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**Effects of School Selected Factors on the Implementation of the  
Re-Entry Policy in Public Secondary Schools in the Gatundu  
South Sub- County, Kiambu County, Kenya**



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**Effects of School Selected Factors on the Implementation of the Re-Entry Policy in Public Secondary Schools in the Gatundu South Sub- County, Kiambu County, Kenya**

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**Abstract**

**Purpose:** In 1994, Kenyan Ministry of Education established a policy that expectant students should remain in school until due to delivery. In 1996, the policy was revisited and National Guidelines for School Re-entry in Basic Education was formulated in 2020 whose goal was to provide and improve re-entry for learners who drop out of school. This research aimed to assess the effects of school selected factors on the implementation of the re-entry policy in public secondary schools in the Gatundu South Sub- County, Kiambu County, Kenya. The study was based on Equality of opportunity theory propounded by Mithaug.

**Methodology:** The Convergent parallel mixed research that yielded both quantitative and qualitative data. To gather quantitative and qualitative data in this study, a cross-sectional survey and case study designs were applied. The target population was 421 derived from 268 class teachers, 30 principals, 60 mother-students, 60 parents/guardians and 3 MOE officials. The sample size was 93 participants. Purposive and simple random sampling were used to get 53 class teachers, 10 principals, 2 Ministry of Education officials, 15 mother-students and 13 parents/guardians. The study used content, face, construct and criterion validity. Reliability of research tools and the quantitative data analysis was done using SPSS VERSION 21. The Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient test results were at 0.933, greater than 0.7 affirming an acceptable level of internal consistency. The data collection tools included: questionnaires, face to face interviews, document analysis and phone interviews. Hypothesis was tested using Pearson correlation and results indicated negative correlation between government initiatives towards the implementation of the re-entry policy and school completion rate. The quantitative findings were elaborated in frequencies, tables, rates, pie diagrams and charts while qualitative data thematically dissected and presented narrative form. The researcher sought permission

from NACOSTI, The Catholic University of Eastern Africa, and the Kiambu county government as a mandatory pre-study requirement. The participants of the study were given the essential information and confidentiality guaranteed.

**Findings:** According to the findings of the study, the vast majority of all respondents had verbally heard about the re-entry policy or from the media. The teachers' and parents' level of education was commendable because they were able to comprehend the policy if channels of educating were utilized. The study also found that the re-entry policy was not supported by the government.

**Unique contribution to theory, practice and policy:** The study recommends accurate dropout records, leave applications, and follow-ups for girls, as well as comprehensive retraining for guidance and counseling teachers to address teenage pregnancy cases and support mother-students.

**Key Words:** *School Selected Factors, Re-Entry Policy and Public Secondary Schools*

### **Background to the Study**

Education, according to (Komora, 2014), has long been regarded as a critical common freedom since it looks to be the road to possible transformation, harmony, and strength inside and between nations. With this idea in mind, the United Nations issued the Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. Its article 26 advocates for free and compulsory education, at the elementary and fundamental levels. Education, therefore, facilitates social, economic, and political transformation. Therefore, instruction is a helpful and productive tool for both people and the state. In an era where men and women have equal work possibilities, educated individuals have emerged as remarkable, capable, and self-assured entrepreneurs. High-quality education for females has been recognized to be the cornerstone for economic and resourceful progress. Furthermore, educated women are healthier for themselves and their children since they can keep dietary issues under check. Women who have received education protect themselves and their children from the detrimental consequences of economic and environmental disasters. Literates might so labor tirelessly to alleviate poverty and improve moral standards (Wanjiku, 2012). Keeping young people in school offers them more freedom, prepares them to make life decisions, and gives them the opportunity for a higher income. The duty of caring for both the infant and the mother hurts the family in early parenthood (Kurgat, 2016).

Mutua (2019) asserts that Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 4 and 5 address girls' education globally. Both expect admittance to comprehensive and fair schooling to support long lasting learning for all and consideration on orientation to equity and the strengthening of all ladies. As a result, educational opportunities for lifelong learning that are inclusive and equitable for everyone via empowerment are prioritized. The Millennium Development Goals (MDG) prioritizes empowering women to eliminate poverty through quality education, according to Tang (2015). Pathania (2017) backs up this claim by asserting that by 2030, "no one is left behind" in addressing the devastating and severe issues of inequality and exclusion. According to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), everyone has the right to education, where females are placed at the core of its educational efforts regardless of how

poor or affluent a nation is. Following that, despite being forced by cultural, political, or societal considerations, dismissing a young student mother from school that limits her capacities has no place (Kapasule & 2020). Parenthood is a crucial milestone in a woman's life. Yet, adolescent motherhood is a major worry in many nations since it carries with it physical, psychological, emotional, and social challenges. As a result, healthcare personnel should offer them extra attention and care assistance (Mangeli et.al 2017). Another source says that single parents are more likely to experience stigma, despair, anxiety, and stress overall despite making significant efforts to meet their financial obligations (Stack & Meredith, 2018).

The Ministry of Education of the Kenyan government issued an order in 1994 requiring pregnant students to attend school until the child was born and then return to the same or another school. Its motivation was to safeguard youthful moms from mental and close to home damage. In addition, the policy emphasized educating the entire school community to facilitate youth reintegration. By the by, strategy execution was stopped at the area and commonplace levels, leaving translation and decision-production to individual directors (Latan Imbosa et.al 2022). In 1996, adjustments by the Ministry of Education to strengthen the stance that the female child was not unfairly disadvantaged even after delivery. Teenage mother-students were therefore urged to make adequate provisions for the care of the baby. The Care and Protection of Children Act of 2016 directed the county governments submit to the highest authority the establishment of childcare facilities to assist teen mothers. Implementation of the re-entry policy is however challenged by insufficient resources and little legitimacy (Mwenje, 2015). The Ministry of Education published National Guidelines for School Re-entry in Basic Education in 2020 to determine and provide strategy for improving readmission for learners to increase retention, transition, and completion of basic instruction (MOE, 2020). Furthermore, the standards were intended to enhance legislation and policies pertaining to excellent education. The rules' components were explicitly stated: inclusion and non-discrimination, gender equality, equity, child safety, and following the learners' best interests.

The teenage mother-students are by all accounts not the only ones who benefit from the guidelines. However, a similar report uncovered that 33% of girls became mothers at 15 to 19 years age had no education. To ensure that these principles are effectively implemented, the Ministry is tasked with leading coordination among multiple agencies. Subsequently, financial possibilities are hampered, and the country's true capacity is decreased (MOE, 2020). An unfortunate connection between sensitization and comprehension of the re-entry policy sharpening and stemming the reemergence strategy was clearly demonstrated among stakeholders (Christine, 2020). In addition, there is a deficiency of educators in schools to meet students' physical, emotional, intellectual, and emotional necessities. However, brutality and destructive social practices likewise hinder reemergence execution for school culmination after conveyance (Ananda, 2019). According to Kamau & Wambugu (2017), secondary education is an essential link in the preparation of human capital for development and life opportunities. However, (Komora, 2014) asserts that despite established strategies to improve education, variations persist in the Kenyan educational system in efforts to reduce unintended pregnancies. According to Omwanicha (2012), young girls are burdened in schooling and require exceptional thought since they are more likely than boys to leave school for various reasons, including early



pregnancy and marriage, customary viewpoint, violence, and exposure to various forms of harassment.

