The State of Safety and Security in Selected Students' Boarding Houses of Lusaka City, Zambia

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ABSTRACT

Safety and security management in learning environments and spaces is a growing concern globally. Students have the right to learn in a safe and secure environment. Safety and security in class rooms, student boarding houses or hostels and other learning spaces should be taken care of if learning is to be meaningful. This paper explored safety and security issues in selected students' boarding houses of Lusaka city. Using purposive and simple random sampling, a sample of 4 student boarding houses were randomly selected and 10 students from each house. Data was collected using unstructured interviews and focus group discussion. Data collected was analysed using descriptive statistics and thematic analysis. This paper established that selected boarding houses in Lusaka city faced many safety and security challenges such lack of Close Circuit Television (CCTV) cameras, lack of firefighting equipment, lack of security lights, unlockable doors, windows and gates among others. This study established that as much as the selected boarding houses had put in place safety and security measures, there were still outstanding safety and security concerns. Boarding houses owners could also install CCTV cameras to improve surveillance of boarding houses. The landlord could ensure all welfare facilities in the boarding house are provided and in good condition to enhance the safety and security of the students lodging in that particular boarding house. Also, local authorities should collaborate with relevant authorities to inspect the living conditions of boarding houses to ensure safety and security of students is safeguarded. Boarding houses should also be registered with local authorities to ensure the safety and security of students is monitored. Landlords must also orient students to be responsible users of boarding house facilities and report and security concerns observed.

Key words: safety, security, boarding house

INTRODUCTION

The right to get a high-quality education as well as students' security and safety have been hot topics globally for some time. According to Mubita et. al. (2022), hostel accommodation for students is problem in many colleges and universities in Zambia due to high demand for university education, enrolments are increasing. The students not accommodated resort to alternative accommodation, mainly boarding houses. No matter where they stay, students have a right to a safe and secure environment since the chance to receive a quality education is worthless if they cannot exercise their legal right to an education in a setting that is both safe and protected (Mubita et. al. 2022; Thro, 2006). Christie, Butler and Potterton (2007) and Mubita and Namafe (2016) state that the purposes of attaining an education, which can be achieved only in a peaceful school environment, are to provide an environment where teaching and learning can take place.

This is meant to prepare people for the world of work, nation-building and citizenship, teach values of society, and evidently help in the development of the individual. This simply shows that societal values may have influence on school safety and security and may govern how students live in a school environment.

Safety and security among students are a fundamental and an obligatory component of the teaching and learning process (Mubita, 2021). As reported by Squelch (2001) and Mubita (2021), a clean and safe environment is conducive to education and has security of property, well cared for facilities, furniture and equipment, clean toilets, water and green environment and absence of harassment. The Independent Project Trust (IPT, 1999) authenticates the foregoing by stating that a secure environment has a very low risk of physical, emotional and psychological injury to its occupants. Hence, a safe environment is directly proportional to the security of students. As noted, safety and security play an important role in schools as well as outside school were students reside like boarding houses. Thus, ensuring learner's safety and security is something that should never be overlooked.

Mubita (2016) states that school safety and security is important because in order for any learning to take place, a child has to feel that he or she is in a safe environment. If they are focused on other fearful issues, they could care less about what is being taught. Additionally, the protection of all students from physical and psychological instability is ensured by school safety (accommodation inclusive). This is particularly true in terms of the security and safety of students who board away from home and on campus. To promote high-quality education, boarding houses must make sure that its residents' physical safety, mental security, and general well-being or welfare are given first priority. There is general agreement that all stakeholders including school administrators, staff, parents, learners, law enforcers, community leaders, the government and others have a critical role in creating and maintaining safe schools (Rusell and Clarke, 2009; Mubita and Namafe, 2016).Most boarding houses make sure that students and their guardian sign an agreement form that ensures and provides an atmosphere conducive to stay and learn effectively in order to care for the safety and security of students outside of school. It is crucial to protect students' security both within and outside of schools so that both students and faculty can avoid illnesses, deaths, and injuries that could hinder their ability to complete their education.

