

## **MANDATORY SCHOOL UNIFORM POLICY AND STUDENTS' SCHOOL ATTENDANCE IN LANGATA SUB-COUNTY, NAIROBI-KENYA**

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### **ABSTRACT**

**Purpose of the Study:** The purpose of the study was to determine the influence of mandatory school uniform policy on students' attendance in Langata Sub-County secondary schools.

**Statement of the Problem:** Uniform has always been believed to have benefits include, improve academic performance, discipline, attendance, retention and most of all cement the gap between rich and the poor through the use of unified dress colour and styles. Upon these, the former President of Kenya made a mandatory school uniform policy pronouncement supported by the Nairobi Court on the use of the school uniforms. He called the students to dress appropriately, or else risk dismissal at the discretion of their teacher. This pronouncement infringed the fundamentals students' human right of freedom of participation and expression. Many students, parents, teachers and principal's complaint of indiscipline, misused of drugs and poor school performance in some schools in Kenya including Langata Sub-county secondary schools and the cost of school uniforms has escalated and become an added burden for parents and students yet not empirical study has been conducted to aid school authorities to remedy the situation.

**Research Methodology:** The study used mixed method research paradigms. Specifically, triangulation concurrent method of quantitative cross sectional and qualitative phenomenology research designs was used. The target population is 28,290 and the sample size of the study was 253 respondents obtained from principals 23, teachers 92, parents 46, and students 92. Questionnaires, interview guides and document analysis guide were the main tools for data collection. Data was analyzed by the use of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23, descriptive and inferential statistics such as, pie chart slices and regression analysis

respectively. Qualitative data was analyzed by the use of content analysis techniques and thematic approach.

**Results:** The findings revealed that there was positive and significant relationship between mandatory school uniform policy and students' school attendance ( $\beta=0.864$ ,  $p=0.000$ ).

**Conclusion:** The study concluded that wearing school uniforms primarily serves to distinguish members/nonmembers, such distinction is very important in the school environment since the inclusion of students in the school environment is one of the essential conditions of their successful school attendance. The study concluded that mandatory school uniform policy in secondary schools in Langata Sub County positively and significantly influences students' attendance.

**Recommendations:** The study hence recommended that the managements of secondary schools in Langata Sub County should strive to enforce the law regarding school uniforms in their schools because school uniform has been found to improve attendance among students in secondary schools. Additionally, the government of Kenya through the ministry of education should put in place legislations guiding wearing of school uniform in all schools in Kenya whether public or private schools to avoid the unnecessary debates regarding mandatory school uniform in Kenya.

**Keywords:** *Mandatory, Uniform, Policy, Attendance, Langata, Kenya.*

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## 1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Use of uniforms show that one is part of an organization. It implies teamwork and together in the organization. Wearing uniform signifies that one is being respectful, and a demonstration of what the organization is all about. In education and the school system generally, uniforms give students a sense of belonging to a particular school and create an identity for the school in the community. Many schools around the world today have implemented uniform dress codes in the school system to prevent their students from wearing inappropriate clothing items to schools and uniform was thought to help influence a safer and more professional school environment. School uniforms are common in primary and secondary schools in various countries. Although often used interchangeably, there is an important distinction between dress codes and school uniforms. Despite a good deal of work on the history of education, uniforms and children clothes as separate fields of research, the development of school uniform in UK was an area that has received little meaningful academic attention to date. School uniform was a visibly prominent reflection of, not only, institutional values, but also of wider views and an indicator of cultural change (Stephenson, 2016).

The use of school uniforms dress code in both public and private schools has been in existence long time ago since the early civilization took place in schools. School uniforms came into effect when some parents, teachers and school administrators started complaining against the unacceptable casual dress code of pupils in schools. The wearing of short and skin attire skirts for girls were described as sexually provocative to men. Furthermore, putting on very expensive clothing and hair styles were also described as intimidating against the economically disadvantaged pupils from low socioeconomic families. Boys coming to schools with different attires each day were also deemed as quite disturbing classroom learning. Some educators' complaint that pupils in the classroom were so preoccupied with their everyday dress code instead of focusing in learning and these consequently affected academic performances. The dress code competition was so common that many other pupils stopped going to schools because their parents

cannot afford them fancy and every day good looking clothes. Subsequently this aroused the need to adopt a dress code policy called school uniform for all pupils' boys and girls respectively (David, 2017).

Wilde (2018) in USA California noted that uniform can be as simple as requiring collared shirts, or restricting colour choices and limiting items students were allowed to wear. On the other hand, a dress code, was much less restrictive, and focused on promoting modesty and discouraging anti-social fashions. Examples of a dress code would be not allowed ripped clothing, no logos or limiting the amount of skin that can be shown. Christ's Hospital (2019) found that school uniforms were believed to be a practice which dated far to the 16<sup>th</sup> century in the United Kingdom. It was believed that the Christ Hospital School in London in 1552 was the first school to use a school uniform. Students were given a uniform that most notably consisted of a long blue coat and yellow, knee-high socks. An almost identical uniform was still worn by students attending the schools today. The earliest documented proof of institutionalized use of a standard academic dress dated back to 1222 when the then Archbishop of Canterbury ordered the wearing of the cappa-clausa. This monastic and academic practice evolved into collegiate uniforms in England, particularly in charity schools where uniform dress was often provided for poor children.

Universities, primary schools and secondary schools used uniforms as a marker of class and status. Although school uniforms can often be considered conservative and old-fashioned, uniforms in recent years have changed as societal dress codes have changed. The issues that ought to be made clear here were the missionaries were giving uniforms as part of their responsibility and vowed for charity, they were much disciplined, and well trained for schools. In addition, student teacher ratio was not a problem therefore attendance, discipline and performance were very high because of school uniforms (Christ's Hospital, 2019). However, many schools today with school uniform policy still facing challenges and new measures were needed to improve compliance.