Wanyama & Simatwa (2011), in Emuhaya additionally observed that young ladies ought to profit from the re-entry strategy since they are distraught in all degrees of training regarding access, support, consummation, and execution because of early pregnancy. High schooling moms, further face, ridicule and stigma from the community instructors, and companions, with no advantage from training. It was outstanding that guardians attempt to track down a spot for their girls to return to school after delivery in spite of not being familiar with the re-entry strategy. Mutua et.al (2019), indicated high paces of school dropouts because of teen pregnancy in Homa Bay and Narok counties at 66% and 33% respectively. Murang'a County ranked the least at 6%. The evident consequences of early moms as shown by the study of well-being and social worry considering its relationship with higher distress and mortality for both the youngster mother and the newborn contrasted with students who pursue completion of secondary schooling with less distractions. Between the years 2014 and 2017, 65% of young ladies exited school in Kathiani Sub County due to pregnancy. The stakeholders assumed their vital role in assisting young mothers as per the re-entry policy guidelines that needed clarity before execution (Muthikwa, 2020).

### **Statement of the Problem**

Notwithstanding the 1948 United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, which encourages free and compulsory education at the basic and foundational levels, there has been and continues to be uproar among governments that the execution of re-entry policies for young mothers is failing (Komora, 2014). Worldwide, it is estimated that 25% of school dropouts resulted from early pregnancy while Africa registers an annual rate of 18.8% (Worku, et.al 2021). Following the establishment of the re-entry policy in 1994 by the Kenyan government, implementation, both at district and provincial levels was suspended, leaving interpretation and decision-making to individual principals (Imbosa et.al 2022). As a result, many secondary school students do not complete their education after giving birth, with 13,000 females dropping out each year (Wanyama & Simatwa, 2011). In Kiambu county, early pregnancy is rated at 14 percent. Similarly, an outcry on early pregnancy between 13-19 years in Gatundu South sub-county diminish the dreams among girls who miss opportunities and benefits that come along with education due to school dropout (Njoroge, 2019). Prior studies on this policy have not adequately addressed the role of re-entry policy execution and consequences of school dropout for adolescent mother-students. Therefore, this study was meant to assess the effects of school selected factors on the implementation of the re-entry policy in public secondary schools in the Gatundu South Sub- County, Kiambu County, Kenya.

### **Research Questions**

To what extent have the school selected factors affected the implementation of the re-entry policy in public secondary schools in the Gatundu South Sub- County, Kiambu county, Kenya?

## **Theoretical Review**

### **Human Right-Based Approach (HRBA)**

The Human Right-Based Approach safeguards and gives people an establishment for opportunity, equity, respect, harmony, and prosperity for all through the Widespread Statement of Basic Human Rights as taken on by the United Nations (UN) General Gathering in 1948. The approach examines disparities that exist particularly on helpless, underestimated, and victimized upon power orientation and equality in society. Likewise, it commands the obligation carriers to meet their commitments and urges freedoms holders to guarantee their rights in various disciplines including schooling and completion of education to appropriate levels from where they become confident and self-reliant citizens (Kamruzzaman& Das, 2016). The principles of participation, accountability, non-discrimination, empowerment, and legality bind the Human-Right Based Approach immovably. This implies everybody in the general public has the right to contribute to issues influencing them (Scottish Basic liberties Commission, 2011). The discriminated groups, in this case, the mother-students are accommodated as well. In any case, the engagement of the rich and poor is a general struggle. This unbecoming attitude presents difficulties for duty-bearers to attend to the demands of every individual's claim (Mutua, Miriti & Mogeni, 2019). The Human Rights-Based Approach has not fully led to the realization of better human conditions since there is no sufficient training of those in positions of influence and policy implementation to make it work (Kanal, 2022). This has left this approach largely theoretical and non-impactful in situations where it needs to be applied. NGOs have commonly been noted to take up the responsibilities of filling the gaps in this approach and their work is hampered by poor frameworks and funds to cover all areas of concern (Kanal, 2022). This approach, therefore, lacks a direct impact on the plight of the mother-students since it is not binding to those involved in policy implementation. It was relevant to adopt Social Integration Theory the study since it helped the researcher to gain the overall understanding of the concepts involved to effectively implement the re-entry policy for teenage mother-students to re-join and complete schooling after delivery. The theory points to uplift the attitude of young mothers to integrate with others meaningfully while the society breaks the barriers to exclusion.

### **Social Integration Theory**

Emile Durkheim, the defender of the social integration theory of 1892 defines it as a principle that guides connections among individuals in the bigger society and how they communicate with each other. The minority are assimilated into the societal standard to raise a brought-together society. Social principles inside society are considered to determine the way individuals coordinate into the predominant culture of the society and consequent achievement or failure (Berkman, Glass, Brissette & Seeman, 2000). This theory offers that security provides young mother-students with opportunity and certainty when retained in school to yield prosperity after completing their studies and progressing. Besides, the shared perspective of individuals who live and share cultural commitments feel part of the entire society including the people who have a possibility of exclusion; teen mothers counted also and whose aggressiveness in education minimizes social conflict in the field workforce (Berkman, Glass,

Brissette & Seeman, 2000). While everybody should be similarly maintained, gaps exist on how best every individual can take advantage of social fairness since individuals' preferred result at any point determine the success by legitimacy and exertion made. This theory only paints an ideal situation in society that has wide gaps from reality. The girls are a part of the community but their condition and status as victims of teenage pregnancy set them apart as a disadvantaged group that is not in harmony with the rest of the population due to the discontinuation of their education. It is likely to produce tension between the secondary school leavers and dropouts, widens the gaps on economic endeavors and produces inequalities (Linda, 2001).

### **Empirical Review**

#### **The extent to which the selected school factors affect the implementation of the re-entry policy in public secondary schools**

After formulation and core policy execution, the most crucial phase of policy implementation is various initiatives geared toward influencing a multilevel education system and societal participation that elevates education by specific policy goals (Tezera, 2019). The re-entry policy is thus meant to give a second chance for girls to complete school after delivery. According to Walgwe et al., LaChance, Birungi, & Undie (2016), teen pregnancy means the end of girls' education. School administrators are challenged to have networking mechanism to track the victims of early pregnancy back to school. Educational administrators must not only demonstrate concern for the students and use consistent and prompt intervention to effectively resolve their issues to keep re-entered students motivated, but they must also be aware of and comprehend the policy guidelines (Muthikwa, 2020). Girls' retention at all educational levels is significantly influenced by the administration of the school. However, it has been demonstrated that stakeholders are unaware of the document's existence (Oywecha, 2008) and that there are inconsistencies between practice and theory (Adhiambo, 2010). The government's provision of professional in-service training for teachers is crucial to the effective implementation of the guidelines for supporting teen mothers to stay in secondary school until they complete their education (Kurgat, 2016).

Girl child education has in recent times received increased focus and tailored initiatives to address unique problems facing different countries across the globe from both middle- and low-income areas. Evans & Yuan (2022) carried out a study on what can be learned from interventions that do not focus on girls. The study used document analysis on over 495 documents on access to education or learning outcomes for boys and girls. The study focused on the period between 1985 and 2015. The study also included 18 studies that primarily focused on improving girls' access to education. The study established that almost all initiatives specifically targeting girls were from Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia in an attempt to address the wide gaps in education for boys and girls. The study also found that girl-targeted initiatives are found in low-income countries and majorly focus on girl-secondary school education. The study reported that girls benefitted from both initiatives whether girl-specific or general initiatives, leading to increased numbers of girls accessing and completing secondary school education. The study recommended continued interventions to help in improving access

and quality of education for both boys and girls. The current study mainly focused on policy implementation using convergent research methods to collect qualitative and quantitative data.

