



(RESEARCH ARTICLE)



THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CHILD SAFEGUARDING PRACTICES UTILIZED AND CHILD PROTECTION OUTCOMES IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS OF EMBAKASI SOUTH SUB-COUNTY, NAIROBI COUNTY, KENYA

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ABSTRACT

Child protection is essential for children's safety, wellbeing and overall development. Children in informal settlements face increased risks of abuse, neglect, exploitation and other protection concerns. Despite the enactment of legislation and policies, child protection practices in primary schools remain inconsistent, particularly in informal settlements where poverty, overcrowding, unemployment and high crime rates further constrain safeguarding efforts. This study will analyze child safeguarding practices and child protection outcomes in primary schools in informal settlements of Embakasi South Sub-County, Nairobi County, Kenya, with a focus on the types of safeguarding practices implemented. The study will be guided by Travis Hirschi's Social Control Theory and will adopt a Convergent Parallel Mixed Methods Design, incorporating a descriptive survey and case study. The target population will comprise 666 respondents, including headteachers, teachers, Parents Teachers Association representatives, Board of Management representatives, support staff, counsellors, the Children Officer, the County Education Officer and representatives of non-governmental organizations implementing child safeguarding programmes. A sample of 249 respondents will be selected using Yamane's (1967) formula, through stratified simple random and purposive sampling. Structured questionnaires will be used to collect data. Quantitative data will be analyzed using descriptive statistics with SPSS Version 29, while qualitative data will be analyzed thematically. The study will establish that child safeguarding practices positively and significantly contribute to child protection outcomes, with effective safeguarding practices emerging as the strongest predictor. The study will conclude that coordinated and integrated safeguarding is essential for safe learning environments. It will recommend periodic staff training, adequate resources, appropriate reporting systems, multi-sectoral collaboration, regular safeguarding audits and strengthened school-parent, school-community and school-child protection service partnerships.

Keywords: Child safeguarding practices; Child protection outcomes; Informal settlements; Child safety; Child wellbeing; Child abuse and neglect; School-based child protection

1 INTRODUCTION

Child safeguarding has increasingly received global recognition as a key strategy for preventing neglect, exploitation and abuse of children and vulnerable groups. Globally, millions of children continue to experience violence and exploitation in homes, schools and communities, which are settings expected to provide protection and promote their wellbeing (Baginsky, 2021). This situation has necessitated the development of legislation, policies and institutional mechanisms aimed at protecting children from different forms of harm. Child safeguarding has therefore emerged from the need to promote children's wellbeing, uphold their rights and protect them from abuse, neglect, exploitation and other forms of harm.

Craig (2022) observes that child safeguarding is critical in promoting the welfare of children, particularly in informal settlements where poverty, gender inequality and structural vulnerabilities may increase children's exposure to risks. Globally, a large proportion of urban populations live in informal settlements, with rapid urbanization and socio-economic inequalities contributing to the continued growth of such settlements. Children living in these settings may experience increased vulnerability to violence, neglect, exploitation and limited access to protective services.

Child safeguarding practices occur in all environments where children interact, including schools, homes and communities. Within school settings, safeguarding involves the knowledge and awareness of staff, implementation of preventive measures, establishment of reporting and referral mechanisms, and addressing barriers that may hinder effective safeguarding. These measures are intended to contribute to safer learning environments and improved child protection outcomes by preventing abuse, facilitating early identification of risks, strengthening reporting and enhancing institutional responses to child protection concerns (Baginsky et al., 2022). Abdi and Cleave (2023) observed that schools and their staff form an important part of the wider safeguarding system for children.

A child refers to any human being below the age of eighteen years. Schools are therefore important environments in which children's rights, safety and wellbeing should be actively protected. Craig (2022) notes that there has been increasing global recognition of the need to strengthen child safeguarding in schools, not only to support educational attainment but also to promote the physical, emotional and social wellbeing of children. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) emphasize the responsibility of states and institutions to protect children from all forms of harm and to ensure safe learning environments. These frameworks provide a basis for promoting staff awareness, preventive safeguarding measures, effective reporting systems and institutional mechanisms that support children's safety.

In the United Kingdom, schools are mandated to implement a whole-school safeguarding approach that includes staff training and designated safeguarding responsibilities. Schools also collaborate with law enforcement agencies, health professionals and social service departments to respond to child protection concerns (Thoburn, 2023). Baginsky et al. (2022) reported that school safeguarding broadly encompasses protecting children from maltreatment, preventing impairment of health and development, establishing effective reporting pathways and promoting children's wellbeing. This demonstrates the importance of staff awareness, institutional safeguarding practices and coordinated reporting and response systems.

In Africa, there has been increasing awareness and adoption of child safeguarding practices within schools. Moshtari and Safrpour (2024) noted that different organizations work with schools to embed safeguarding within school cultures and support it through continuous training. Schools are expected to implement child safeguarding policies that assign responsibilities to administrators, teachers, counsellors and other stakeholders. Although these initiatives have increased awareness of safeguarding responsibilities, implementation remains uneven, particularly in schools located in vulnerable and informal-settlement environments. The gap between the existence of safeguarding policies and their practical implementation continues to influence child protection outcomes.

Tanzania's efforts in child safeguarding are reflected in various education policies and programmes. The establishment of Tanzania Enlightenment Development Innovations (TEDI) in 2019 strengthened initiatives aimed at improving child protection and the quality of education. Through such programmes, children and young people are equipped with skills intended to improve their learning and wellbeing. However, child violence and abuse remain significant concerns. Haki Elimu (2020) reported high levels of physical violence among children, indicating that the existence of safeguarding initiatives does not necessarily translate into effective child protection outcomes.

Kenya has developed several legal and policy frameworks for child protection, including the Basic Education Act (2013), the Children Act (2022) and national child protection and violence-prevention frameworks. Despite these developments, implementation of child protection measures has not been uniform across schools. Udalang (2023) identified differences in implementation between urban and rural schools and between formal and informal settlements. Musili (2023) found that although some schools had institutionalized child safeguarding procedures,

weaknesses remained in the prevention, detection and reporting of child protection concerns. Institutional capacity therefore remains an important consideration in achieving effective child protection outcomes.