The Zambia Environmental Management Act (2011) and Mubita (2021) also records that the right to clean, safe and security environment includes the right of access to the various elements of the environment for recreational, educational, security, spiritual, cultural and economic purposes. This statement also highlights the importance of a safe and a secure environment for the betterment of education.

Several studies on safety and security in the broader scope has been carried out globally. However, studies which primarily examines the level of provision of safety and security issues in students' private boarding houses in Lusaka city is quite lacking. Thus, this paper investigated the safety and security measures provided in selected private boarding houses in Lusaka city with the aim of identifying areas where improvements are required.

Aim

The aim of this study was to ascertain the safety and security issues in student boarding houses in Lusaka city and propose sustainable mitigation measures thereof.

Research Questions

This study was guided by the following research questions:

- What is the state of safety and security in selected students' boarding houses in Lusaka city?
- What can be done to mitigate the impact of safety and security issues in selected students' boarding houses in Lusaka city?

Significance of Study

Boarding houses have become an alternative mode of accommodation for most students in higher education. The growing enrolment rate of universities and colleges has outweighed the capacity of most institutions to

accommodate its students hence students look to boarding houses as alternative accommodation near their schools. Residents near learning institutions have taken advantage of this as a business opportunity (Kunda, 2021). Many people near these learning institutions have decided to build structures as boarding houses while some have just turned their houses into boarding houses.

The results of this study would help to improve the safety and security standards of most boarding houses in Lusaka. The results of this study would also be important to the public security department under Lusaka City Council to intensify inspection of boarding houses in order for them to make sure that boarding house owners meet the requirements for running this business. The study would also help them identify problem areas of boarding houses in terms of keeping up with the security and safety standards so that solutions can be provided.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Safety versus Security

Safety is a concept that includes all measures and practices taken to preserve the life, health, and bodily integrity of individuals. Safety is the condition of being protected from harm or other non-desirable outcomes. Safety can also refer to the control of recognized sources of danger (hazards) in order to achieve an acceptable level of risk (Mubita, 2021). Defining security is problematic, since the term has had many different meanings to different people in different places and different times over the course of human history. Actually, there has been a never-ending debate on its nature and dimension, since there is not a broad consensus on its meaning. According to Stone (2009) security is about freedom from threat and ability of states to maintain independent identity and their functional integrity against forces of change, which they see as hostile. Security is generally agreed to be about feeling of being safe from harm, fear, anxiety, oppression, danger, poverty, defence, protection and preservation of core values and threat to those values. Morgan (2021) provided a clear definitional distinction between safety and security. He contended that one of the primary difference between the two terms is their definition. Security refers to the protection of individuals, organizations, and properties against external threats that are likely to cause harm. It is clear that security is generally focused on ensuring that external factors do not cause trouble or unwelcome situation to the organization, individuals, and the properties within the premises (Morgan, 2021). On the other hand, safety is the feeling of being protected from the factors that causes harm.

The quality of safety and security in students' boarding houses adds value to the university and learning environment at large. Hassanain (2008) and Mubita et. al. (2022) opined that to attract and retain students, universities should endeavour to provide accommodation that are safe and secured for the students. Literature also reviews that, learners perform better in their studies if they feel safe, secure in their residences (Mubita, 2016, Mubita, 2012 and Hassanain, 2008). Therefore, any gaps in the safety and security of a students' boarding houses should be a concern to all the stakeholders. Studies have also reviewed that many learning institutions have poor safety culture and security in their interaction spaces, students' accommodation inclusive. This abandonment of safety and security measures in students' boarding houses can expose students to high risk of injury, intimidation, attempted murder, threat, theft, and fatality rate increases (Xaba, 2006).

According to Xaba (2006) and Mubita (2021) safety and security systems and procedures relate to service systems and procedures. Included in safety systems and procedures are drainage and sanitation maintenance, waste disposal and management, electricity, alarm, fire, communications, emergencies and evacuations, visitation, vehicular drop-off and pick-up, leaving school campus during teaching and learning hours, access control, parking and vehicle control, mail, packages and delivery systems, and intrusion detection (cf. Szuba & Young, 2003.) Systems and procedures followed in safety and security maintenance may also include,

monitoring, identifying damages and repairing safety systems that are already in place. (Szuba & Young, 2003; Szachnowicz, 2003; Reid, 2000).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Using convenient sampling, a total of 4 students' boarding houses were selected. For each boarding house, 10 students were also sampled purposefully. The boarding houses were named as A, B, C and D for ethical reasons. The target population for this study were students living in boarding houses, boarding houses owners (landlords) and security guards.