Adangbe (2020) researched the Challenges Facing Teenage Mothers in School, Teachers' Perspective in Wa West, India using a qualitative research approach on a purposefully sampled group of respondents. All the participants in the study were sampled from one school where mother-students and 10 teachers were engaged in focus-group discussion. The findings of the study pointed to most teachers viewing the mother-students as overwhelmed teenagers with huge responsibilities of parenting and unable to comfortably study. The teachers also view teenage mothers as unable to manage their time effectively to balance studies and motherhood. The study was notably conducted in only one school and the principal the main administrator was not involved. The study did also not make any recommendations to help in improving the teachers' perception towards mother-students. The intention of this study was to engage more than 30% of the schools in the location of the study with multiple respondents to enrich its findings.

Cohen, Loeb & Miller (2020) conducted a qualitative research study in New York on policy implementation, principal agency, and strategic action. School principals, class teachers, learners, and schools and school records were the main sources of data for the study. A survey method was used to gather data from all respondents and the researcher also extracted the relevant data from school records. The study had a target population of 494 respondents but only 52% participated in the online survey. The study established that school principals have mixed reactions and feelings on the approaches to implementing policies. Some principals felt that policies are designed to have a natural course of implementation once rolled out. They assume that they are not directly confronted with the responsibility of ensuring the policy works when it encounters challenges during challenges. The study recommended proper framing, funding, and facilitating of policies by providing monitoring frameworks to troubleshoot where challenges are encountered. The study also recommended sensitization of the various stakeholders of their individual and collective roles toward the success of the policy. The gap in the study is the use of an online survey where 52 respondents participated remotely. The researcher of the current study physically visited the majority of respondents, except very few who were reached out by phone and get their feedback on their experiences which will be recorded and used to fatten the findings.

Nkurunziza et.al. (2020), studied on breaking barriers in the prevention of adolescent pregnancies for in-school children in the Kihere District of Rwanda. It was done using combined qualitative and quantitative research techniques over three years. Pre- and post-surveys were done on six focus groups comprising school girls aged between 15-19 years who were interviewed. After using descriptive together with cohort data analysis, the findings of the study showed that over 85% of teenage pregnancies were in secondary school. The girls were said to seek information about sexual experiences from peers who turn to have limited knowledge and were misinformed. The researcher recommended intensive peer education and Sexual Reproductive Health (SRH) programs to enlighten teenagers on the effects of premarital sex, especially for school-going girls. The study was conducted over a long duration of three



years which is likely to have had an impact on the respondents due to various factors. The current studies wished carry out the research and establish the findings within approximately two months to avoid unforeseen situations that are likely to happen over a long duration. The secondary school-going age for Rwanda is between 15-19 years while Kenya has the average secondary school-going age of between 14-18 years.

Niboye (2018) conducted another study on Back to school after delivery, the plight of teenage mothers in Zanzibar in Mjini Magharibi's Urban and West Districts in Unguja. The primary data was collected using public rapid appraisal methods. Grey literature was used to gather secondary data. The preferred respondents were school heads, teachers, and teenage mothers from selected secondary schools, as well as a ministry of education officials and vocational training. The study found that girls who had reasonable support to care for their babies returned to school, whereas those who did not have to wait longer never returned. The Zanzibar government was hence mandated to develop a clear implementation strategy to ensure that all pregnant teenage girls are supported and encouraged to return to school after their pregnancy. The study's methodology was limited because it failed to show the designs, target population, and sampling techniques and procedures used. The current study applied appropriate methodologies and analysis procedures to determine the factors that promote or hinder the effective implementation of re-entry policies in public schools in Gatundu South Sub County.

Oyugi (2016), sought to establish the practices of Principals that influenced the retention of girls in public secondary schools in the Suba sub-county, Homa Bay County. The study used the descriptive survey design in research that targeted 32 secondary schools. Random sampling was used to select 10 secondary school principals, 47 class teachers, and 116 girls, with interview schedules and questionnaire instruments being considered for data collection. According to the findings, one of the reasons for low school retention was early pregnancy. Principals who were completely in agreement that girls should be given time to share their experiences had opened lines of communication for girls' experiences to be listened to. To encourage teenage mothers to stay in school and complete their secondary education, the school administrators suggested soliciting donations and government support in the form of bursaries. The study further recommended the involvement of NGOs in helping to improve and maintain the retention of mother-students in secondary school. The study sampled students without considering if they were mother-students or not. This study focused on mother-students for responses intended to add relevance since they possessed the characteristics required for the study.

Ouma (2013) conducted a descriptive survey to establish the factors affecting the participation of the girl-child in secondary education in Migori District, Migori County. Census sampling techniques were used to get 33 principals and 66 student leaders. Sixty-six classroom teachers were chosen through systematic random selection. Questionnaires to collect data were used in the study. The researcher also used purposive sampling for informants who possess the necessary characteristics for the study. The findings concluded that girl child participation in secondary education is influenced by socioeconomic factors. As a consequence of this, there were no school supplies, no uniforms with inadequate funds for tuition. These situations and

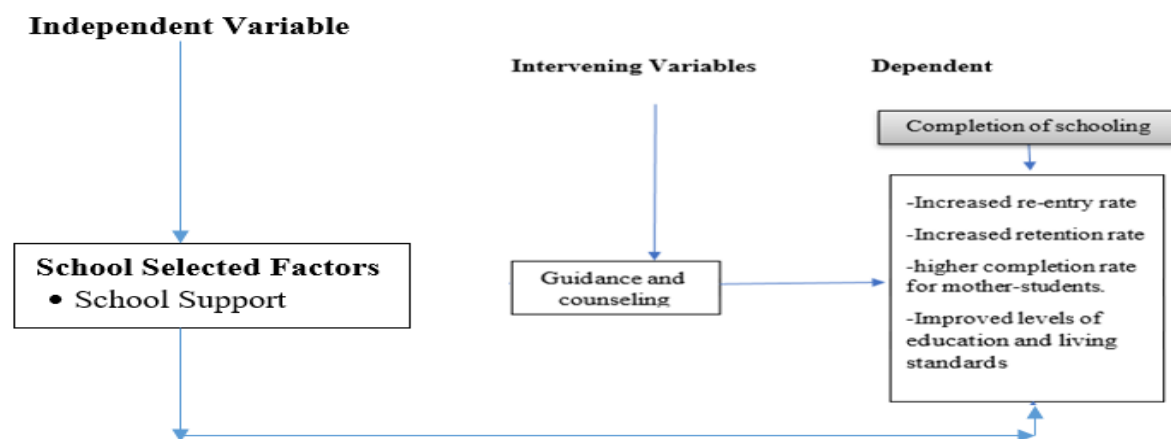
long commutes from home led to early pregnancy and marriage thus impacting the completion of secondary education. It was also discovered that parents' level of education was very influential in school completion. The review recommended closer partnership among stakeholders to help students from poor households to complete their studies. The sampling of the study did not involve adequate samples from other stakeholders. The researcher focused on head teachers, classroom teachers, and student leaders, leaving out parents, Ministry of Education officials who are key stakeholders in ensuring that students are facilitated to go to school. The current study diversified the respondents by collecting data from various stakeholders to ensure rich feedback from the relevant participants that are concerned or affected by the implementation of the re-entry policy for teenage mother-students in Gatundu South sub-county.

Another study by Wamahu et.al (2020), on the role of key stakeholders in integrating teenage mothers into secondary schools in Samburu West constituency, Samburu County was conducted. Data collection was done using convergent parallel and mixed methods. 327 respondents were chosen using snowball, stratified, and simple random sampling methods. The respondents included; class teachers, school administrators, parents, counselors, officials from the Ministry of Education, and teen mothers. Instruments used included interview guides, focus groups, and questionnaires. The ministry of education and the guidance and counseling department's inability to provide girls with information on the effects of teenage parenting was the focus of the findings. The respondents strongly stamped on educating principals about re-admitting teen mothers. Provision of guidance and counseling teachers with training to promote support for teen mothers was also a key outcry. The study sampled principals and deputy principals within the same institutions and who were likely to give similar accounts on the issue, leading to unnecessary repetition. To prevent duplicate information, the current study interviewed the school principals and administered questionnaires to the classroom teachers.