Societal norms, environmental conditions and school commitment to safeguarding have also been identified as factors influencing the implementation of child safeguarding practices (Holmyard & Rigg, 2025). In addition, inadequate financial and human resources may constrain schools' ability to implement safeguarding measures effectively. These challenges suggest that the existence of policies alone may not guarantee effective protection of children unless staff possess adequate awareness, schools implement appropriate safeguarding practices, effective reporting mechanisms are available, and barriers to implementation are addressed.

The situation in Embakasi South Sub-County reflects some of these national and contextual challenges. Embakasi South is characterized by high population density, socio-economic diversity and the presence of informal settlements. The four major informal settlements considered in the study are Mukuru kwa Njenga, Mukuru kwa Reuben, Pipeline and Kware. Children in these environments may face risks associated with poverty, overcrowding, exposure to violence and limited access to protective resources. Mwangi et al. (2025) noted that child vulnerability and the burden placed on safeguarding systems are heightened in schools within such environments.

Schools in these settings therefore require effective safeguarding systems that are supported by knowledgeable staff, appropriate preventive measures and accessible reporting mechanisms. However, overcrowded classrooms, teacher workload, inadequate resources and other institutional and socio-cultural factors may affect implementation. Consequently, the extent to which safeguarding practices are implemented and their contribution to child protection outcomes may differ across schools.

Although Kenya has established legal and policy frameworks for protecting children, empirical evidence on the relationship between implementation of safeguarding practices, and child protection outcomes in primary schools located in informal settlements remains limited. Existing studies have largely focused on child protection concerns such as violence prevalence, corporal punishment, legal protection and general awareness. Less attention has been given to how specific dimensions of school safeguarding relate to child protection outcomes in informal settlements, particularly in Embakasi South Sub-County.

This gap provided the basis for the present study, which examined the relationship between child safeguarding practices, and child protection outcomes in primary schools in informal settlements of Embakasi South Sub-County, Nairobi County, Kenya.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Primary schools should provide safe and protective environments where children can learn, develop and exercise their rights. Teachers, administrators and support staff should possess adequate knowledge of safeguarding policies and procedures, implement preventive measures, and maintain accessible, confidential and responsive reporting mechanisms. Schools should also address institutional and socio-cultural barriers that expose children to harm. Effective safeguarding would therefore prevent abuse, facilitate early identification of risks, promote timely reporting and strengthen institutional responses, leading to improved child protection outcomes (Baginsky et al., 2022).

Despite Kenya's commitment to child protection through the Basic Education Act (2013), the Children Act (2022) and other national frameworks, child protection concerns persist. The 2019 Violence Against Children Survey reported that 46% of young women and 52% of young men aged 18–24 had experienced at least one form of violence before age 18, alongside low reporting and help-seeking among survivors (Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, 2020). Literature also identifies inconsistencies in teachers' safeguarding capacity, weaknesses in reporting systems, limited awareness of reporting channels and inadequate follow-up of cases. However, limited empirical evidence establishes how staff awareness, implementation of safeguarding practices, reporting mechanisms and implementation barriers relate to child protection outcomes in primary schools in informal settlements, particularly in Embakasi South Sub-County.

The study will address this gap by examining the relationships between child safeguarding practices, and child protection outcomes in primary schools in informal settlements of Embakasi South Sub-County, Nairobi County, Kenya. By generating context-specific empirical evidence, the study will contribute to understanding how safeguarding practices operate within resource-constrained school environments and inform strategies for strengthening child protection systems. The findings will support improved staff training, reporting mechanisms, resource allocation, stakeholder coordination and school-based safeguarding interventions to enhance child protection outcomes.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

This section reviewed literature based on one objective; the relationship between child safeguarding practices utilized and child protection outcomes in primary schools in informal settlements of Embakasi south sub-county, Nairobi County, Kenya.

Child safeguarding in schools has increasingly become a central concern within education and child protection discourse worldwide. Schools are not only learning hubs but also environments where children's protection and supports should be heavily practiced. Safeguarding practices comprise of policies, procedures, and practices put in place to prevent and respond to abuse, neglect, violence, and exploitation of children (Mochoge, 2021). There are many different practices that can be introduced in child safeguarding in schools.

Global international frameworks such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) have firmly positioned child protection as a shared responsibility for states and institutions, including schools. Studies conducted across different regions indicate that the presence of clear child safeguarding policies in schools contributes to improved prevention and response to child abuse. These studies highlight that policies alone are insufficient unless they are supported by practical safeguarding measures such as staff training, reporting mechanisms, and strong institutional leadership (Aktaret al.2020). Where safeguarding practices are poorly implemented, child protection outcome remains ineffective.

Gatundu (2024) avers that schools should provide a privileged location for the creation of preventative strategies and health promotion for child safeguarding. Korir (2017) research conducted in Nakuru West District established that schools retain detailed records of any problems or occurrences that involve school personnel or volunteers. Gatundu (2024), reported that schools in Kibra Sub-County did a good job of including lessons on sexual abuse and its definition into their curricula. The schools also carried out sensitization campaigns where parents were taught on how to identify sexual misbehaviors in their children. These assertions provide evidence of fragments of school specific practices necessitating the need for the present study need to establish child safeguarding practices utilized in primary schools located in the informal settlements of Embakasi sub county.

Jang and Ko (2023) assessed student awareness level for child safeguarding practices in United Kingdom. The study focused on the extent children were able to understand and participate in child protection processes. The study found a low awareness level among children on child safeguarding processes. Results revealed that children were excluded from decision making for safeguarding practices. major exclusion on children's opinions on the process for safeguarding. This study was qualitative focusing on children aged 6-17 years. Child safeguarding in UK schools is guided by comprehensive statutory frameworks such as the *Children Act* and *Keeping Children Safe in Education*, which clearly outline the responsibilities of schools in protecting children. The school carries out mandatory safeguarding training for all school staff, the appointment of designated safeguarding leads, and clear reporting and referral procedures have significantly strengthened child protection responses within schools. The present study appreciates the environmental and child right policy disparity between the Embakasi and United Kingdom limiting generalization of the findings from this study to Embakasi sub county.

China has national policies and regulations which aim at reducing children exposure to violence. The government set up a special program and a steering committee to strengthen the legal protection of children. School management is required to report cases of domestic violence against a child. Baginsky et al. (2020), noted that the efficiency of reporting is not yet efficient as children preferred reporting safety issues to adults close to them than in schools. Gatundu (2024), provided guidelines on child safeguarding in school recommend use of school-based health and nutrition programmed to reduce safety related problems. Such comprises of school feeding programs where children do not have to leave the school compound for lunch, but the school can serve those meals. Some of the primary schools in the informal settlements in Study are beneficiaries but limited data exist on the effectiveness of these programs on child protection outcome.