In Kenya context the school uniform policy came at a time when the former president Mwai Kibaki mandated all schools going pupils to put on the prescribed school uniforms as the country dress code for all schools both primary and secondary schools without conducting any study. A study conducted by Mirie (2013) further explained the used of school uniforms skyrocketed in many parts of the countryside. The Kenya Government under the rule of former President Mwai Kibaki in 2002 advanced strongly to implement the uniform policy and called on parents to abide to that. Disobeying a mandatory uniform policy was considered a level its disciplinary infraction, this requires intervention by a school administrator.

Furthermore, Mirie iterated that such a violation can result in a variety of punishments depending on the severity of the infraction and the student's prior behaviour. These can range from a call to the student's parents to in-school suspension, although the administrators were given discretion to increase or reduce the punishment beyond this range if necessary. Even if a child was not sent away, the lack of a uniform greatly inhibited education and encouraged dropout rates. Just like in school, environment anywhere else has the pressure to fit in and the fear of ridicule crippled Kenyans' adolescences. Stigmatization and reprimand from teachers and peers were highly demotivational in the classroom, led to attendance and concentration issues.

However, certain teachers, administrators, parents and students had different viewpoints towards this decision of uniforms dress code and their effect on pupil's learning. In a clearer perspective Porter (2017) in US compiled a report on standard school attire. Porter looked at the issues associated with school uniforms. Porter considered White Kerry A. study carried on "do school

uniform fit”? The report responded to the recent proposal for standardized attire in all Metro Nashville schools USA. The central aim for this standardized school attire for students was to reduce crime, gang and illegal activities in school and improve learning experience. Various arguments gathered from pros and cons were not supported by scientific evidence and the claims attached to standardized school attire were untested at high school level. Furthermore, BBC also indicated in the report that there has been no evidence anywhere in the world to show there was a connection between school uniform and standard of academic school performance. In the same report the researcher also noted certain relevant points of interest. That because one evidence followed another did not mean that the first caused the second to happen. Therefore, reduction in crime, gangs and drugs activities, following standardized dress was not weighty enough evidence upon which to conclude that school uniform effect learning and improves test scores and grades. These further explained that crimes, gangs and school attendance rates, other factors present could well be the cause of the reduction. Regardless, Nairobi court according to Muthoni (2016) ruled in favour of school uniform for all students. Interestingly perhaps Kenya Government and BOM imposed the school uniform policy to facilitate tracking down terrorists’ invasions in the recent times in schools and public places rather than many of the claims above. The Government could have adopted good security policy and control rather than the imposition of a mere school uniform to deter terrorists’ attacks.

In support of the government claims, the World Bank (2014) conducted a study on the effort of ICS-Africa, and NGO that funded the Child Sponsorship Program (CSP) in Kenya and focused on the distribution of school supplies. The results revealed that since the program began providing annual school uniforms to sponsored children in rural Kenyan schools, dropout rates decreased almost in half, from 15% to 8.6%, uniforms encourage good behavior in the classroom and qualify students for reduced fees on public transportation. However, the study was conducted in rural and poor and deprived place where parents and children can accept anything without questioning. The other possibility that led to good attendance perhaps after the supplied of uniforms teachers enforced disciplinary and attendance policies to deter absenteeism. To promote the idea of uniforms Layeni (2018) reported on the Nigeria school documentary the best school uniforms in Nigeria. The writer further explained programs that financially helped the most disadvantaged families in Nigeria. Uniforms were believed to promote equality, discipline and prevent social snobbery. The Chairman of Ejigbo Local Council Development Area, LCDA, Kehinde Bamigbetan distributed 7,200 school uniforms to pupils in the nine primary schools within the council area, with the aim of improving the standard of education in Lagos state Laveni concluded. In support of the Laveni’s viewpoints Wambugu and Mokoena (2016) carried out a study on the effect of Cost-sharing policy on the dropout rates of public secondary school students in Limuru District, Kenya. The researcher examines the effect and inequality of participation in schools in Kenya.

Consequently, the findings of Hesapcioglu discovered that certain school uniforms worn by pupils in schools were not comfortable to school pupils which can possibly cause distractions and can affect their concentration in the classrooms and further affect learning. However, the reviewed of the historical background of school uniform programs in the world around Africa and the United States began with who first implemented uniforms, then turned to how and why the use of uniforms gained popularity. Historically, uniforms policies were utilized by catholic private schools which created sense of obedient and loyal bodies with a strong sense of belonging to their nation. To further understand the policy, Brunsmas (2004) wrote a book in USA entitled school uniform

movement and what it tells us about American education: A symbolic crusade. Brunnsma explained that school uniforms movement continued to be rooted in a pure speculation without any scientific evidence to support anecdotal argument for its effectiveness in schools. Brunnsma further iterated that school uniforms campaign continued to grow in popularity with administrators and parents despite research in the past decade showed that uniforms did not work. Schools with high of poverty and high proportion of minorities, had much higher propensity for school uniform policy adoption, as did schools that had low level of parental involvement in decision making. This fact suggested that parents must be supportive of such policies in order for them to be actually be implemented with any respectable degree of compliance and not taken advantage of their vulnerability.

In a more concrete reflection MiliWiki (2019) wrote on dress code and Yeung and Ryan (2009) wrote about educational policy in United States of America where the former President Bill Clinton publically announced his support for the idea of school uniforms and its policy he explained that school uniforms were one step that may help to break the cycle of violence, truancy and disorder by helping young students understand what really counts is what kind of people they are expected in the society. Since then minorities' school districts authorities in the United States adopted school uniforms. In addition, the former President failed to note that vulnerable children accept anything been offered to them without asking questions.

The background of this current research study will make comprehensive review of information surrounding the relationship of mandatory school uniform and learning. As a matter of fact, uniforms tend to close the socioeconomic gap that existed between students as it makes pupils equal and uniforms make the students easily identifiable thus, any stranger or outsider is easily recognized by school authorities. However, the authorities failed to know that an intruder might come to the schools with the same school uniform and cause harm. Uniforms also hamper a smooth transition of pupils from childhood to adulthood as their socialization is practically controlled as they considered them all the same. Uniforms may also be a probable source of uneasiness for students considering that; they need to make maximum use of their time in schools this will cause distractions during classroom.