Unstructured interview for this study involved 20 students and 4 landlords. This was followed by 4 in-depth interviews conducted with security guards in selected boarding houses. More so, structured observation (using a checklist)was used in data collection. This involved a careful look at the quality of safety and security services provided in boarding houses A, B, C and D. It also involved watching student activities and documenting processes and results.

In this study, the field observations had the added benefit of enabling the researchers to identify activities that may have been missed during interviews. The study also collected data from published and unpublished reports, textbooks, internet sources and journals that had some relevant information on safety and security issues in students' boarding houses to relate with the primary data. In this study, the data was analysed using thematic evaluation of collected data.

RESULTS PRESENTATION

This study investigated the kind of conditions and facilities that are provided in various boarding houses which prioritize the security and safety of students staying there. The interviews conducted showed the variations in the prioritization of security and safety issues in different boarding houses in Lusaka city. The results below, which are based on the data collected show the variations on the provision of safety and security facilities and conditions in different boarding houses.

State of safety and security in selected students' boarding houses in Lusaka city

- *Perimeter fencing:* A survey proved that all the 4 boarding houses A, B, C and D had some perimeter fencing. The quality of fencing material was ranging from acceptable to non-acceptable in some cases. More so, all fences had gates to prevent intruders from invading the inside spaces. Others had broken bottles and razor wires on top.
- *Security lights:* In all the 4 selected boarding houses, the lighting was reported to be moderately good. From the results it still showed that there could be room for more improvement towards better lighting because it would also contribute to security around the boarding houses and help with protecting student eye sight as many prefer studying during late hours.
- *Experiences of theft:* According to students interviewed, theft cases and break-ins were experienced in all the 4 houses though others were not aware.
- *Firefighting equipment:* The participants in all the 4 boarding houses noted that their boarding houses did not have fire fighting equipment. They bemoaned lack of fire extinguishers and fire hose reels that could have been used to extinguish fire in case of emergency. This presented a huge risk factor in any case of a fire.
- *Security guards:* It was discovered that 3 out of the 4 boarding houses had security guards. These guards were tasked to watch over the boarding house premises mainly during the night. During the day, only maids (in the 4 houses) were noted cleaning in and around the premises of the boarding houses. They would, however, knock off at 17 hours, meaning that the evening time was left without guards in some cases.

- *Lockable gates, windows and doors:* The study reviewed that the sampled boarding houses did not have adequate lockable facilities. Participants observed that some doors and windows were not locking properly while others were locking well. It was also reported that some boarding houses' gates were not good enough to secure the place. For Boarding House B and C, it was observed that the gates were made of poor material, not strong and almost falling off whilst for Boarding Houses A and D, the gates were lockable and strong enough to provide security.
- *Safety and Security policy:* The study reviewed that none of the boarding houses had a safety and security policy in place.
- *Closed Circuit Television (CCTV):* The study reviewed that none of the boarding houses had CCTV facilities in place.

State of provision of safety and security measures per boarding house in summary.

The provision of safety and security measures per boarding house varied considerably. These variations observed using a checklist with the following themes: Firefighting equipment, perimeter fencing, security lights, experiences of theft, security guards, lockable gates, windows and doors, safety and security policy and availability of CCTVs. Responses are presented in Tables 1, 2, 3 and 4

Table 1. State of provision of safety and security measures in boarding house A

Security measures	Responses		
	Yes	No	Not sure
Firefighting equipment			
Perimeter fencing			
Security lights			
Experiences of theft			
Security guards			
Lockable gates, windows and doors			
Safety and security policy			
Closed Circuit Television (CCTV)			

Source: Field data, 2022

As presented in table 1, boarding house A had notable safety and security lapses. There was no firefighting equipment at all, the doors, gate and windows were unlockable, there was no safety and security policy in place and also no CCTVs in place. This means that the state of safety and security for this housing unit was very poor. However, the boarding house was fenced, had security lights around the premises and there was a security guard.