Gatundu (2024), investigated the influence of school security on the academic self-concept of pupils in primary schools in informal settlements in Kibra Sub-County, Nairobi County, Kenya. Descriptive survey design was used on a target population of 138 head teachers, 203 teacher counsellors, and 9536 learners in Class VII. A sample of 385 determined using Yamane's formula was used. Questionnaires and interview guides were used to collect data from grade VII learners, head teachers and teacher-counsellors. The findings found that majority of schools in informal settlement did not have adequate security guards and fences that would improve child safeguarding practices.

Balch et al, (2020) asserts that effective child safeguarding practices include clear codes of conduct for staff, measures to prevent sexual abuse and exploitation, child-friendly complaints and feedback mechanisms, and established referral

pathways to child protection authorities. Schools that actively operate these practices tend to foster safer environments, encourage disclosure of abuse, and build trust among learners and parents.

3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study was guided by social control theory as the study specifically examined how child safeguarding practices influenced child protection outcomes.

3.1 Social Control Theory

Social Control Theory, associated with Travis Hirschi (19690), explained how social bonds, rules, norms, supervision and institutional controls influenced behavior and discouraged harmful conduct. The theory proposed that strong attachments, commitment to conventional activities, involvement in socially accepted roles and shared values could discourage deviant behavior. The theory was relevant to child safeguarding because schools operated through formal and informal mechanisms of social control. School administrators, teachers, support staff and parents participated in establishing and enforcing rules, supervising learners, implementing codes of conduct and responding to violations. Clear disciplinary procedures, teacher supervision, restricted access and consistent enforcement of codes of conduct could therefore discourage harmful behavior and promote accountability.

Social control theory also explained the importance of child safeguarding practices, and professional commitment. When school staff understood safeguarding requirements and internalized professional standards, they were more likely to identify risks, intervene appropriately and report concerns. Strong pupil-teacher relationships could also increase trust and make children more willing to disclose unsafe experiences. Similarly, parental and school management involvement could strengthen informal social controls. The theory therefore supported the study's examination of safeguarding practices as mechanisms through which formal and informal social controls could influence child protection outcomes.

4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a Convergent Parallel Mixed Methods Design, involving the concurrent collection of quantitative and qualitative data, separate analysis and subsequent integration of findings. The quantitative component used a descriptive survey to measure staff awareness, child safeguarding practices, reporting mechanisms, implementation barriers and child protection outcomes, while inferential statistics examined relationships and predictive effects among the study variables. The qualitative component used a case-study approach to obtain contextual explanations from key stakeholders regarding safeguarding implementation, reporting mechanisms, institutional challenges and child protection responses. The methodology also covered the study area, target population, sampling procedures, data collection instruments, pilot testing, validity and reliability, data collection procedures, data analysis, diagnostic tests and ethical considerations.

Table 1: Distribution of the Target Population

Category	Kware	Pipeline	Mukuru (Njenga and Rueben)	Total
Headteachers	5	13	19	37
Teachers	55	130	195	380
Support Staffs& counsellors	15	39	57	111
Parents/PTS & BoM representatives	15	39	57	121
NGO/Child Protection Actors	5	5	5	15
Sub county education officer	1			1
Children Officers	1			1
Total	97	226	334	666

Source: Researcher, 2026

The study was conducted in Embakasi South Sub-County, Nairobi County, Kenya, focusing on Mukuru kwa Njenga, Mukuru kwa Reuben, Pipeline and Kware informal settlements. These settlements comprised 37 primary schools, with Mukuru kwa Njenga and Mukuru kwa Reuben treated as one Mukuru cluster of 19 schools, Pipeline comprising 13 schools and Kware 5 schools. The target population consisted of 666 respondents directly involved in or knowledgeable about child safeguarding and protection, including school administrators, teachers, support staff, counsellors, PTA/BoM

representatives, NGO/child protection actors, the County Education Officer and the Children Officer. For sampling and analysis, the population was divided into a quantitative survey population of 612 respondents—380 teachers, 111 support staff and counsellors, and 121 PTA/BoM representatives—and a qualitative key-informant population of 54 participants, comprising 37 headteachers, 15 NGO/child protection actors, one County Education Officer and one Children Officer. The distribution is presented in Table 1.

4.1 Sample Size and Sampling Procedures

The study employed both probability and non-probability sampling techniques. Purposive sampling was used to select primary schools within the four informal settlements and key informants, including headteachers, NGO/child protection actors, the County Education Officer and the Children Officer, based on their knowledge, experience and involvement in child safeguarding. Stratified sampling was then used to categorize respondents into teachers, support staff and counsellors, and PTA/BoM representatives to ensure adequate representation of each group, followed by simple random sampling to select respondents from the respective strata. The study targeted 666 respondents, and using the Yamane (1967) formula at a 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error, a sample size of 249 respondents was determined.

Yamane's formula is expressed as:

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

Where:

n = sample size

N = population size (629)

e = margin of error (0.05, corresponding to a 95% confidence level)

$$n = \frac{666}{1 + 666(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{666}{1 + 666(0.0025)}$$

$$n = \frac{666}{1 + 1.67}$$

$$n = 2.67$$

$$n = 249$$

Table 2: Distribution of sample size

Category	Population	Sample Size
Headteachers	37	14
Teachers	380	142
Support Staffs & counsellors	111	42
Parents/PTS and BoM representatives	111	42
NGO/Child Protection agencies	15	7
Educational officers and children Officers	2	2
Total	666	249

4.2 Data Collection Instruments

The study used four complementary instruments: questionnaires, interview guides, observation guides and document-analysis checklists. The instruments were designed to correspond with the mixed methods design and enabled the researcher to obtain quantitative, qualitative and contextual evidence.

Questionnaires were used to collect quantitative data from teachers, support staff and counsellors, and PTA/BoM representatives. Interview guides were used to obtain qualitative information from headteachers, NGO/child protection

actors, the County Education Officer and the Children Officer. Observation guides were used to assess observable safeguarding practices and the school environment, while document-analysis checklists were used to examine relevant school safeguarding records. The use of multiple instruments enabled triangulation by comparing information obtained from respondents with observations and documentary evidence.