## **1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Wearing of school uniforms in Kenya is not a new thing. It existed in the era of the British colonial masters and the missionaries. Uniform was believed to have benefits include, improve academic performance, discipline, attendance, retention and most of all cement the gap between rich and the poor through the use of unified dress colour and styles. Upon these, the former President of Kenya made a mandatory school uniform policy pronouncement supported by the Nairobi Court on the use of the school uniforms. He called the students to dress appropriately, or else risk dismissal at the discretion of their teacher (Mirie, 2013; Muthoni, 2016).

This pronouncement infringed the fundamentals students' human right of freedom of participation, and expression. As Satish (2017) explained the impact of suppressed emotions in our health. That, students will develop resistance and tendency to look for other means to vent out their anger. Many students, parents, teachers and principal's complaint of indiscipline, misused of drugs and poor school performance in some schools in Kenya including Langata Sub-county secondary schools and the cost of school uniforms has escalated and become an added burden for parents and students yet not empirical study has been conducted to aid school authorities to remedy the situation. Corey (2009) wrote on theory and practice of counseling and psychotherapy supported Satish and further



argued that forcing unwanted memories or information out of the conscious awareness however these memories do not just disappear but they continue to influence people’s behaviours and will find exit at an unannounced time.

Muia (2016) carried out a study on the influence of social media on deviant behaviours among secondary school students in Langata Sub-county, Nairobi County Kenya. The research sought to determine the influence of social media on deviant behaviour among secondary school students. The study was guided by a descriptive research design. The findings showed a high agreement amongst respondent used that social media usage has contributed to poor academic performance, notably, the study findings indicated that social media and violence strongly contributed to growing violence amongst students and form three engaged online bullying and molesting other students.

### 1.3 RESEARCH QUESTION

How does mandatory school uniform policy influence students’ school attendance in the Sub-County?

### 1.4 HYPOTHESIS

**Ho:** There is no statistically significant relationship between mandatory school uniform and students’ attendance in secondary schools.

### 1.5 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

#### Independent Variable

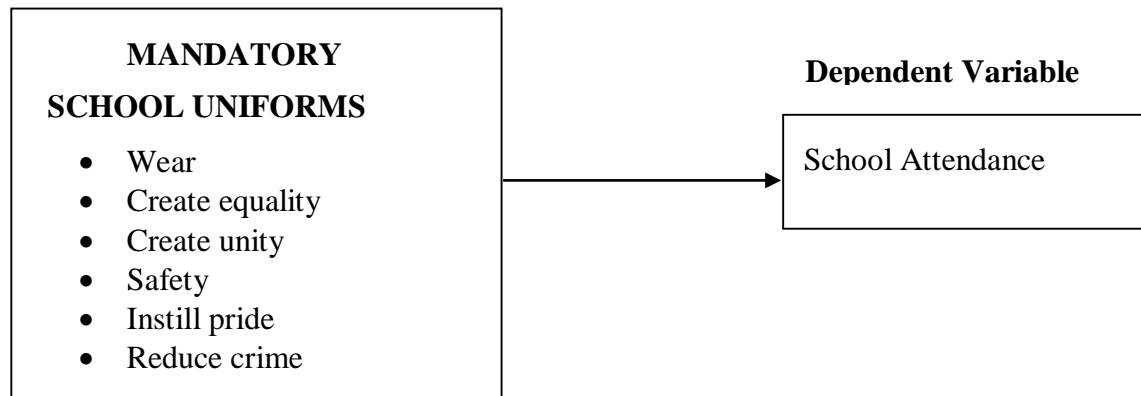


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework on Mandatory School Uniform on Attendance

## **2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Theoretical Review**

#### **Theory of Poverty**

Poverty is a condition in which an individual, society or community lacks a definite amount of resources or possessions, including material or monetary possessions. Poverty is one of the challenges that could affect academic performance, attendance and discipline in schools if proper measures are not taken. Proponents of this theory believed in poverty stricken. Thus, poverty-stricken communities' people remain connected to the main values and rules of the dominant middle-class culture. But, strain is introduced in the form of failing to achieve goals, removal of positive stimuli, and presence of negative stimuli available. So, people are then forced into criminal acts to achieve this success (Pineda, 2019).

In a more concrete note therefore, uniform policy was forced on pupils after the various school authorities have failed to address the needs of people they governed. Perhaps making every child in uniform indicates that things are okay. Dwakar & Shepherd (2018) carried out a study on understanding poverty in Kenya: a multidimensional analysis. The study was on household budget Survey 2015/16, a nationally representative household survey covering 21,773 households and 92,846 individuals. The study used interview guide for data collection. The study focused on identifying the main deprivations (how), in what dimensions one is poor, as well as who is poor in which dimensions and linking it to institutional, structural and developmental causes to poverty. The results reported that certain groups are consistently being left behind in Kenya, on account of income poverty status, gender, age, disability, area of residence in logjams of disadvantage. The report importantly found that an overwhelming majority of Kenyans, almost 80%, are either income poor or near the poverty line.

UNICEF (2017) conducted study on child poverty in Kenya. The study aimed at finding out whether poverty can also set children on a lifelong trajectory of low education levels and reduced productivity, and undermine their physical and mental health. Children living in poverty are more likely to become impoverished adults and have poor children, thereby creating and sustaining intergenerational cycles of poverty. The study also aimed at the factors that impede access of children and their parents to basic services and the bottlenecks in delivery of these services from the side of service providers. The study was mixed method of both qualitative and quantitative research designs. The study was carried out counties Nairobi, Turkana, Kakamega and Kitui from 14<sup>th</sup> -31<sup>st</sup> August, 2016. Focus group discussion, questionnaires and interview guide were used for data collection. The summary findings of the child poverty study indicated that overall child poverty (prevalence of deprivations) was 45 percent of all children. This translated to 9.5 million children in Kenya who were severely deprived in at least 3 or more basic needs for their wellbeing. The studies of both Dwakar, and UNICEF their studies reviewed above highlighted the challenges that school administrators, parents and students faced in various schools in implementing school policies. These challenges demand good measures in order to promote child's attendance and retention in schools. Thus, this places the study at a better position to find out the effectiveness of school uniform in pupils' learning.