Muthikwa (2020) investigated the roles of stakeholders in the implementation of re-entry policy guidelines for adolescent mothers in Machakos County. The descriptive survey research design was preferable. The target population was 28 mixed and four girls boarding secondary schools. Random sampling was adopted to select 14 mixed schools and 2 girls' schools. The sample size was 16 Principals, 16 fourth-form class teachers, 16 counselors, and one education officer who was purposively sampled. Ten parents/guardians of the adolescent mothers were sampled using both purposive and snowball techniques. The results after thematically analyzing structured questionnaires revealed that schools only used guidance and counseling departments to help student-mothers cope with school and parenthood. The researcher recommended that the re-entry policy should be reviewed and clarified as well as the government to establish a monitoring framework to enforce better implementation. The study sampled form four class teachers and students as respondents, restricting the probability of the mother-students to one class. The current investigation sought to find out the effective collective role played by various stakeholders in the re-entry policy implementation from multiple respondents without repetition. The study purposively sampled mother-students from any class without focusing on any particular class.

Guidance and counseling are paramount was recognized in Kenya schools in 1970 by the ministry of education through the Teachers Service Commission which recruits professionally trained personnel assist to limit the occurrence of an untimely pregnancy, (Muthikwa, 2013; Wambu& Fisher 2015). Furthermore, professional guidance and counseling give girls the confidence of resuming school with an attitude of self-acceptance, (Kurgat, 2016). However, the intention did not occur and schools were left to hire untrained professionals, (Wanjiku, 2015) who lacked the skills to handle teenage pregnancy cases in schools, (Mbugua, 2013). Mwenje (2015) highlights other factors centrally to counseling like inadequate legal provisions for reports and feedback on the implementation of documents, inadequate requisite skills, a lack of definite staff development policy, few disempowered staff, and inadequate budgetary allocations and tools frequently hold firm the implementation of educational policy. The extent to which guidance and counseling services in public secondary schools assist teen mothers in coping with the circumstances surrounding them has not been the focus of the existing studies on re-entry policies.

### Conceptual Framework



**Figure 1: Conceptual Framework**

### Research Methodology

The study took place in Gatundu South Sub-County, which is situated within Kiambu County. This research applied a convergent parallel research design which entails gathering both qualitative and quantitative data, analyzing the data, and interpreting the outcome of the study. The study targeted 421 respondents from 30 public secondary schools. The units of observation comprised of MOE officials, Principals, Class teachers, Parents/guardians and Mothers-students. Purposive sampling technique was employed in selecting 2 MOE officials, 10 Principals, 13 Parents/guardians and 15 Mothers-students while a simple random sampling technique was employed in selecting 53 Class teachers. Total sample for the study was thus 93 respondents. The study relied on both qualitative and quantitative which was collected through structured questionnaires and interview guides, as well as phone calls. Document analysis involved evaluating existing records from archives to comprehend their basic substance or more profound implications, which could be uncovered through their style and inclusion. For the qualitative data, the researcher employed both descriptive and thematic analysis to interpret

the study's findings. Descriptive analysis compared the trends observed in the participants' responses with past observations to arrive at informed conclusions. The data was processed using SPSS Version 21.

## Results

### The teachers' demographics

The table 1 shows the duration taken by class teachers in their current capacity and the impact of their experience to students.

**Table 1: Duration as class teachers**

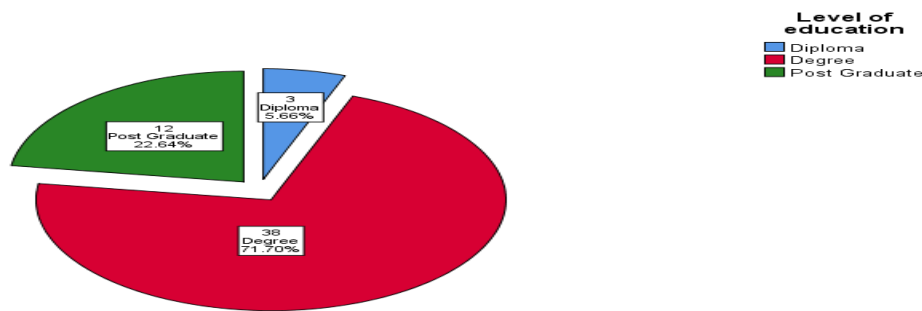
Responses	Frequency	Percent
0-5 years	36	67.92%
6-10 years	10	18.87%
11-15 years	5	9.34%
16-20 year	1	1.89%
21 and above	1	1.89%
<b>Total</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Source: Field Data, 2023**

Table 1 indicates the respondents' experience as classroom teachers at the school where they are currently employed concerning the issues affecting students. The findings indicated that majority of teachers (67.92%) had between 0 and 5 years of experience. Those who had served over 6 years were 10 (18.87%). Five teachers (9.34%) had served between 11-15 years. Only one (1.89%) teacher had served for more than 20 years in the same school. The longer the experience of teacher and the students, the more confident the student becomes to improve on self-worth. This applies to early motherhood when such students are assured of mental support through positive integration in pursuit to successful academic performance (Vanner et.al 2022). The mother students in public secondary schools in Gatundu south-sub county are highly and emotionally taken care of due to positive teacher-student relationship. Therefore, they can provide accurate information and guidance to help the students through the journey of pregnancy or related issues and the return to school for completion (Hill & Chin, 2018). Podolsky et.al (2020), teacher knowledge and experience is significant contributors to school policy implementation.

### Class teachers' level of education

Figure 2 represents the level of education for class teachers in public secondary schools in Gatundu south sub county, Kiambu county, Kenya and the effect on mother-students who resume schooling after giving birth.



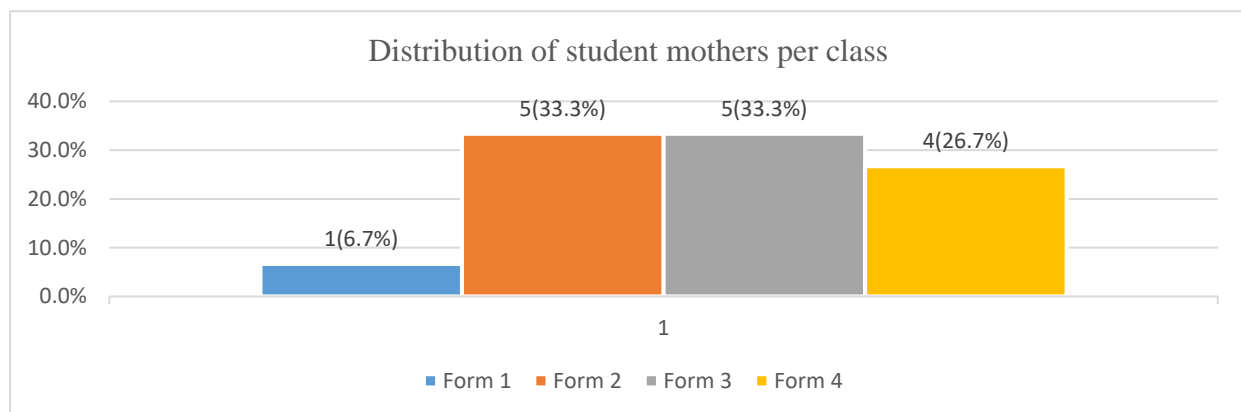
**Figure 2: Teachers' level of education**

**Source: Field Data, 2023**

The data revealed that a great majority of teachers in public secondary schools, 38 (71.7%) were university graduates, while 12 (22.64%) were postgraduates. Three of the selected teachers, or 5.66%, were diploma-educated teachers. This demonstrated that the public secondary schools in Gatundu South Sub County have highly educated and competent teachers to assist with the execution of the re-entry policy. In practice, highly skilled teachers interact with education policies in many roles as collaborators, implementers, opponents, and policymakers, as defined by (Viennet & Pont, 2017). After returning to school, the student-mothers are professionally and competently integrated back to the schooling system.