4.3 Pilot Testing of the Instruments

Aziz and Khan (2020) opine that a pilot study refers to a small-scale study, which is usually done before the main study with the objective of assessing the feasibility of carrying out the main study. Doing this allows researchers, most specifically novice researchers, to have an efficient road map for a successful main study. This study conducted a pilot study in public primary schools located in Embakasi East Sub-County, Nairobi County, which shares similar socio-economic and educational characteristics with the study area but were not included in the main study. The pilot study involved 14 teachers and 10 PTA/BoM representatives to fine-tune the questionnaire. The valuable feedback led to improvements in the wording, clarity of the scales, and relevance of the items included.

4.4 Data Analysis Techniques

The data collection process commenced after obtaining approval from the relevant department of the Catholic University of Eastern Africa. The researcher subsequently obtained the required research authorization and permit from the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) and sought permission from the relevant County and Sub-County education authorities.

The researcher then contacted the selected schools and key informants to arrange suitable dates and times for data collection. Questionnaires were administered to sampled teachers, support staff and counsellors, and PTA/BoM representatives. The researcher and research assistants explained the purpose of the study and provided instructions on completing the questionnaires.

Interviews were conducted with the purposively selected headteachers, NGO/child protection actors, County Education Officer and Children Officer. Interviews were conducted at locations convenient to the participants and, with permission, the researcher recorded and transcribed the information for analysis.

Observation of the selected schools was undertaken using the observation guide. The researcher also reviewed relevant school documents using the document-analysis checklist, subject to institutional authorization and availability of the documents. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained before questionnaires, interviews, observations or document reviews were undertaken.

4.5 Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

Multiple linear regression was used to examine the combined predictive relationship between the independent variables and child protection outcomes. The regression model was specified as:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \varepsilon$$

Where:

- Y = Child Protection Outcomes
- β_0 = Constant/intercept
- X_1 = Staff awareness
- X_2 = Child safeguarding practices
- X_3 = Reporting mechanisms
- X_4 = Implementation barriers
- $\beta_1 - \beta_4$ = Regression coefficients
- ε = Error term

5 RESULTS

Analyzes, interprets and discusses the findings of the study on child safeguarding practices and child protection outcomes in primary schools in informal settlements of Embakasi South Sub-County, Nairobi County, Kenya. The findings are presented in line with the study objectives and are based on data collected using questionnaires, interviews, observation checklists and document review guides. Analysis of quantitative data was done using descriptive statistics while qualitative data thematically.

5.1 Demographic Analysis

This section describes the demographic information of the respondents who responded to the study conducted. Demographic variables examined are respondent category, gender, age, highest educational attainment, and work experience and whether the respondents had received training on child safeguarding practices. Data is summarized in terms of frequencies and percentages.

5.1.1 Gender of the Respondents

The gender of the respondents was important as gender could affect experiences, perceptions and approaches to child safeguarding and protection in the school setting. The results are shown in Figure 1.

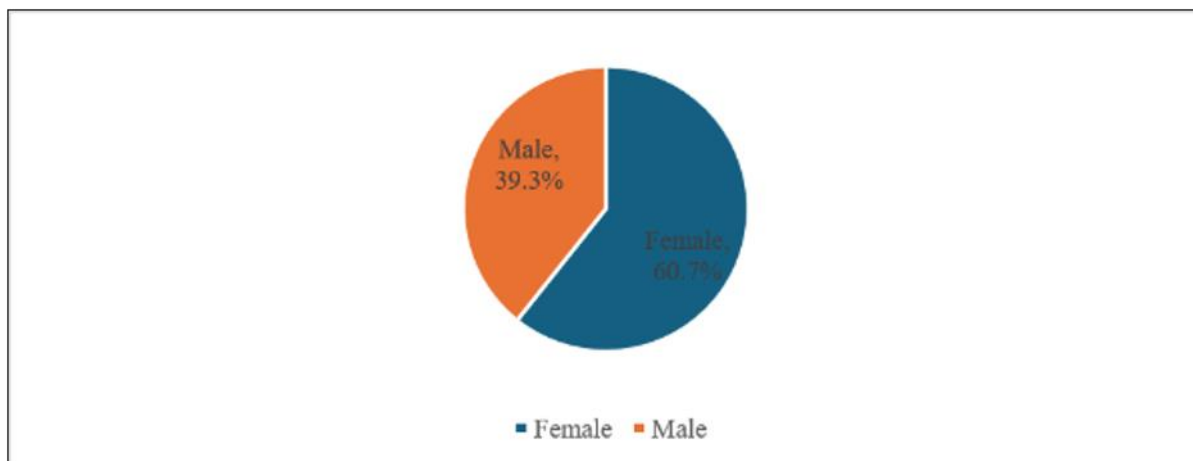


Figure 1: Gender of the Respondents

As seen in Figure 1, vast majority of the respondents were female 142 (60.7%) and 92 (39.3%) were males. The relatively high percentage of female respondents may be explained by the fact that women are an important group of teachers in primary schools and do a lot of work in learner welfare, counselling and child protection. However, both male and female respondents answered the question, which created a balanced picture of child safeguarding activities and child protection outcomes and contributed to the overall quality of the study results.