With this regard and to further curb down poverty the World Bank called for poverty reduction strategy and claimed that if all children were in the same out fits dress code and provision of school fees, fees for books, materials and some exams then they won't get bullied over clothing.

Several countries including sub-Saharan Africa have taken strides towards meeting the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) of universal primary education (Evans, 2008). However, this call failed to consider that African countries have numerous emerging issues put aside school uniforms which affecting the system of education such as human immunodeficiency virus, acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV / AIDS), ethnic conflicts, technology and political instability to list but few. Josephson (2018) from the debate conducted in Columbia and Oxford on the perception of people on school uniforms. Findings revealed mixed feelings. Proponents believed that uniforms promote safety, belongingness, cuts down parents' expenses while cons believed that uniforms limit self-expression, sexist and a way of policing student.

In reaction to the uniform policy pros and cons people raised many debates in favour and against mandatory school uniforms policies application. Kelly (2019) on pros and cons of school uniform debate said uniforms used at schools can range from the formal to the informal. Some schools that have implemented them have chosen what one usually thinks of in connection to private or parish schools: nice trousers and white shirts for boys, jumpers and white shirts for girls. Pennington (2013) further explained that the streets in Scotland were full of children in navy blue, black and grey school uniforms trudging or skipping back to school. In England and Wales return, with children in school uniforms that were very clearly gendered with lovely pleated skirts, sparkly shoes for girls and polo shirts for boys. Pennington described this as an obsession to uniforms and has no evidence to promote learning once the child reads, with good distribution of quality and quantity of teaching and learning materials, trained teachers and good discipline can excel. School administrators cannot compensate their failure in poor managements and poor teaching to uniforms.

Wearing a single set of clothe also goes with ethical issues. Therefore, Admin (2016) considered the ethical implication of uniforms believed that school uniforms should be ethically sourced and environmentally friendly. With this in mind the researcher roused with further interest to explore whether school uniforms in Kenya fulfilled these conditions. Interestingly the researcher will also want to know whether school pupils are comfortable considering different weather conditions in Kenya. Furthermore, and surprising every school going pupil in Kenya is stuffed with clothes which might become uncomfortable during the day and deter concentration and learning.

## **2.2 Mandatory School Uniform Policy and its Influence on Students' School Attendance**

Attendance policy is in school documents indicated in the curriculum and course outline which aid decision making and the award of penalty to defaulters where necessary. The importance of students regularly being in the classroom to learn from their teachers and students' colleagues has been documented in numerous studies reviewed. This is simply because academic success has been linked up to regular school attendance. An example of these policies was taken from Wales. The policy provided guidance on the attendance codes. The policy called for safeguarding and educational reasons, schools must follow up all students' unexplained and unexpected absence in a timely manner, such as through first day calling procedures. The policy can be made effective through the collaboration and cooperation of parents and the supervision of teachers and head-teachers respectively. It was the responsibility of parents, careers, school and local authorities for securing regular school attendance (Welsh Government, 2012).

The Government agreed to consult on legislation for the introduction of fixed penalty notices for non-school attendance. Having considered the responses to this consultation the Welsh Government has made the Education (Penalty Notice) (Wales) Regulations 2013 which come into



force in September 2013. Local authorities (LAs), school governing bodies, school staff, and the police are required by law to have regard to the relevant parts of this guidance when carrying out their functions in relation to penalty notices, including making decisions on issuing a penalty notice under section 444A of the Education Act 1996. This means that due regard must be given to the guidance and there is an expectation that it will be followed unless there is good reason to depart from it. Penalty notices are one option among a number of different interventions available to promote better school attendance. Attendance at school is essential to improve children's educational prospects and to avoid putting them at risk of criminal or antisocial behaviour.

The success of the attendance policy depends on the roles and responsibilities for issuing penalty notices local authority, schools, the police and the local codes of conduct. Under section 437 of the Education Act 1996, LAs have a duty to ensure that children for whom they are responsible are receiving a suitable education either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. The local code of conduct is key to the successful use of penalty notices. It ensures consistency, fairness and transparency. The Welsh Government considered the views and ideas expressed by children when making decisions that have a direct impact upon their lives. The analysis that was conducted in 2009, 2010, 2011 it was discovered that the statistical links between attendance and achievement was very strong therefore there was a significant relationship between school attendance and achievement scores.

However, the Welsh Government did not account to the contribution of the factors that might have greatly contributed to a positive link. Factors like provision of quality teaching and learning materials, students and teachers' ratio, motivation, teaching and learning methodologies, lastly the competence of the teachers to name but few. Any of these factors must have contributed more significantly to pupils' achievement scores. Similarly, the National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER) through Gentile and Scott (2011) conducted a study in Massachusetts in UK on dress for success and the effect of school uniforms on students' achievement and behaviour, the study was carried out on large urban school district and the trend for adopting school uniforms. The study objective was how uniforms affect behavior, achievement and other outcomes. The researcher used a survey design and document analysis for data collection. Results revealed that uniforms have a positive influence on student attendance in secondary grades. Attendance rates in grades 6 through 12 increases by 0.3 to 0.4 percentage points after the school adopted uniforms. On the other hand, the results showed little evidence that uniforms have lasting impacts on academic achievement. In terms of discipline results showed little evidence of uniform effects.

Another study conducted the same on dress for success in Southwest United State by Gentile (2012) discovered that uniform use in public schools was rising, but they knew little about how they affect students. Using a unique dataset from a large urban school district in the Southwest United States, they assessed how uniforms affect behavior, achievement and learning. Each school in the district determines adoption uniform independently, providing variation over schools and time. By including, students and school fixed-effects they found evidence that uniform adoption improves attendance in secondary grades, while in elementary schools they generated large increased in teacher retention.

