Extensiveness of Secondary Education Quality Improvement Project in Ensuring Safe School Safety for Girls Students in Public Secondary Schools, in Geita District, Tanzania

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Abstract
This study evaluated the extent to which SEQUIP ensures a safe school safety for girls' students in public secondary schools in Geita District, Tanzania. The study employed a convergent design under a mixed-methods research approach. The target population consisted of 7 public secondary schools, 1301 girls' students, 7 Heads of Schools, 14 Guidance and Counselling Teachers, and 1 District Secondary Education Officer. Proportionate stratified sampling selected 332 girl students to ensure fair representation across schools. Expert purposive sampling was applied to 6 Heads of Schools, 6 Guidance and Counselling Teachers, and 1 District Secondary Education Officer because of their relevant expertise and involvement in SEQUIP implementation and girls' safety issues, making a total sample size of 349 respondents. The data obtained by using questionnaires administered to girl students, interview guides used with Heads of Schools, Guidance and Counselling Teachers, and the District Education Officer, as well as an observation guide. The validity of the research instruments was ensured by a research experts from the field of Assessment and evaluation from Mwenge Catholic University to critically review content, construct, and face-to-face validity. A pilot study was conducted in 1 selected school out of sampled schools. Reliability of quantitative data collection instrument were established using Cronbach Alpha which yielded a value of 0.837, the researcher ensured trustworthiness of the interview guide through peer debriefing and triangulation and for the observation guide, triangulation and member checking to ensure credibility. The quantitative data were analyzed descriptively to obtain frequency, mean, and percentages using the Statistical Package for Social Science Version 26 and qualitative data were analyzed thematically. To adhere to Ethical issues, voluntary participation, participants' confidentiality, anonymity and informed consent. The study found that SEQUIP has moderately provided a safe school environment among girls by improving guidance and counseling services, enhancing menstrual hygiene facilities, and reinforcing mechanisms for reporting and addressing safety concerns. The study concludes that the SEQUIP intervention has created a positive learning environment by various activities facilitated by this initiative. The study recommends that school administrators continue strengthening SEQUIP implementation, with particular emphasis on improving guidance and counseling services and strengthen collaboration with parents, community and local government, government and other stakeholders to facilitate monitoring and evaluation of safe school activities to obtain real time data which will guide future practice and improve girls safety in public secondary schools.

Keywords: Extensiveness, Secondary Education Quality Improvement Project, Safe School Environment, Girls Students

1. Context of the Evaluation

Education is universally a fundamental human right and an essential foundation for social and economic development. It equips individuals with knowledge and skills necessary to overcome poverty, improve livelihoods, and promote gender equality. A safe school environment is an important component of quality education because it ensures that learners, particularly girls, are protected physically, psychologically, and socially while participating in the learning process. Safe school environments promote learners' sense of belonging, improve attendance and participation, and support academic achievement (UNICEF, 2021). In line with this, Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) particularly target 4.1, which emphasizes the provision of inclusive, equitable, and quality education through safe and supportive learning environments that enhance educational outcomes for all learners (UNESCO, 2021).

Globally, school safety remains a significant challenge affecting girls' participation and retention in education. Evidence indicates that more than 30% of students worldwide have experienced bullying**,** while approximately one in three learners is affected by school violence in various forms, including physical, psychological, sexual, and cyberbullying (UNESCO, 2023). Girls are particularly vulnerable to sexual harassment, gender-based violence, and online abuse, which negatively affect their well-being and learning outcomes. Furthermore, inadequate school sanitation and menstrual hygiene facilities continue to undermine girls' educational participation. Recent global data show that only 39% of schools provide menstrual health education**,** and just 31% of schools worldwide have bins for menstrual waste disposal in girls' toilets, with the situation being worse in Sub-Saharan Africa (UNICEF & WHO, 2024). These challenges, coupled with poverty and child marriage, contribute to absenteeism, poor academic performance, and increased dropout rates among girls. The persistence of unsafe and non-inclusive school environments raises serious concerns about the achievement of global commitments to equitable and quality education under Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4).

In response, developed countries have implemented various interventions to enhance school safety and learner protection. Countries such as the United States, Australia, the United Kingdom, Canada, and Sweden have introduced anti-bullying programmes, teacher safeguarding training, child protection policies, gender-responsive infrastructure, reporting

mechanisms, and school mental health services to promote safer learning environments (USAID, 2019; UK Department for Education, 2021; Swedish National Agency for Education, 2022). Similarly, the Caribbean Safe School Initiative strengthened disaster resilience, risk education, and community participation in school safety (UNDRR, 2017). Evidence suggests that interventions combining policy reforms, infrastructure improvements, teacher training, and community engagement are more effective in promoting school safety (UNDRR, 2023). Despite their effectiveness in well-resourced contexts, the direct application of these interventions in developing countries remains constrained by limited financial resources, inadequate institutional capacity, and insufficient teacher training.

Developing countries have implemented various initiatives to improve school safety and enhance girls' participation in education, USAID Safe Schools for Girls programme in Ghana, Malawi, Mozambique, and Ethiopia strengthened violence prevention through teacher training and improved school infrastructure (USAID, 2019). Other initiatives, including Plan International's Safe Schools campaign, promoted community participation, parental involvement, and student engagement in creating safer learning environments (Plan International, 2020). Although these interventions have reported positive outcomes, concerns remain regarding the extent to which their achievements are sustained and translated into long-term improvements in school safety. The Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Report found that many education sector plans in low-income countries lack adequate financing, institutional support, and monitoring mechanisms needed to sustain gender-responsive interventions effectively (UNESCO, 2019). Furthermore, differences in social, cultural, and institutional contexts influence programme outcomes, making it difficult to generalize findings across settings. These concerns highlight the need for systematic evaluation of school safety interventions to determine their effectiveness in promoting safe and supportive learning environments for girls.