5.1.2 Age of the Respondents

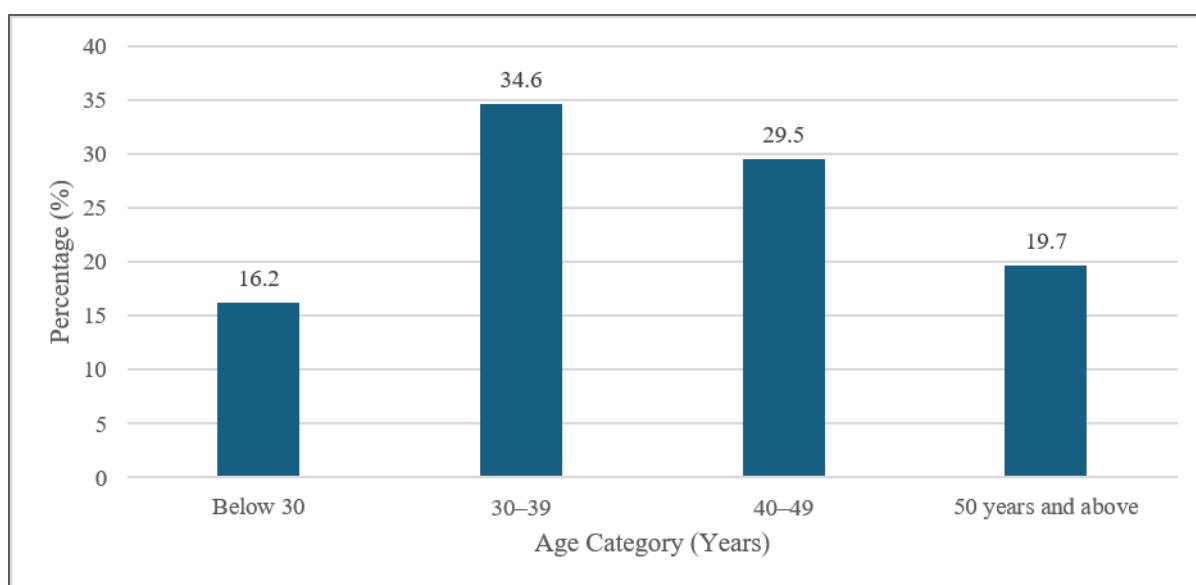


Figure 2: Age of the Respondents

To determine age profile of respondents to establish if those were mature and experienced enough to be able to give informed views on the safeguarding of children and child protection outcomes. Age is identified as a key demographic because it can affect their work experience, they may have had a different level of exposure to safeguarding issues and may have different decision-making processes in the school. Figure 2 illustrates their distribution.

Based on the results in Figure 2, it is noted that 81 (34.6%) of the respondents were in the age group 30 – 39 years, while 69 (29.5%) were in the age group 40 – 49 years. Forty-six (19.7%) of the respondents were aged between 50 years and above, and 38 (16.2%) were below 30 years. The results indicate that most of the respondents were of prime age, and therefore likely to have had good knowledge and experience of child safeguarding issues and concerns in primary schools. Representativeness in terms of age range also ensured that the study included a range of perspectives

5.1.3 Highest Level of Education of the Respondents

The aim of the study was to determine the highest level of education of the respondents. This information was of significance as it is likely to affect how respondents understand educational policies on child safeguarding and what they do in response to child safeguarding concerns, as well as how they implement child protection practices. Results are shown in Figure 3.

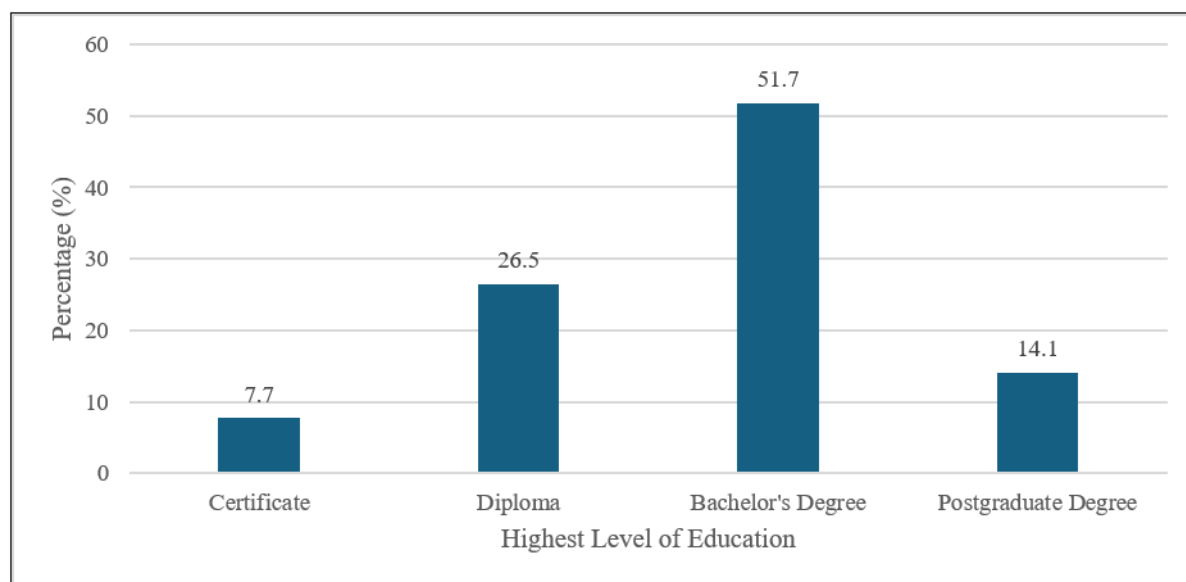


Figure 3: Highest Level of Education of the Respondents

As shown in Figure 3, the highest level of education among the respondents was bachelor's degree with 121 (51.7% of respondents) respondents holding a bachelor's degree, the most common level of education among the respondents. Sixty-two (26.5%) had a Diploma and 33 (14.1%) had a postgraduate qualification. The lowest percentage (7.7%) was those holding a Certificate qualification. From the findings, most of the respondents had tertiary education, which meant they were well informed about issues regarding child safeguarding practices, child protection policies and reporting procedures. The relatively high level of education of respondents also contributed to the confidence gained in the quality and reliability of information in the study.

5.1.4 Work Experience of the Respondents

The study aimed to identify the respondents' work experience to understand the level of exposure they have to child safeguarding practice and child protection issues in primary schools. Often, the length of time in work experience was cited as an important factor as longer serving staff were expected to have been exposed to a broader spectrum of child protection issues and have had more experience with safeguarding policies and procedures. The results are shown in Figure 4.