**Mother-students demographics**

Asked the number of teen pregnancies they knew from each class in the same school they were in, mother-students responded as shown in the figure 3.



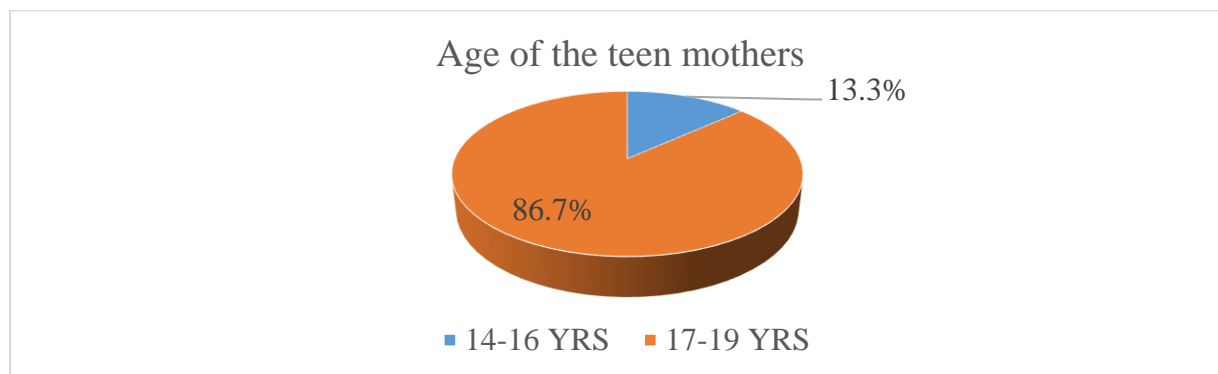
**Source: Field data, 2023**

One teenage mother was identified from form 1 (6.7%) while the majority of the cases were recorded among form twos and form threes who recorded at 5 (33.3%) cases each. Form four students reported 4 cases (26.7%). Zulaika et.al (2021), observed that a combination of biological and environmental factors plays a significant role in the levels of risk of teenage girls getting pregnant or infected with sexually transmitted diseases. Engelbert et al, (2019) observed that most of the early pregnancies are among girls aged 15 and 20, reflecting the findings of the study that form ones who are aged between 12-14 years reported less cases compared to their senior in higher classes, aged 15 and above.



### Age of teen mothers

The age of the teen mothers in school was crucial in the study since previous study concluded that most of girls drop out of school at the age 19 (Ntindaet.al 2016). The age distribution among the teen mothers in public secondary schools was summarized in figure 4.



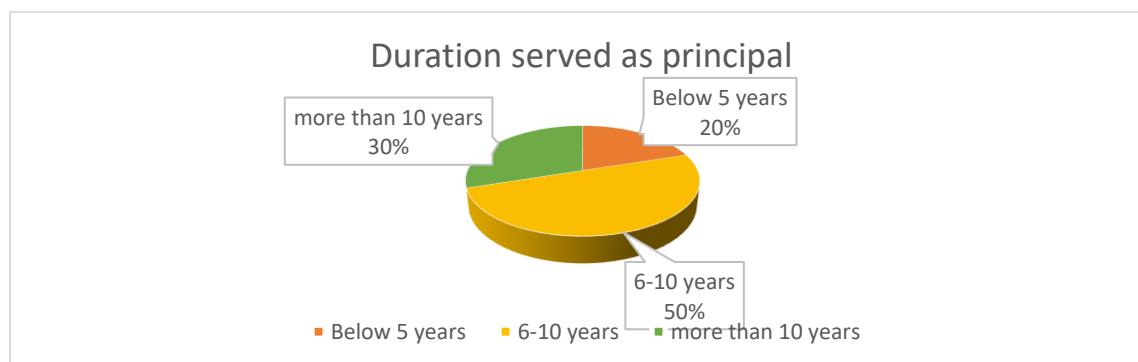
**Figure 1: Age of teen mothers**

**Source: Field data, 2023**

The figure above indicates that majority of the mother-students are aged between 17-19 years (86.7%) while those aged between 14-16 were (13.3%). The outcome shows that most of the cases happen to students between the of 16 and 18 since they got pregnant before their current age at the time of the study. The researcher noted that majority of the students aged 16 years and above are either in form 2 or higher if not for any inconvenience that may have been caused by repeating or missing classes, that leads to slowing down the progress of the student through secondary school. The findings in figure 4 above (Age of teen mothers) and distribution of girls per class (Figure 4) shows close relatable pattern between age and class, these factors can help in targeting a specific population with the right support and approach to effectively deal with the situation (Chohan & Langa, 2011).

### Duration served as principal

The figure 5 shows the number of years served by the principals in their current capacity.



**Figure 2: Principals' duration of service**

**Source: Field data, 2023**

It was confirmed that cumulatively, 80% of the respondents have been principals for more than 5 years with 5(50%) of the principals having served between 6-10 years. While 30% had served for more than 10 years. This is remarkable, enough proof that the schools have seasoned and experienced principals who are aware of a longer student history and the content of the re-entry policy. Only two (20%) of the principals reported having served for less than 5 years. Clotterfelter et.al (20 08) observed that more experienced principals with rich understanding of the school dynamics are helpful in policy implementation since they know how to navigate their local challenges.

### **Cases of teenage pregnancies reported and readmission rate annually from document analysis in public secondary schools by principals.**

Each public secondary school had recorded the case of teen pregnancy among the students in the duration of five years. However, some records were missing for particular years yet they recalled pregnancy cases. The cases were summarized in table 2.

**Table 2: Pregnancy cases in schools from 2018 - 20222**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Reported Cases</b>	<b>Readmitted</b>	<b>Dropped</b>
2018	8	2	6
2019	16	8	8
2020	11	7	4
2021	18	12	6
2022	14	11	3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>27</b>
	<b>Percent</b>	<b>59.7%</b>	<b>40.3%</b>

**Source: Field data, 2023**

Table 2 shows an annual documentation of adolescent pregnancy cases reported and recorded in public secondary schools from 2018 to 2022. In 2018, the least number of teenage pregnancies (8) were reported but the drop-out rate was found to be alarming since 6 of the cases did not report back to school. It is also notable from the table that the number of girls readmitted has been rising steadily with more than 50% readmission rate. From the records, there is a notable surge of cases in 2021 which can be attributed to the long stay at home due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Some quotes are mentioned below:

