percent of the school heads have a prefect body with the same proportion believing that prefects assist the school administration in ensuring safety and security in school.

About 33% of schools have a crisis management policy plan while 44.4% have a mission statement which includes safety plan. These percentages are low which shows that schools take safety issue for granted. About 62% of the school heads report cases of insecurity in their school to the police but only 22% organized for lectures from law enforcers in sensitizing the students on the need for maintaining security.

More than three quarters of schools have an internal intelligence system. Prefects are the most important source of intelligence information, followed by other students, security guards, teachers and subordinate staff respectively

Measures Required to Improve Security in Secondary School

The third objective was to determine measures required in improving security in secondary school. The majority of the school heads indicated campaign against alcohol and drug abuse, involvement of parents in school matters, cooperation between the school and community, training of head teachers on security management, improvement of security in schools by the Government, introduce school safety manual, and development of disaster preparedness plan.

Conclusion

Insecurity affect learners and schools in different ways which include; incurring additional costs for maintaining security, emotional and physical safety of learners, learning and completion of syllabus, students' truancy/absenteeism, destruction of school property, injuries/loss of life, students' enrolment, utilization of school resources and students transferring from the school. This requires action by all stake holders in order to reverse the situation. However, head teachers have employed various security management measures in their schools but that is not enough. Schools in general need to implement in full the "Safety Standard Manual for Schools in Kenya" guidelines recommended by the Ministry of Education

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