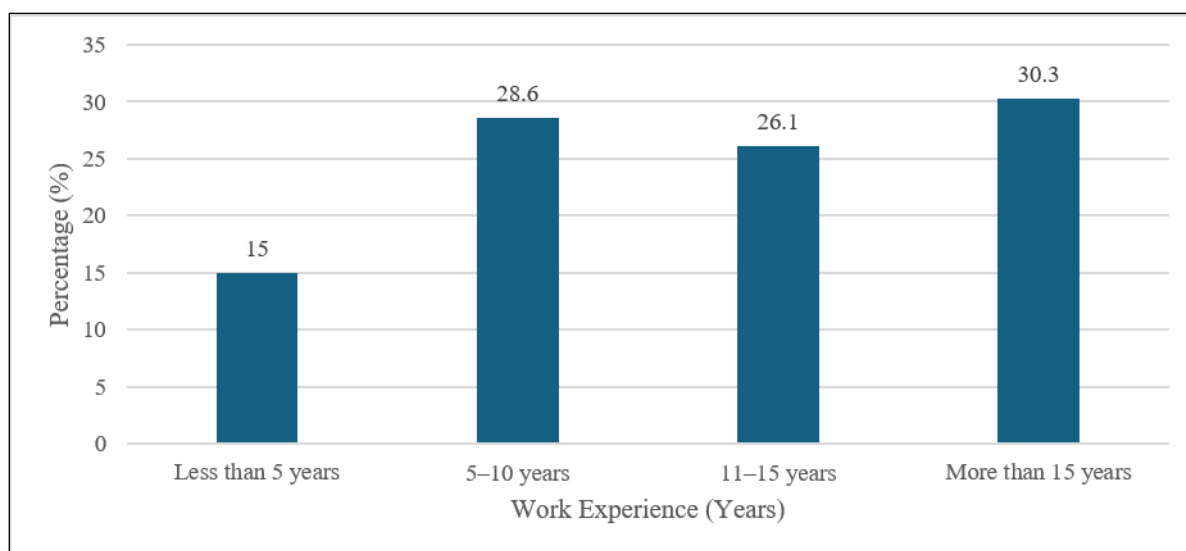


Figure 4: Work Experience of the Respondents

As illustrated in Figure 4, most of the respondents (71, 30.3%) had over 15 years of work experience, with 67 (28.6%) having 5-10 years' experience. Among respondents who had 11 - 15 years of experience, 61 (26.1%) reported this experience, and 35 (15.0%) had less than five years of experience. The results indicated that most of the respondents had wide experience in education. This means that they were likely to have a significant amount of knowledge from their long-term interactions with learners and school communities about child safeguarding practices, school policies and child protection procedure. The use of respondents from different levels of work experience also allowed the researchers to gain insight into both newly established and experienced stakeholders' perspectives, which enhances the quality of the results obtained.

5.1.5 Training in Child Safeguarding Practices

The study aimed at finding out if there was formal training received by the respondents in child safeguarding practices. A key aspect of child protection is training, which provides all school staff and other stakeholders with the knowledge and skills needed to recognize, prevent and respond to child safeguarding issues appropriately. The results are displayed in Figure 5.

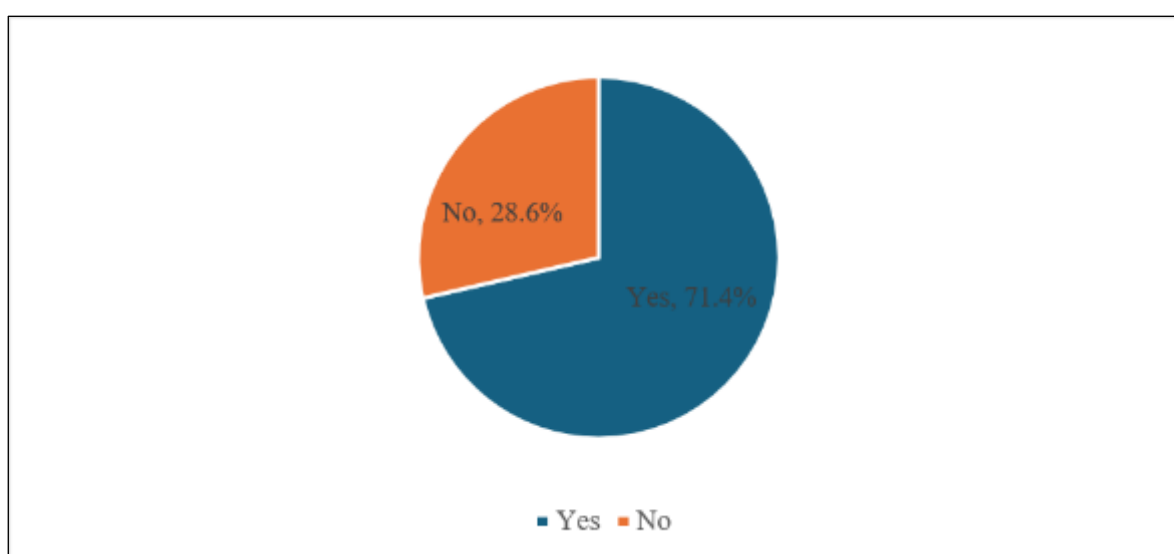


Figure 5: Training in Child Safeguarding Practices

The data in Figure 5 show that 167 (71.4%) of the respondents reported receiving training on child safeguarding practices and 67 (28.6%) reported not to have received any formal training. The results indicate that while most of the respondents had access to child safeguarding training, a significant percentage did not have access to it. The relatively high proportion of trained respondents suggests that several schools and child protection actors have tried to boost the skills of staff members involved in child protection. Nearly a third of respondents, however, did not have any formal

safeguarding training, which raises concerns that this could impact on the consistent implementation of child safeguarding policies and procedures in schools. This reinforces the importance of ongoing professional development and regular safeguarding training to ensure all stakeholders have knowledge and skills to enable them to respond to child protection issues and effectively protect children.

5.2 Descriptive Analysis of the Study

The results of the study are presented based on the research objectives. The results are derived from the information derived from the structured questionnaire that was used to interview the respondents. Data is analyzed descriptively and presented in terms of frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations. The mean scores were interpreted using a five-point Likert scale where 1.00–1.80 = Strongly Disagree, 1.81–2.60 = Disagree, 2.61–3.40 = Neutral, 3.41–4.20 = Agree, and 4.21–5.00 = Strongly Agree. Mean scores are higher, the more in agreement with statements about child safeguarding practices and child protection outcomes.