Table 2. State of provision of safety and security measures in boarding house B

Security measures	Responses		
	Yes	No	Not sure
Fire fighting equipment			
Perimeter fencing			
Security lights			
Experiences of theft			
Security guards			
Lockable gates, windows and doors			
Safety and security policy			
Closed Circuit Television (CCTV)			

Source: Field data, 2022

As presented in table 2, boarding house B still needed much improvement in safety and security provision for its occupants. The boarding house had no firefighting equipment, no security lights, no safety and security policy and no CCTV in place. However, it had a fence around with lockable gate, windows and doors. This housing unit presented a safety and security worry to its occupants that could be sorted out as soon as possible.

Table 3. State of provision of safety and security measures in boarding house C

Security measures	Responses		
	Yes	No	Not sure
Firefighting equipment			
Perimeter fencing			
Security lights			
Experiences of theft			
Security guards			
Lockable gates, windows and doors			
Safety and security policy			
Closed Circuit Television (CCTV)			

Source: Field data, 2022

This boarding house presented more safety and security concerns to its occupants as noted in table 3. The only safety and security items available were perimeter fencing and security guard. Other things like CCTV, safety and security policy, security lights and so on were missing. With such lapses in the provision of basic safety and security services, this boarding house could present risks to its occupants.

Table 4. State of provision of safety and security measures in boarding house D

Security measures	Responses		
	Yes	No	Not sure
Firefighting equipment			
Perimeter fencing			
Security lights			
Experiences of theft			
Security guards			
Lockable gates, windows and doors			
Safety and security policy			
Closed Circuit Television (CCTV)			

Source: Field data, 2022

Boarding house D presented many safety and security concerns as presented in table 4. Only a fence and presence of a security guard was notable at the time of the study. As presented, many basic safety and security things were lacking at this boarding house, notably, CCTV, safety and security policy, poor state of doors, windows and gate, security lights and no trace of fire fighting equipment. All these presented safety and security concerns to students occupying the house.

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

According to the Stockholm proclamation "Humans have the fundamental right to freedom, equality and adequate conditions of life, in an environment of a quality that permits a life of dignity and well-being, and a solemn responsibility to protect and improve the environment for present and future generations".

From the presented data, it can be noted that most boarding houses did not have the much needed safety and security measures in place. For example, safety and security policy was lacking for all housing units sampled. The housing units for students that operated without safety and security policies could be perceived as being negligent by landlords on the questions of safety and security of students. Participants who were not sure of having a safety and security policies governing boarding houses raised a serious cause for concern. It implies, among others, that such boarding houses were vulnerable to safety and security threats. This also noted by Mubita (2016) and Mubita *et. al.* (2022) who asserted that lack of safety and health policies in learning institutions could pose a danger to occupants of those teaching and learning spaces. There is need for stakeholder engagement in making sure that boarding housing units are safe and secure before students occupy them. This is because the feeling of insecurity could make students lose concentration on their academic tasks and then concentrate on their personal safety and security.

Lockable gates, windows and doors are among the factors of safety and security considered in this study. Overall, the sampled boarding houses had worrying qualities in this area. Gates, windows and doors are points of access to boarding housing units for students. According to Mubita et. al. (2022), lockable gates, windows and doors provide the much needed feeling of safety and security to students in these boarding houses. If they are not available or they are of poor quality, then, students may be exposed to external attacks and intrusion. Their properties could be stolen and they could also face physical threats and attacks from intruders. This could temper with the students' psychosocial safety and physical safety.