The other side of the United State in the East Tennessee at Johnson State Gouge (2011) conducted a study on a comparison research study on the use of school uniforms and graduation, attendance, and suspension rates. The researcher applied moral absolutism and social cognitive theories as theoretical framework for the study of school uniforms. The study was quantitative, causal

comparative study and interview guide was used to collect information from respondents. The purpose of this study was to investigate whether the presence of a school uniform policy affected graduation, attendance, and suspension rates in rural schools in East Tennessee. Upon completion the results of the study revealed that a school uniform policy had a significant effect on a rural school in East Tennessee, specifically its graduation rate. However, there was no significant effect on student attendance or suspension rates. The attendance rates of the independent high school and the dependent high school in this study was at a minimum of 92.5%.

Agarwal (2015) carried out a qualitative case study to examine the effects of school uniform on student's achievement, behaviour, and attendance in government school of Odisha: A case study of Sundargarh District in Northwestern part of Odisha State in Eastern Indian. The study examined the functions of the school children after wearing school uniform. This qualitative case study focused on the functioning of the school children after wearing school uniform. The study considered 3 years before and after implementation. From 120 schools in Sundargarh district it was discovered that the percentage of attendance in boys and girls in government school before the implementation of school uniform was lower in comparisons with after the implementation of school uniform. The causes of these low percentage mostly were due to poor financial status of boys and girls who were unable to purchase proper clothing for schools to match up to the rich status of students from posh localities, thus to avoid the shame they bunk schools and hence a low percentage of attendance was seen in class.

Sabic–El-Rayess (2019) conducted a survey on school uniform policy's adverse impact on equity and access to schooling in Mongolia Central Asia. The sample size of the study was (n = 462). The study examined the effect of school uniforms on school attendance in low income countries is scarce. The survey design was carefully incorporated preliminary input from 20 focus groups and open-ended interviews with students, teachers, parents and the school uniform suppliers. The findings revealed that it was not only the cost of uniforms that matters, but also poor students' feelings of exclusion when the majority of students in a school wear uniform.

The poor students' minority dropout from school when their symbolic association with the majority was visibly broken through their inability to afford and wear school uniforms. This study suggested that school uniform policies in low income countries are loaded with complications. That is, instead of creating cohesion, such policies are more likely to affect poor students' negative perceptions of themselves and play a strong role in dropout rates from schools. Other unexplained reasons perhaps, for non-attendance and why pupils miss school could be, bullying, poor relationships with teachers and other staff, peer pressures (e.g. having few friends), communication problems between school staff and parents, classes as boring, irrelevant, and a waste of time list unending.

On the contrary Gentile (2010) conducted a research in New York in the Philadelphia public schools on dress for success? The effect of school uniform on students' achievement and behaviour. The most notable estimated results here were for girls in middle/high school grades. Attendance rates for these students increase by 0.48 percentage points after uniform adoption. This is a substantial increase equal to 7% of their mean absence rate amongst these students. Middle/high school boys also show marginally significant improvements of 0.27 percentage points - about 4% of the average absence rate. The finding above on the role of uniform in students in secondary schools still not cleared. Therefore, my research findings will provide concrete answer to mandatory school uniform policy and its influence on students' school attendance.

After the abolition of official school fees in some developing countries, the cost of school uniforms became the largest expenses for families. Ngatia Muthoni and Evans David (2018) carried out a study to give answer to the question: do free school uniforms help children stay in school? This research was sponsored by the World Bank and published on Nasikiliza. The study was conducted globally in countries such as Tanzania, Ghana, Sudan and Democratic Republic of Congo. The study examined the impact of providing free school uniforms to school children and observe how it affects their school participation in the short and long run. The report highlighted that, one of the largest challenges facing countries around the world was that children were not learning as they should, even once they were in schools.

But many children still do not make it far enough in schools, and attendance was an important element of learning. School uniforms can help children especially the poorest children to continue attending school. But if we want enduring impacts, the schools they attend have to deliver the learning that children deserve. This report emphasized on the role of the teachers and school administrators to effect other school policies such as attendance and learning. A learner can have nicely prescribed school uniforms, however, if teachers and school administrators are not making efforts learning will not take place as required.

Zambia government and her ministry of general education (MoGE) like Kenya school uniform is compulsory and shared the same hope to increase enrollment, improve attendance, retention, and finally improves academic performance. On the contrary a study conducted by Hall (2018) sponsored by UNICEF in eight (8) districts on dropping out? A participatory exploration of adolescent school journeys in Zambia revealed a high school dropout rate from lower secondary school grade 7-8 66.2% and upper secondary school grade 9-10 46.6% respectively, indicating two major dropouts for children within Zambia educational system. The study further revealed that there was limited progression into secondary education, persistent low performance, in the national examination results. Finally, the findings underlined factors responsible as over half of citizenries live in poverty, burden of school fees on the household finances, children working instead of attending schools, pressure on teenage pregnancies and early marriages to name but few.

Kremer and Ngatia (2008) who evaluated a random lottery that gave uniforms to students in Kenya. They found improvements in attendance and, preliminarily, test scores for students who received uniforms. While this suggests that uniforms can be effective tools at improving student outcomes. In a more empirical method Evans David (2013) carried out an evaluation to assess the impact of providing school uniforms on children's education the effort of NGO ICS-Africa operates a Child Sponsorship Program (CSP) in Western Kenya, in which children sponsored by donors in the Netherlands and elsewhere received school fees and school uniforms. The objective of the evaluation was to determine the impact of an educational intervention in which a Kenyan non-governmental organization distributed school uniforms to pupils in poor communities. Results of the study indicated a strong positive impact of school uniform on students in school participation. In other words, giving a uniform reduced school absenteeism by 6.4 percentage points (43%) from a base of 15% school absenteeism. The effect is 3.4 percentage points larger for students who did not have uniforms at the baseline. This was a major reduction in absenteeism from a baseline school attendance level of 85%.