5.3 Child Safeguarding Practices Utilized

Respondents were asked to agree or disagree with statements about the implementation of child safeguarding practices in their schools. The statements measured the degree that schools had set in place safeguarding policies, systems of support within the school, systems of collaboration and practical systems in place for the protection of children. Table 3 summarizes the findings.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics on Child Safeguarding Practices Utilized in Primary Schools

Statement	SD (%)	D (%)	N (%)	A (%)	SA (%)	Mean	Std. Dev.
The school has a written child safeguarding policy.	1.7	3.8	8.1	45.3	41.1	4.20	0.87
There are clear reporting channels for child abuse in this school.	2.1	4.7	9.0	46.6	37.6	4.13	0.91
Child safeguarding is taken seriously in this school.	2.6	5.1	9.8	45.3	37.2	4.09	0.94
Teachers are supported by the administration in child safeguarding matters.	2.6	5.6	10.3	45.7	35.8	4.07	0.96
School promotes a safe environment for children.	2.1	4.3	8.5	45.7	39.4	4.16	0.91
The safeguarding policy is accessible to all staff.	2.6	5.6	10.7	45.3	35.8	4.06	0.97
New staff are oriented on child protection practices.	4.3	7.7	13.2	43.2	31.6	3.90	1.08
The school collaborates with external agencies (e.g., child services).	3.8	7.3	12.8	43.2	32.9	3.94	1.07
Counseling services are provided to affected pupils.	4.3	8.5	13.7	42.3	31.2	3.88	1.10
There is supervision of pupils during school activities.	2.1	4.3	8.1	45.7	39.8	4.17	0.90
The school has measures to ensure physical safety of pupils.	1.7	4.3	8.5	45.3	40.2	4.18	0.89
Composite Mean/Standard Deviation						4.07	0.96

5.4 Interpretation of Findings

Table 3 shows that the general impression of the respondents on the effectiveness of child safeguarding practices in primary schools was a composite mean of 4.07 (SD = 0.96), indicating a general agreement. The available information appears to indicate that the schools involved had implemented school-based institutional structures and practices to support the safety, protection and wellbeing of children.

The most widely agreed statement was ‘The school has a written child safeguarding policy’ (M = 4.20, SD = 0.87), with most schools having a written child protection policy to support their child protection work. Participants also reported that their schools had procedures in place to keep pupils physically safe (M = 4.18, SD = 0.89), there was sufficient supervision of pupils during school activities (M = 4.17, SD = 0.90), and schools foster a safe environment for pupils (M = 4.16, SD = 0.91). This evidence indicates that schools had focused on developing a secure learning environment, both through policy and practical, safeguarding practices.

There were also strong agreement ratings for there being clear reporting channels for child abuse ($M = 4.13$, $SD = 0.91$); for child safeguarding being taken seriously within their schools ($M = 4.09$, $SD = 0.94$); for school administration to support members of staff on matters of child safeguarding ($M = 4.07$, $SD = 0.96$); and for safeguarding policies being available to members of staff ($M = 4.06$, $SD = 0.97$). The results showed that institutional commitment to child safeguarding was not just manifested in policymaking but also in administrative support and easy access to safeguarding procedures.

Lower mean scores were found however for counselling provision for pupils who are affected ($M = 3.88$, $SD = 1.10$), induction for new staff to child protection ($M = 3.90$, $SD = 1.08$) and partnership working with external agencies including child protection services ($M = 3.94$, $SD = 1.07$). The responses were still positive on these points, but the results indicate that these elements of safeguarding practice were not always evident in all schools and so need strengthening.

The overall results showed that the composite mean score (4.07 , $SD = 0.96$) of child safeguarding practices was well established in participating primary schools. There are written safeguarding policies, clear reporting lines, effective supervision of pupils and administrative support in place, which is evidence of the institutional commitment to fostering safe learning environments and to keeping children safe from abuse, neglect and exploitation.

The findings are consistent with Gatundu (2024), which focuses on the importance of schools having formal safeguarding policies, building safe learning environments, and implementing practical activities in schools that ensure children are not placed at risk of harming themselves. Likewise, the results align with Wessells (2022), who states that a key factor in effective safeguarding is institutional commitment, administrative support and procedures and cooperation among institutional stakeholders who are responsible for child protection. Yet the relatively low rates for counselling services and orientation of newly appointed staff and collaboration with external child protection agencies agree with the findings of Kabwos et al. (2020) that there are often weaknesses in the provision of psychosocial support services, collaboration with external child protection agencies and ongoing institutional capacity building in schools. The results thus indicate that, overall, the implementation of child safeguarding practices was satisfactory, but there is a need for extension of counselling services, induction programmes for new staff and partnerships with external agencies dealing with child protection to enhance the effectiveness of child safeguarding interventions in primary schools.

5.5 Qualitative Findings

This section presents the qualitative findings obtained from the open-ended questions included in the questionnaire. The qualitative responses complement the quantitative findings by providing respondents' views and experiences regarding staff awareness, child safeguarding practices, reporting mechanisms, barriers to the implementation of child safeguarding practices and strategies for improving child protection outcomes in primary schools within informal settlements of Embakasi South Sub-County, Nairobi County. The responses were analyzed thematically and are presented according to the study objectives.

5.5.1 Child Safeguarding Practices Utilized

This aimed at exploring the practices of child protection in primary schools in informal settlements of Embakasi South Sub-County. Interviewees talked about the different protective measures that have been taken in schools to ensure children's safety and wellbeing. The qualitative results are provided by themes that come up.

Theme 1: Implementation of School Child Safeguarding Policies and Procedures

Most participants reported that schools had established child safeguarding policies and procedures to guide the prevention, identification and management of child protection concerns. They indicated that safeguarding had become an integral part of school management and that staff were expected to adhere to the established procedures when handling child protection cases.

One headteacher explained: *"Our school has a child safeguarding policy that guides how we handle cases involving learners. Every member of staff is expected to follow the laid-down procedures whenever a child protection issue arises."* (Headteacher 7)

Similarly, a Child Protection Actor stated: *"Most schools have made significant progress by introducing safeguarding policies and assigning specific staff to coordinate child protection activities."* (Child Protection Actor 3)

Theme 2: Creating Safe and Supportive Learning Environments

Participants indicated that schools had implemented several initiatives aimed at creating safe learning environments. These included teacher supervision, guidance and counselling services, child-friendly reporting channels, learner sensitization programmes and collaboration with parents and child protection agencies.

A headteacher noted: *"Besides having policies, we conduct regular guidance and counselling sessions and encourage learners to speak openly whenever they experience challenges. This has strengthened trust between learners and teachers."* (Headteacher 10)

A PTA representative added: *"Parents are occasionally invited to school meetings where child protection issues are discussed, although attendance is sometimes low."* (PTA Representative 5)

The qualitative findings support the quantitative results, which indicated that respondents generally agreed that child safeguarding practices were being implemented in the participating schools. Participants highlighted the existence of safeguarding policies, supportive school environments, guidance and counselling programmes and management support as key practices contributing to child protection. However, they also noted that greater parental involvement and more frequent review of safeguarding policies would further strengthen the effectiveness of these safeguarding practices.

