

Assessment of vulnerability to fire in public boarding secondary schools: a study of schools in Central Division, Machakos District

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Abstract:

Fire disasters in public boarding secondary schools in Kenya have been very rampant in the past few years. Some have been very tragic with loss of students' lives. Property worth millions of shillings is destroyed every year as a result of school fires. Members of school communities are affected emotionally and this disrupts the learning process in the schools. Public boarding secondary schools remain susceptible to fire disaster hence this research. This study sets out to assess the level of awareness of fire disasters among school communities in Central Division, Machakos District. Central Division has 20 public boarding secondary schools. This study took a representative sample of two schools that had already experienced fire disasters. The general objective of this study was to find out the causes and the magnitude of vulnerabilities that make public boarding schools susceptible to fire disasters. The study adopted both probability and non-probability sampling techniques. The data of this study was collected using structured interviews, direct observation and in-depth interviews. The study findings showed that although these schools had suffered fire disasters in the past, they still remained vulnerable to fire disaster. More needs to be done in terms of provision of early warning systems, fire preparedness and making the school buildings fire safe, in order to reduce the vulnerabilities. This study concluded that, the Government through the Ministry of Education should incorporate fire preparedness programmes in the school curriculum. Early warning systems should be installed. Inspections on the installations should be regular and frequent. The government should ensure its policies on physical structures against the number of students are strictly followed.