Building on these studies above five years later, Evans and Muthoni (2018) conducted another evaluation under the same project Child Sponsorship Program (CSP) in Kenya. The evaluation was on school costs, short-run participation, and long-run outcomes. This paper reported the impact of an educational intervention that reduced out-of-pocket schooling costs for children in

poor communities in Kenya by providing school uniforms. ICS selected all children who had experienced one or both parent deaths and orphans to automatically awarded sponsorships. Therefore, out of the 876 sponsorships targeted the ICS allocated, 309 orphans were assigned the results showed that before the distribution of uniforms insignificant on attendance and after the distribution of the school uniforms, school attendance increased to a regression of 3.8%, Form IV attendance was 7.0% and reduction of 37% absenteeism. Finally, children who were given uniforms newly a reduction of 55% of absenteeism. However, the study of Evans and Muthoni did not indicate the role of the teachers and parents in reinforcing the attendance school policy to show clearly whether attendance was due to school uniforms or the reinforcement of the school attendance policy after the uniforms distribution or perhaps the attendance was due to parents' encouragement to pupils to attendance schools now that they were been given uniforms. The new study will indicate clearly the role of teachers and parents will play to promote students' compliance to attendance policy.

In summary of this section, mandatory school uniform policy and its influence on students' school attendance the issues surrounding students' attendance and the role of school uniforms in relation to students' school attendance were not clearly addressed. Gentile & Scott (2011) through NBER conducted a study on dress for success? Effect of school uniforms on students' achievement and behaviour. The study was carried out in large Urban District Southwest USA. The study was a quantitative survey of cross-sectional to compare schools before and after the adoption of the school informs policy. The study targeted 200,000 schools and sampled 300 and had a compliance rate of 292 schools. The researcher used structured interview guide for principals and administrative records to collect data including students' demographics, test scores, discipline records, and attendance records. The study findings revealed that school informs had sparse impact on students' behaviour, academic achievement and other outcomes. The study also revealed that disciplinarians' principals were quick to incline to the policy and were able to maintain attendance, discipline and performance but when they were transferred discipline, attendance and performance declined.

Another study was conducted by Muthoni and David (2018) sponsored by the World Bank's World Development carried out a global evaluation on do free school uniforms help children stay in schools? The evaluation was conducted globally in countries such as Tanzania, Ghana, Sudan and Democratic Republic of Congo. The study was a quantitative survey. The report findings highlighted the largest challenges facing countries around the world is that children are not learning as they should, even once they are in school. But many children still do not make it far enough in school, and attendance is an important element of learning. School uniforms can help children especially the poorest children to continue attending school. But if we want enduring impacts, the schools they attend have to deliver the learning that children deserve.

The program had a significantly larger effect on girls. The intervention had no impact on siblings' outcomes. The program has significant impact on test scores for children with no uniform at baseline and a positive but insignificant impact on children who already had a uniform at baseline. Evans David (2013) conducted a study to assess the impact of providing school uniforms on children's education the effort of NGO ICS-Africa operates a Child Sponsorship Program (CSP) in Western Kenya, in which children sponsored by donors in the Netherlands and elsewhere received school fees and school uniforms. Results of the study indicated a strong positive impact of school uniform on students in school participation.

All the above studies the researchers used only quantitative experimental survey designs, structured interview guide for administrators and administrative records to collect data including students 'demographics, test scores, discipline records, and attendance records. No study has used mixed methods, students, teacher and parent were not involved, questionnaires were not used and no theory was used in the studies. The findings did not clearly stated effect of school uniforms on children attendance and the researchers did not indicate the impacts of disciplinary measures and role of the teachers in each school. My study will come to close these gaps.

### **3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The study adopted a mixed method research approach. Specifically, the study used a concurrent triangulation mixed method design. In this study the target population was all schools, all teachers, all school heads, students and parents in both public and private secondary schools in Langata Sub-County of Nairobi. The target population in this study includes all the schools, principals, teachers, parents and students in both public and private secondary schools in Langata Sub-County of Nairobi. The study used simple random sampling procedure for selecting secondary schools in the Sub County. The study therefore used 23 secondary schools out of 46 representing 50% of the entire secondary school populations in Langata Sub-County. This is so because all schools emphasized on attendance and most of it, all school pupils put on school uniforms which are the main characteristics of the study. The study selected 23 principals because of their pivot roles in running the schools from the selected schools representing a 50% which is equally representative to the number of secondary schools selected in Langata Sub-County. Ninety-two (92) out of 644 teachers were selected representing 14.3% of the students. This was according to Mugenda (2013) who recommends that more than 10% of respondents for larger samples and for survey research are adequate. The study used the stratified random sampling method due to homogeneous characteristics to select ninety-two (92) students and four (4) students were selected from each school. This included one (1) student from each stream starting from Form one (1), Form two (2), Form three (3) and to Form four (4) inclusively giving a total to four (4) students. The study used questionnaire and interview guide to collect primary data. The collected data was analyzed using SPSS.