5.6 Correlation Analysis

This section presents the results of the Pearson product-moment correlation analysis conducted to determine the relationships between the study variables. The analysis examined the association between staff safeguarding training, child-centered practices, community participation and child protection outcomes. The strength of the relationships was interpreted using Cohen's (1988) guidelines, where correlation coefficients of 0.10–0.29 indicate weak relationships, 0.30–0.49 indicate moderate relationships and 0.50–1.00 indicate strong relationships.

Table 4: Pearson Correlation Matrix for Study Variables

	Child Protection Outcomes	Staff Awareness	Child Safeguarding Practices	Reporting Mechanisms	Barriers to Implementation
Child Protection Outcomes	Pearson Correlation	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)				
	N	234			
Staff Awareness	Pearson Correlation	0.714**	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000			
	N	234	234		
Child Safeguarding Practices	Pearson Correlation	0.756**	0.284	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.091		
	N	234	234	234	
Reporting Mechanisms	Pearson Correlation	0.731**	0.263	0.301	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.104	0.082	
	N	234	234	234	234
Barriers to Implementation	Pearson Correlation	-.641**	-.228	-.194	-.217
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.118	0.137	0.126
	N	234	234	234	234

The results presented in Table 4 showed that child safeguarding practices had a strong positive and statistically significant relationship with child protection outcomes ($r = 0.756$, $p < 0.001$, $N = 234$). This suggests that schools with stronger reported safeguarding practices tend to have more favorable perceived child protection outcomes. It is important to note that correlation does not establish causation. The results demonstrate associations between the study variables and perceived child protection outcomes but do not, by themselves, demonstrate that changes in one variable directly caused changes in another. The findings indicate that child safeguarding practices were positively associated with perceived child protection outcomes.

5.7 Regression Analysis

Regression analysis was conducted to examine the extent to which child safeguarding practices, statistically predicted perceived child protection outcomes in primary schools in informal settlements of Embakasi South Sub-County.

Table 5: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.781	0.610	0.603	0.421

The results presented in Table 5 show that the multiple correlation coefficient ($R = 0.781$) indicates a strong positive relationship between the independent variables and child protection outcomes. The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.610$) further reveals that, child safeguarding practices, account for 61.0% of the variation in child protection outcomes. This suggests that the predictor variables make a substantial contribution to explaining changes in the dependent variable. The remaining 39.0% of the variation is likely attributable to other factors that were not included in the regression model.

In addition, the adjusted R^2 value of 0.603 demonstrates that the model retains considerable explanatory power even after adjusting for the number of predictor variables, indicating that the regression model provides a reliable fit for the observed data. The findings are consistent with the literature reviewed in this study, which has highlighted that the outcome of child protection is complex and dependent on a multi-institutional and multi-organizational context rather than a single safeguarding intervention.

6 SUMMARY,

This section presented a summary of the findings of the study, conclusions drawn from the findings, contribution of the study to theory, policy and practice, recommendations and suggestions for further research. The summary brought together the findings in relation to the study objectives. The conclusions were drawn from the descriptive, correlation, regression and qualitative findings. The section also highlighted the implications of the findings for child safeguarding and child protection outcomes in primary schools in informal settlements of Embakasi South Sub-County, Nairobi County, Kenya.

6.1 Summary of the Findings

6.1.1 Child Safeguarding Practices and Child Protection Outcomes

The study established that child safeguarding practices were positively and significantly associated with child protection outcomes in primary schools in informal settlements of Embakasi South Sub-County. The descriptive findings indicated that respondents reported the presence and implementation of various safeguarding measures, including child protection policies, learner supervision, reporting procedures and awareness activities aimed at preventing abuse and neglect.

The qualitative findings indicated that schools that consistently implemented safeguarding procedures were perceived to be better positioned to prevent and respond to child protection concerns. The correlation analysis revealed a strong positive and statistically significant relationship between child safeguarding practices and child protection outcomes ($r = 0.756$, $p < 0.001$). The regression analysis further showed that child safeguarding practices significantly predicted child protection outcomes and represented the strongest predictor among the study variables, based on the verified regression results. The findings therefore indicated that stronger implementation of safeguarding practices was associated with more positive perceived child protection outcomes.

7 CONCLUSION

The study concluded that child safeguarding practices were strongly and positively associated with child protection outcomes ($r = 0.756$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that consistent implementation of child protection policies, effective learner supervision, safe school practices and appropriate response procedures contributed to improved child safety, wellbeing and protection. The study contributed to policy, practice and knowledge by providing empirical evidence to support strengthened safeguarding policies through continuous staff training, effective reporting mechanisms, adequate resources and stronger coordination among child protection stakeholders. In practice, it highlighted the need for staff capacity building, consistent policy implementation, accessible reporting systems, regular safeguarding assessments and collaboration among schools, parents, communities and child protection agencies. In terms of knowledge, the study expanded empirical understanding of the relationship between child safeguarding practices and child protection outcomes in primary schools within informal settlements and provided a basis for further research in resource-constrained and socially vulnerable school environments.

Recommendations

- **Strengthen policy implementation and institutional capacity:** The Ministry of Education, Teachers Service Commission and relevant agencies should provide continuous safeguarding training, standardized and regularly reviewed child protection guidelines, adequate resources, and effective monitoring and evaluation systems to ensure consistent implementation across primary schools.
- **Improve school-level safeguarding and reporting systems:** School administrators should integrate child safeguarding into routine school management, establish accessible, confidential and child-friendly reporting mechanisms, conduct regular safeguarding audits and risk assessments, and strengthen referral and response procedures for child protection cases.
- **Strengthen stakeholder collaboration and further research:** Schools should enhance collaboration with parents, communities, child protection agencies, health facilities and civil society organizations while sensitizing learners on their rights and reporting channels. Further research should examine safeguarding practices across different school settings, compare urban and rural contexts, investigate additional influencing factors, and use longitudinal approaches to assess the sustainability of safeguarding interventions.

STATEMENTS ON COMPLIANCE WITH ETHICAL STANDARDS

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The author declares no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have influenced the work reported in this manuscript.

Data Availability Statement

The data supporting the findings contains information collected from study participants and is not publicly deposited. Access may be considered for legitimate academic purposes subject to applicable ethical, institutional, and confidentiality requirements.

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