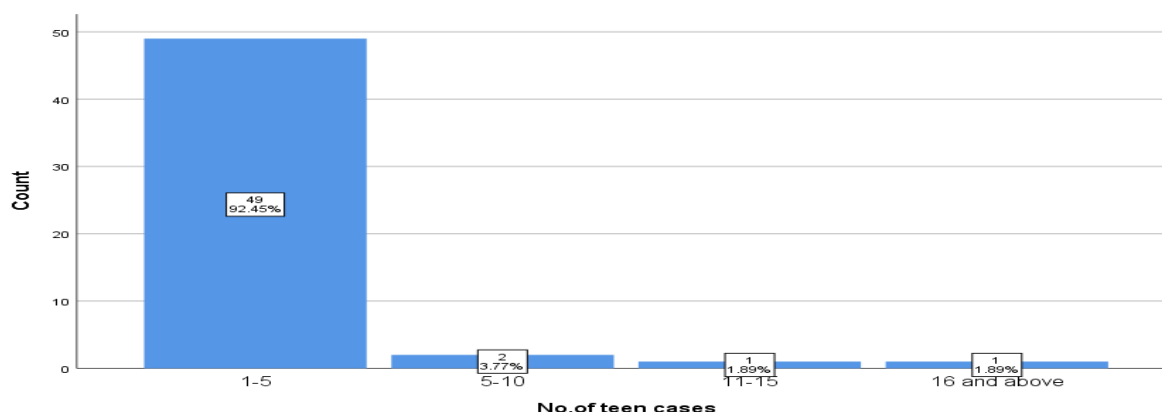
*“The students were mostly not engaged with studies during the covid-19 period, providing them with too much idle time to engage in unproductive activities” (Principal 4). “During that time of Covid, children were not busy; there were no activities to hold them. Some pretended to go for studies with their friends only to see them pregnant later” (Parent 5).*

Young people within close social circles are likely to engage in unhealthy behavior if left unoccupied with productive engagements or unsupervised (Kiptoo, 2020). According to the annual reports submitted by the principals in Gatundu sub-county, there is still a lot of disorder in schools, since adolescent pregnancies keep young females from completing their education. This necessitates a long-term solution to fix the situation. However, it was noted that there

were no records kept for some years yet the administration acknowledged having students' pregnancy cases. Poor record keeping poses a serious challenge in policy auditing and negatively reflects on the accountability of the stakeholders (Veyana et al, 2020).

### Number of teen pregnancies in public secondary schools as reported by class teachers

The figure 6 indicates the class teachers' annual records on teen pregnancies within public schools.



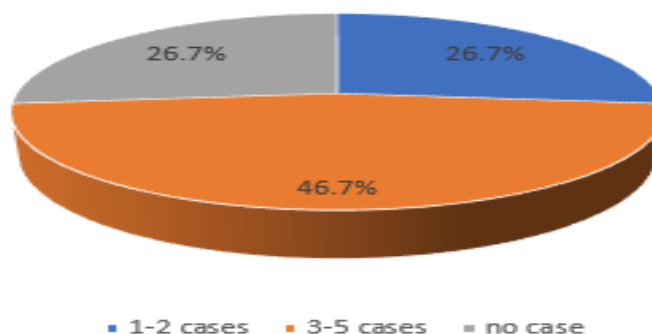
**Figure 3: Number of cases of teen pregnancy in schools as recorded by class teachers**

**Source: Field data, 2023**

The researcher sought to get the number of teenage pregnancy cases received annually from sampled and known to the class teachers. The findings shows that 49 out of the 53 secondary school class teachers (92.45%) recorded between 1 and 5 cases of teenage pregnancies annually. Two teachers at (3.77%) recorded between 5 and 10 cases. Each of the 2 teachers at (1.89%) reported above 10 cases of teenage pregnancy. However, it is worth noting that the cases are not at any fixed range at the schools. Some schools may record zero pregnancy cases in some years.

### The number of pregnancy cases reported back to school after delivery

The interviewed mother-students reported diverse pregnancy case rates they knew during their schooling and managed to resume education.



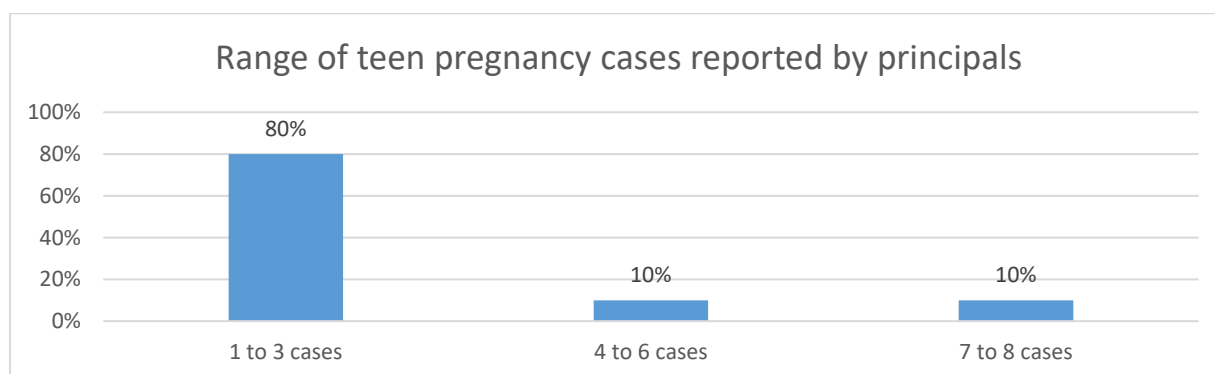
**Figure 4: No. of pregnancy cases who resumed education after delivery**

**Source: Field data, 2023**

During the interviews, when the students were asked how many girls, they knew who got pregnant while still in school, 46.7% said that they knew between 3-5 cases, while those who knew about 3-5 cases and those who knew no case equally reported 26.7% each. Of all reported cases of pregnancy by the student-mothers in their schools, only 41.9% managed to get readmitted while over 50% failed to return. However, the researcher noted that due to the lack of follow-up on the cases of pregnancy and school completion, some girls transferred to seek admission from other schools and their whereabouts remained unknown to the former schools. This pointed at a loophole in establishing whether the girls are able to complete school or not (Ananda, 2019). Each student was aware, on average, of two girls who had dropped out of school. The numbers introduced uncovered that teen pregnancy is pervasive with by far, most saying they basically knew one young lady who had exited. Others mentioned more than five girls who dropped out of school because of pregnant. However other reasons outside pregnancy were told to administration for exiting from school.. These statistics confirm a study by (Mallya et.al 2016), laid out that a critical larger part of the teen moms had not gotten back to school. At the point when teachers were asked the number of young ladies and known to them, who had exited school annually, 73.4% mentioned a range of 1 and 5 young ladies. On normal the instructors said they had some awareness of 2-3 young ladies who had exited school. At the point when asked the number of young ladies and who had returned to school, around 50.1% of the educators referenced somewhere in the range of zero and three, four girls were mentioned at 27.8% f and 16.7% referenced five, another 16.7% said settled at 7 girls. It is clearly read that a significant number of teen mothers lost opportunity to complete secondary education..

**Ranges of teen pregnancy cases reported by principals annually**

Each principal for selected schools responded to the range in which teen pregnancies occurred in their schools per year.



**Figure 5: Cases of teen pregnancy reported by Principals**

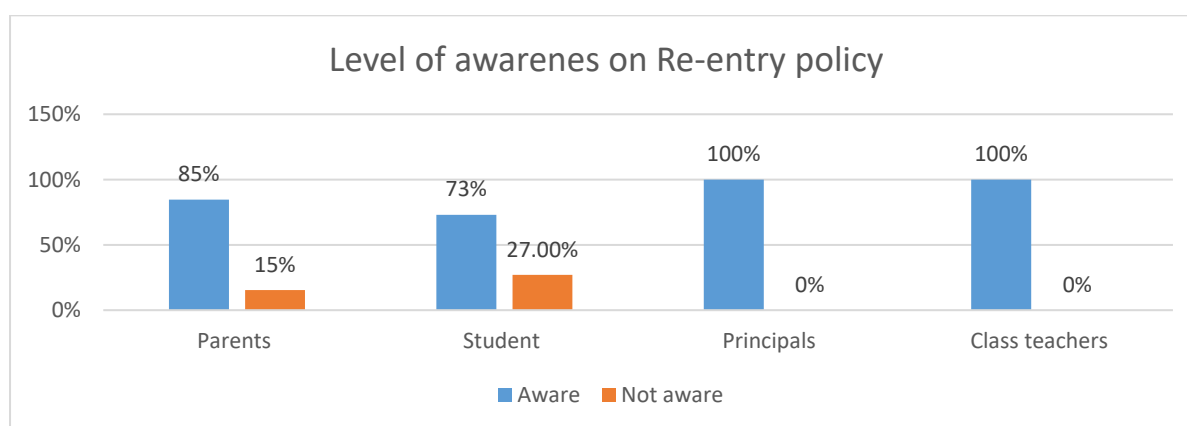
**Source: Field data, 2023**

The findings show 8 (80%) of the principals between 1-3 cases annually while the remaining two principals reported 4-6 cases and 7-8 cases respectively. According to Sidze et.al (2011) urban areas report lower cases of teenage pregnancies compared to rural areas. The difference is brought about by insufficient or lack of sex education as well as the availability of