#### 4.0 PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

##### 4.1 Descriptive Statistics

**Table 1: Students School Attendance**

	<b>SD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>UD</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>SA</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Dev.</b>
Students in this school believe school uniform policy improves attendance.	3.40%	5.70%	4.60%	48.30%	37.90%	4.115	0.982
Students in this school think school uniform has an effect on student's attendance.	2.30%	4.60%	19.50%	44.80%	28.70%	3.931	0.938
Introduction of fixed penalty notices for non-school attendance makes students in this school to attend schools.	12.60%	5.70%	3.40%	51.70%	26.40%	3.736	1.271
Students in this school are followed up when absent from school/classes.	2.30%	4.60%	9.20%	44.80%	39.10%	4.138	0.930
Students in this school will attend other schools without school uniforms if given alternative.	1.10%	5.70%	1.10%	50.60%	41.40%	4.253	0.838
Students in this school receive parental motivation to attend school	4.60%	3.40%	14.90%	49.40%	27.60%	3.920	0.991
Students in this school skip classes.	37.90%	14.90%	18.40%	13.80%	14.90%	2.529	1.485
Students in this school are accepted in class when not in proper school uniform.	41.40%	17.20%	20.70%	8.00%	12.60%	2.333	1.411
Students in this school believe school uniform policy improves attendance.	3.60%	6.00%	4.80%	47.60%	38.10%	4.107	0.994
Students in this school think school uniform has an effect on student's attendance	2.40%	4.80%	19.00%	45.20%	28.60%	3.929	0.941
Introduction of fixed penalty notices for non-school attendance makes	11.90%	6.00%	3.60%	52.40%	26.20%		

students in this school to attendance schools.						3.750	1.250
Students in this school are followed up when absent form school/classes	2.40%	4.80%	9.50%	44.00%	39.30%	4.131	0.941
Students in this school will attend other schools without school uniform given alternative	1.20%	6.00%	1.20%	48.80%	42.90%	4.262	0.852
Students in this school receive parental motivation to attend school	3.60%	3.60%	15.50%	50.00%	27.40%	3.940	0.949
Students in this school skip classes	29.80%	36.90%	10.70%	10.70%	11.90%	2.381	1.334
Students in this school are accepted in class when not in proper	64.30%	9.50%	13.10%	3.60%	9.50%	1.845	1.331
<b>Average</b>						<b>3.543</b>	<b>1.074</b>

The results in Table 1 show that most of the students (86.20%) agreed that students in their schools believed school uniform policy improves attendance, 4.60% others were undecided, while 9.10% disagreed with the statement. This was affirmed by ( $M=4.115$ ,  $Std\ Dev= 0.982$ ) implying that most of the students were in agreement with the statement. This implies that students in secondary schools in Langata are convinced mandatory school uniform policy is important in improving the attendance of students in secondary schools in Langata. The results also show that most of the students (73.50%) were in agreement with the statement that students in their schools thought school uniform had an effect on student's attendance. 19.50% of the students were undecided on the statement, while 6.90% disagreed. This implies most of the students in secondary schools in Langata sub county are convinced school uniform affects students' school attendance by ( $M=3.931$ ,  $Std\ Dev= 0.938$ ).

Further, the results show that most of the students (78.10%) were in agreement with fact that introduction of fixed penalty notices for non-school attendance makes students in their schools to attendance schools. This was affirmed by ( $M=3.736$ ,  $Std\ Dev= 1.271$ ). This implies that students in secondary schools in Lang'ata believe tough policies against lack of school uniforms in school among students influences students school attendance. Additionally, most of the students (83.90%) were in agreement with the fact that students in their schools were being followed up when absent form school/classes. The results imply that most of the students in secondary schools in Langata are strongly in agreement with the fact that their teachers are committed to making follow up on those absent students as also affirmed by ( $M=4.138$ ,  $Std\ Dev= 0.930$ ).

Further, most of the students (90.00%) agreed that students in their schools would attend other schools without school uniforms if given alternative. This was also indicated by ( $M=4.253$ ,  $Std\ Dev= 0.838$ ) implying that most students in secondary schools in Langata sub county are of the opinion that they are wearing school uniform because it is mandatory in their schools, otherwise they would consider changing school ad attend schools where uniform is not mandatory. Most of the students (77.00%) were positive that students in their schools received parental motivation to

attend school. The same was affirmed by ( $M=3.920$ ,  $Std\ Dev= 0.991$ ) implying that most of the students in secondary schools in Langata have no doubts about parental guidance and motivation they receive from their parents to attend school.

Similarly, most of the students (52.80%) disagreed with the fact that students in their schools were skipping classes. The same was affirmed by ( $M=2.529$ ,  $Std\ Dev= 1.485$ ) implying that most students in secondary schools in Langata believe that students in their schools are not missing classes. Finally, most of the students (58.60%) disagreed with the statement that students in their schools were being accepted in class when not in proper school uniform, while only 20.60% of the students were in agreement with the statement. This was also affirmed by ( $M=2.333$ ,  $Std\ Dev= 1.411$ ) implying that most of the students having disagreed believed that most of students in their schools were not being allowed in class without school uniform.

Regarding responses from teachers and principals, the results show that 85.70% of the principals and teachers agreed that students in their schools believed school uniform policy improves attendance, while 4.80% of the teachers and principals were undecided on the statement, while 9.60% disagreed with the statement. The responses had a mean and standard deviations of 4.107 and 0.994 respectively. This implies that teachers in secondary schools in Langata sub county Nairobi were in agreement with the statement. The results also show that most of the teachers and principals (73.80%) were in agreement with the statement that students in their schools thought school uniform had an effect on student's attendance. 19% of the students were undecided on the statement, while 7.20% disagreed. This implies most of the teachers in secondary schools in Langata sub county are convinced school uniform affects students' school attendance by ( $M=3.929$ ,  $Std\ Dev= 0.941$ ).

Further, the results show that most of the teachers and principals (78.60%) were in agreement with fact that introduction of fixed penalty notices for non-school attendance makes students in their schools to attendance schools. This was affirmed by ( $M=3.750$ ,  $Std\ Dev= 1.250$ ). This implies that students and principals in secondary schools in Langata believe tough policies against lack of school uniforms in school among students influences students school attendance. Additionally, most of the teachers and principals (83.30%) were in agreement with the fact that students in their schools were being followed up when absent form school/classes. The results imply that most of the students in secondary schools in Langata are strongly in agreement with the fact that their teachers are committed to making follow up on those absent students as also affirmed by ( $M=4.131$ ,  $Std\ Dev= 0.941$ ).