One of the elements that threaten safety and security in students' boarding houses is fire. This is because many boarding houses are built on flammable materials like wood and grass, especially in rural areas. For boarding house owners and occupants, fire is not only a distressing loss, but also a stark reminder that a school faces risks that require special vigilance. Fire safety is important for the simple reason that a large number of people in boarding houses are gathered at one place and a single fire can affect them all. Most of the furniture in boarding houses such as beds, clothes, chairs, desks and tables are made of flammable material and these can easily catch fire. An uncontrolled fire in boarding houses could cause not just property damage but also loss of life. Buildings are destroyed, useful materials are burnt, and everyone in environment is disturbed. A lot of costs are incurred therein. Therefore, there is need to be fire wise by installing fire fighting equipment and orienting students on how to operate them (Mubita et.al. 2020). According to Mubita et.al. (2020) there is need to provide fire safety education to people in a given environment if risks of fire could be reduced. Therefore, boarding houses occupants need to be oriented or taught about fire safety as well.

Theft issues were reported in all boarding house selected in this study. The students reported that theft suspects were fellow students and also outsiders. Therefore, there was need to develop procedures for visitation, with all visitors required to report to the main office building or write down details in a book. This was also noted by Mubita and Namafe (2016) who noted that visitors in schools needed to sign in visitors' book before proceeding to any component of school environment. However, in all sampled boarding houses, it was easy to move around the premises once entry at the gate was gained. In the 4 boarding houses observed, there were also no areas demarcated as out of bounds for non-students. This raised a real concern in terms of intruders who could have unlawful intentions once inside the premises.

Security guards in the boarding houses were meant to provide security for students, buildings and property. This was achieved through a patrol of boarding houses buildings and perimeters, including parking lots. This practice is meant to prevent unauthorized visitors into the premises.

Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) video surveillance systems are used in public and private sectors, such as schools, homes or public spaces for crime prevention purposes. It is used to record footages where it gets installed. CCTV allows keeping an eye on mysterious people strolling around the residential area. It is best to keep the premises protected from any unwanted incidents. It helps to reduce shoplifting incidents. It allows convenient monitoring of residential places even if property owners are away from home. Actually, in the 2013–14 school year, according to Musu-Gillete, et. al. (2018),75% of public schools reported that they used one or more security cameras to monitor their students (up from 19% in 1999–2000).

From this study, none of the boarding houses had CCTV cameras. This meant that security and safety were compromised by the landlords. The 4 boarding houses observed did not have security systems like CCTV, alarms and surveillance equipment. This means that it was not easy to record any video footage of intruders if any.

CONCLUSION

This study has explored safety and security issues in selected boarding houses in Lusaka City. The surveyed boarding houses had significant safety and security challenges that were taken note of. The safety and security status of the boarding houses are termed very poor due to reasons already explained in this study. A lot has to be done so as to improve the safety and security status. Landlords should not overlook the importance of the safety and security of students residing in their owned boarding houses. To this end, this study generally recommends that the government should ensure that safety and security of students in boarding houses be taken into consideration so as to provide students with a conducive learning environment. This means that government need to put in place strict frameworks, guidance and legislation that will govern how the safety and security of students should be taken care of.

RECOMMENDATIONS

With reference to the forgoing, the study recommends the following to improve the safety and security of students living in boarding houses in Lusaka:

- Before renting out boarding houses to students, owners should make sure that they have enough toilets, bathroom, an adequate number of bins and also have a legal way of disposing off their waste
- It should be a requirement for students to do medical check-ups before been admitted to a boarding house so that there isn't transmission of transmissible diseases among the students in boarding houses.
- Landlords should ensure that first aid boxes are available within the boarding house. They should also make sure a medical person is available to handle medical emergencies.
- Landlords must ensure boreholes are installed in the premises of their boarding houses

Landlords must install enough taps to match the number of students in the boarding houses

- The landlord must ensure all welfare facilities in the boarding house are provided and in good condition to enhance the safety and security of the students' lodgings in that particular Boarding house
- Students must be sensitized on safety and security practices to lessen the risk of injury
- Signage should be placed around the boarding house to ensure tenants are more aware of their environment

- Local authorities in collaboration with relevant authorities should inspect the living conditions of boarding houses to ensure safety and security of students is safeguarded
- Boarding houses should register with local authorities to ensure the safety of students is safeguarded
- Landlords must orient students to be responsible users of boarding house facilities such as toilets

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