contraceptives in rural areas. The study estimated the figures ranged from 0 in some schools and as many as 2 girls in others. Others estimated that those who had returned to school after delivery were between 1 and 8 girls in the different schools. It was discovered that there were no consistent records kept in some schools, they only recalled. This was confirmed by the fact that the county officials gave low number of pregnancy cases reported compared to large number of cases given by schools.

### General awareness on the re- entry policy

The level of awareness on re-entry policy from the respondents was sought as elaborated in figure 9. This was necessary because the aim of the study was to assess the extent in which its implementation applied among the stakeholders.



**Figure 6: General awareness on the re-entry policy**

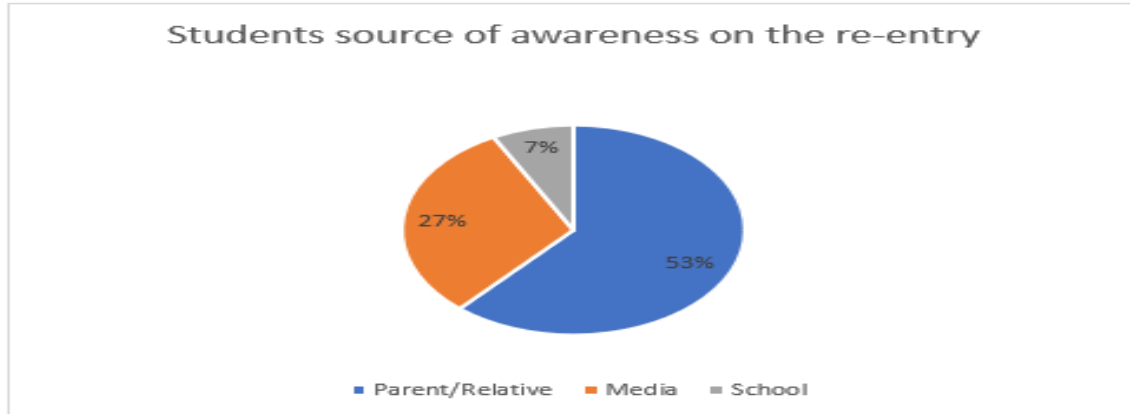
**Source: Field data, 2023**

The majority of respondents that took part in the research are aware of the re-entry policy, as depicted in the figure above. 100% of principals and teachers were aware of the policy, while 85% of parents and 73% of mother-students were aware of the policy's existence. Only 15 percent of the parents and 27% of the students indicated that they were unaware of the policy. Nonetheless, 28% of the parents and mother-students who had heard of the policy were not able to give details of the content of the policy. Students, particularly adolescent mothers, are the policy's primary constituents. If they are unaware of the policy that allows them to return to school or what it entails, they may lose the opportunity to do so, be denied re-entry, and have their rights violated. This was confirmed by Kapsule & Kumar, (2020), who established that a large proportion of the females who dropped out did not seek re-admission because they were unaware of the policy's protections. Every one of the directors knew about the reemergence strategy, yet just a handful conceded having seen the round containing the rules. The researcher found it empowering to see that by far most school chiefs and instructors knew about the reemergence strategy. Because of the way that educators were crucial partners in the definition and execution of instructive strategies, their cooperation was required to elevate the implementation process. It was notably that the level of teachers' awareness and attitude toward adolescent mothers and re-entry did not influence the implementation of the policy (Khatibi et.al 2021).



### Students’ source of awareness on the re-entry policy

Students, being the beneficiaries of the re-entry policy were asked to respond to the sources from which they got information during the interview.



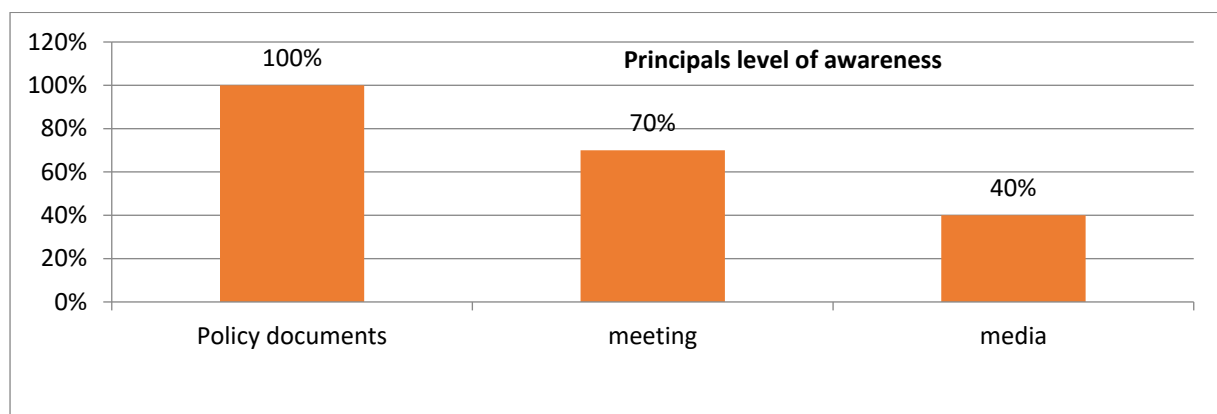
**Figure 7: Students source of awareness on the re-entry policy**

**Source: Field data, 2023**

The majority of students (53%) reported learning about the re-entry policy from their parents who encouraged them to go back to school, then 27% heard of it via radio and television and only 7% heard about at school as seen in the figure above. It is clearly proved that the students are aware of the re-entry policy but could be limited to the real content since none of them admitted having seen or read the document. It calls for the government to vigorously find the mechanism of availing and interpreting the policy for successful implementation (Omwancha, 2012). As stakeholders, the students have useful input in the implementation of policies that affect their learning in schools (Malik et.al 2017).

### Source of awareness among the principals

The extent in which the principals sourced awareness for the re-entry policy was sought since they are in direct contact with the students and in this case the mother-students. By the virtue of their office, they are expected to execute the policy as expected.