Further, most of the teachers and principals (91.70%) agreed that students in their schools would attend other schools without school uniforms if given alternative. This was also indicated by ( $M=4.262$ ,  $Std\ Dev= 0.852$ ) implying that most teachers and principal in secondary schools in Langata sub county are of the opinion that they are wearing school uniform because it is mandatory in their schools, otherwise they would consider changing school ad attend schools where uniform is not mandatory. Most of the teachers and principals (77.40%) were positive that students in their schools received parental motivation to attend school. The same was affirmed by ( $M=3.940$ ,  $Std\ Dev= 0.949$ ) implying that most of the students in secondary schools in Langata have no doubts about parental guidance and motivation they receive from their parents to attend school.

Similarly, most of the students (66.70%) disagreed with the fact that students in their schools were skipping classes. The same was affirmed by ( $M=2.381$ ,  $Std\ Dev= 1.334$ ) implying that most students in secondary schools in Langata believe that students in their schools are not missing

classes. Finally, most of the teachers and principals (73.80%) disagreed with the statement that students in their schools were being accepted in class when not in proper school uniform, while only 13.10% of the students were in agreement with the statement. This was also affirmed by (M=1.845, Std Dev= 1.331) implying that most of the teachers and principals having disagreed believed that most of students in their schools were not being allowed in class without school uniform.

**4.2 Regression Analysis**

To be able to determine the influence of mandatory school uniform policy and students’ school attendance in Langata Sub-County secondary schools, the study conducted a regression analysis and the summary model results are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2: Model Summary**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.877a	0.768	0.766	0.26102

a. Predictors: (Constant), Mandatory Uniform Policy

The model summary results show that mandatory uniform policy was satisfactory variable in explaining students’ school attendance in secondary schools in Langata Sub County. This is supported by coefficient of determination also known as the R square of 0.768. This means that mandatory uniform policy explains 76.8% of the variations in students’ school attendance in the secondary schools in Langata Sub County. In statistics, significance testing the p-value indicates the level of relation of the independent variable to the dependent variable.

**Table 3: ANOVA**

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	18.545	1	18.545	272.208	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	5.587	82	0.068		
	Total	24.132	83			

a Dependent Variable: School Attendance

b Predictors: (Constant), Mandatory Uniform Policy

The ANOVA results show that the model was statistically significant in explaining the influence of Mandatory Uniform Policy on students’ school attendance in secondary schools in Langata Sub County as indicated by a p-value of 0.000.

**Table 4: Regression Coefficient Results**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error			
1	(Constant)	0.442	0.237		1.868	0.065
	Uniform Policy	0.864	0.052	0.877	16.499	0.000

a Dependent Variable: School Attendance

**Students’ School Attendance= 0.442+ 0.864X**

Where, **X**= Mandatory Uniform Policy

The regression coefficient results show that there was a positive and significant relationship between mandatory school uniform policy and Students’ School Attendance in secondary schools in Langata sub county ( $\beta=0.864$ ,  $p=0.000$ ). The gradient coefficient shows the extent to which a unit change in the independent variable causes a change in the dependent variable which is the change in Students’ School Attendance due to a unit change in mandatory school uniform policy. This implies that a unit change in mandatory school uniform policy results into an improvement in Students’ School Attendance in secondary schools in Langata Sub County by 0.864 units.

Additionally, the parents were asked in an interview to indicate what effects school uniform had on their child school attendance and most of them indicated that;

*“...by wearing a school uniform, students gain skills in presentation which ultimately lead to improved discipline in the classroom. Uniforms can also improve attendance rates, and prevent students from forming gangs and groups that could result in further bad behavior. High levels of students preparedness is another benefit of wearing school uniforms. They come prepared to the school environment and they feel being a part of the school environment due to their uniforms. On the other hand, students come prepared to behave according to rules and standards of the particular school, while the uniform reminds them of their responsibility.*

Others indicated that;

*“...Despite their reported benefits, mandatory uniforms are controversial because a lot of parents and students don’t like the idea of forcing children to dress alike, which they say suppresses freedom of expression. Some families complain about the financial burden of purchasing uniforms in addition to their kids’ other clothing, but personally I believe school uniform enhances my child’s school attendance.”*

**4.3 Hypotheses Testing**

***H<sub>0</sub>: There is no statistically significant relationship between mandatory school uniform and students’ attendance in secondary schools.***

The hypothesis was tested by using linear regression analysis results using p-value and t-statistic. The acceptance/rejection criteria were that, if the p value is less than 0.05, we reject the H<sub>0</sub> but if it is more than 0.05, then H<sub>0</sub> is not rejected. Therefore, the null hypothesis was that there is no statistically significant relationship between mandatory school uniform and students ‘attendance in secondary schools. Results revealed a p-value was  $0.000 < .05$ . This was supported by a calculated t-statistic of 16.499 which was larger than the critical t-statistic of 1.96. The alternative



null hypothesis was therefore rejected. The study adopted the alternative hypothesis that there is a statistically significant relationship between mandatory school uniform and students' attendance in secondary schools.

## **5.0 CONCLUSION**

Regarding students' attendance, the study concludes that decreased increased attendance and increased academic achievement may not be achieved just by wearing khaki and blue. But there may be other benefits, such as, it could help a school promote its brand through a uniform look. School uniform may also serve as symbol of commitment to academic achievement. The study also concludes that mandatory school uniform policy positively and significantly influences students' school attendance in secondary schools in Langata Sub County.

## **6.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the findings and conclusions, this study recommends that the managements of secondary schools in Langata sub county should strive to enforce the law regarding school uniforms in their schools because school uniform has been found to improve school attendance students in secondary schools. Additionally, the government of Kenya through the ministry of education should put in place legislations guiding wearing of school uniform in all schools in Kenya whether public or private schools to avoid the unnecessary debates regarding mandatory school uniform in Kenya. This study further recommends to the parents that they need to work together with the school administration to ensure smooth running of schools free from absenteeism, indiscipline and poor performance by assisting the school in the implementation of mandatory school uniform policy. The study also recommends that there is need to involve all stakeholders in the implementation process of mandatory school uniform policy.

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