**Figure 8: Source of awareness for the principals**

**Source: Field data, 2023**

A solid 100% of the 10 principals reported that they learned about the re-entry policy from the government policy documents. Only seven (70%) reported that they also hear about it in seminars and meetings while only 4 (40%) heard of it through the media. The majority of respondents learned about the policy primarily through electronic and print media. Mavrodieva et.al (2019), the study concluded that those who have access to newspapers and other related printed materials, radios, televisions, and the internet are more likely to be familiar with certain policies than those who do not. Therefore, it would be prudent to utilize these channels to raise awareness of the policy. Some of the principals commented that they discussed the reentry policy during PA meetings and other official school activities because they were aware of its application. They also addressed the issue during school visits and during assessments by following up on cases of school dropouts. According to a MoE official, inviting them to chiefs barazas, school AGMs, PA and BOM meetings helped spread awareness. Nonetheless, when the chiefs were requested the way in which they made mindfulness from the presence of the strategy to students, a larger part (87.5%) said that they dreaded expanding the pace of pregnancy issues. They went ahead to condemn students' active sexual behavior. This confirmed the findings of a 1998 study by the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS), which found that nearly 80% of young people had sex before the age of 20. Officials from the MoE confirmed that they occasionally visited the schools. However, they did not meet with principals to discuss the rates of early pregnancy and dropout. (Research carried out between. The researcher sought to establish the awareness on the re-entry policy among all the respondents. The findings as shown in Figure 11 (above) indicated that majority of the participants in the study were aware of a policy that allows mother-students to return to school. The teachers' understanding of the guiding policy emphasizes the need to create a welcoming learning environment for the impacted groups, and they should encourage teen mother-students to recommit to their ambitions. The researcher attempted to explore the causes for girls' unwillingness to return to school after having birth. The analysis of the data from the students showed that 23% of the teenage mothers received support from family to enable them to return to school. The researcher noted that 77% teenage mothers were stigmatized, ridiculed and excluded from community and school activities. These frustrated their plans of returning to school, resulting to high dropout rates. Only one student said,

*“My class teacher appointed me as the games captain, I felt wanted and my talent valued, I longer feel ashamed”. ( Student 3)*

Another student said,

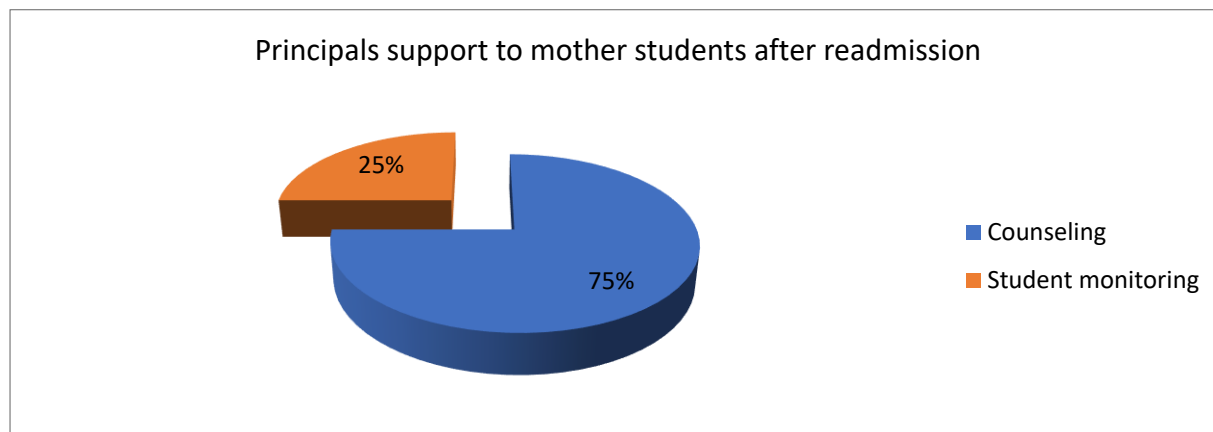
*“I had to go out of class many times to clean myself from breast milk, when some of my classmates knew it, they spread it to others. One day I cried and went home”. (Student 10).*

According to teachers, the majority of mother-students drop out of school owing to harsh conditions caused by stigma and rejection from the community, as well as low self-

esteem that affects their morality. This implies that all stakeholders should be informed of the policy governing re-entry to school following childbirth.

### **The contribution of principals in support of mother-students back to school**

The opinion of principals and the effort they make to retain mother-students after delivery was paramount for the study. Different applications were featured in figure 12.



**Figure 9: Principals support to mother-student after re-admission**

**Source: Field data, 2023**

Figure 12 indicates that 75% of the principals are able to help the re-admitted mother students through counseling while 25% are able to monitor the status and condition of the student-mothers. Koech, Simiyu & Ndimu (2019), established that guidance and counseling is crucial in helping teenage mothers to navigate psychological challenges and focus on studies after readmission. Wamuhui & Isoe (2020), also reported that professional counseling for expectant or mother-student is a critical factor in the success of implementing the re-entry policy and improving the completion rate of girls in secondary school. However, one student remarked.

*"There is no support or counseling at my school for teenage mothers who are affected; only compassionate teachers can encourage students to return to school." (Student 2)*

Developing a policy on re-entry with well-defined objectives, implementation strategies, and monitoring and evaluation framework is critical. There are existing gaps on the roles and responsibilities and coordination in the implementation network owing to the lack of predefined actions to be taken by which stakeholders. Apart from understanding the policy that provides for unconditional readmission after delivery, over 90% of the parent and 100% of the students had never seen the policy document and were not aware of any other detail about it. The parents do not know of any channels and procedures for recourse in the event of any challenge. The school administration does not seem to go beyond creating awareness. This was indicated by the lack of follow-up initiatives by any stakeholders after a pregnancy case had been reported to the school. To demonstrate goodwill and support for the readmission of the girls after delivery to institutions, the government should establish rules and procedures

governing this practice. Additionally, they must address and eliminate restrictions on re-entry and prohibitive conditions.

## **Summary**

### **Level of awareness of the re-entry policy in schools**

The MOE and school head teachers demonstrated awareness of the re-entry policy. Approximately half of the students reported having heard about the policy, but many of them lacked a clear understanding of its purpose and provisions. Conversely, the other half of the students had no knowledge of the policy. The most common sources of information about the policy for students, teachers, adolescent mothers, and parents were radio, television, and friends. A significant number of head teachers refrained from openly discussing re-entry in their schools due to concerns that it might encourage or condone premature sexual activity. Instead, some head teachers discreetly readmitted adolescent mothers without much attention.

### **Identifying policy gaps in the re-entry policy**

The policy analysis revealed several gaps. These included the absence of defined objectives, goals, and implementation strategies. Moreover, the policy lacked specific procedures or guidelines, granting head teachers the discretion to handle pregnancy-related issues, dropout cases, and readmissions in diverse ways. Financial support and budget allocations were lacking, resulting in insufficient funds for implementation, follow-up, awareness campaigns, and monitoring and evaluation. Schools' guidance and counseling departments were understaffed, and the policy did not provide any legal recourse for girls denied re-entry. Furthermore, no monitoring or evaluation mechanisms were in place regarding the policy's implementation or guidelines for the readmission of mother-students after giving birth. Despite principals being required to prepare monthly reports on the matter, no records were maintained regarding specific dropouts due to pregnancy.

### **Factors affecting the implementation of the re-entry policy**

Shame and stigma emerged as significant barriers preventing adolescent mothers from returning to school. Negative attitudes from the school community and the public stigmatized these girls and made them feel unwelcome. The girls themselves may have experienced guilt and shame, hindering their return. Low self-esteem and fear of peers also contributed to their reluctance to come back, particularly to the same school. Lack of parental support was another factor, as some parents felt betrayed and discouraged their daughters from resuming their education. Financial constraints prevented certain parents from sending their daughters back to school or providing adequate care for their babies. Additionally, insufficient information about the re-entry policy and inadequate support from the school and its key stakeholders posed further obstacles to implementation. Resistance and negative attitudes from teachers and the community affected the readmission of the girls, resulting in a decline in the school's reputation and enrollment rates.

## Recommendations

1. Maintaining proper records: Ensure accurate documentation of all dropouts at both the school and County Education office. Students should be required to apply for a "leave of absence" and inform the relevant authorities. Follow-up procedures should be established to monitor the progress of girls who drop out, facilitating their return to school or transfer to other schools.
2. Retraining guidance and counseling teachers: Provide comprehensive training to equip them with the necessary skills to effectively handle teenage pregnancy cases and address the issues faced by mother-students after their readmission.

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