In Tanzania, several initiatives have been introduced to strengthen safe and supportive school environments for girls. Programmes such as Plan International's "Keeping Adolescent Girls in School" (2023), the "Safe Initiative Program" by LPGM (2018), and the "Right to Play" initiative (2023) have focused on improving menstrual hygiene support, strengthening gender clubs, promoting life skills education, and reducing school dropout among girls. HakiElimu through Girl retention programme additionally provides sanitary products, mentorship, and girl-friendly infrastructure to improve attendance and reduce dropout rates

among girls in schools (HakiElimu,2024). Furthermore, Government Circular No. 4 of 2022 reaffirms the government's commitment to safe, inclusive, and violence-free school environments through counselling services, psychological support, and learner protection systems. These recent interventions reveal that there is a challenge of girl's school safety environment.

Tanzanian government introduced Secondary Education Quality Improvement Project (SEQUIP) to address challenges affecting girls' education in Tanzania implemented from 2020 to 2026 through collaboration between the Government of Tanzania and the World Bank (URT, 2019). The project aims to improve access, equity, and quality in secondary education while promoting safe and supportive learning environments for girls. Through the Safe School SEQUIP introduced guidance and counselling services, train school heads, parent teacher association on safe school issues. These interventions were designed to reduce gender-based violence, strengthen learner protection, and support girls' continued participation in education (World Bank, 2019). Despite the efforts, problem remain regarding the extent to which SEQUIP has achieved its objective of ensuring safe school environments for girls. Evidence indicates persistent challenges such as inadequate counselling services, weak school-based monitoring systems, limited teacher capacity in gender-responsive practices, and insufficient collaboration between schools and communities in addressing harmful gender norms (TIE, 2023; Method, 2024; Thabiti, 2025). Reports have also highlighted difficulties in institutionalizing school safety mechanisms and assessing behavioural change outcomes at the school level (World Bank, 2021–2024). These concerns are particularly relevant in Geita District where the study conducted, due to girls' dropout and school-related risks continue to be reported despite the implementation of SEQUIP interventions.

2. Purpose of the Evaluation

This summative evaluation study seeks to assess the extent to which the implementation of the Secondary Education Quality Improvement Programme (SEQUIP) ensures a safe school environment among girls in public secondary schools in Geita District, with specific focus on school safety conditions, strengthening of school-based monitoring systems for identifying girls at risk of dropping out, and promotion of gender-sensitive behavioural change among students. Despite the existence of supportive policy frameworks such as the Education and Training Policy (2014, revised 2023) and Education Circular No. 4

of 2022, safety challenges persist, with reports indicating that approximately 40% of schoolgirls experience violence, of which about 35% occurs within school settings. Empirical studies have provided useful insights into SEQUIP-related interventions; for instance, Izengo and Rupia (2022) examined management challenges in SEQUIP implementation in Bariadi District, Nkwama (2023) focused on SEQUIP's role in supporting girls affected by early pregnancies in Iringa Municipality, and Method (2024) explored menstrual hygiene management and dropout risks in Siha District. Moreover, SEQUIP implementation reports (World Bank, 2020–2024) indicate generally moderately satisfactory progress toward programme objectives, while emphasizing the continued importance of improving sanitation, teacher deployment, and sustainability to ensure a responsive learning environment. Although the studies and reports provided valuable evidence on specific components of SEQUIP, none offers a comprehensive summative evaluation of the extent to which SEQUIP as a whole ensures a safe school environment for girls. Hence, this study evaluated the extent to which the Secondary Education Quality Improvement Project ensures a safe school environment among girls in public secondary schools in Geita District.

3. Evaluation Question

The following evaluation question guided the evaluation theme: To what extent does the implementation of the Secondary Education Quality Improvement Project ensure a safe school safety for girls' students in public secondary schools in Geita District?

4. Significance of the Study

This evaluation provided profound understanding for various education stakeholders, including students, teachers, and SEQUIP implementers, on the extent to which the implementation of the Secondary Education Quality Improvement Programme ensures a safe school environment among girls in public secondary schools in Geita District, with emphasis on school safety outcomes, the school-based monitoring system for girls at risk of dropping out, and gender-sensitive behavioural change among students. For students, the findings will identify areas for improvement in order to strengthen their safety and well-being and promote a more conducive learning environment. Teachers will benefit by gaining understanding into gaps in their current practices related to safeguarding learners, supporting at-risk girls, and reinforcing positive gender-responsive behaviours. Project implementers, including SEQUIP stakeholders, will obtain a comprehensive understanding of how their interventions are functioning at the school level, enabling refinement of strategies to enhance programme

effectiveness. The study will also generate evidence-based recommendations to strengthen education policies, improve resource allocation, and support national and global gender equity goals. Moreover, this evaluation will contribute to academic research by addressing existing gaps and providing a framework for future studies on safe and responsive learning environments in similar educational contexts.

5. Evaluation Model

This study was guided by the CIPO model (Context, Input, Process, Output) to explain how contextual factors affect inputs, which in turn influence school processes and ultimately determine outcomes related to girls' safety, participation, and learning. The framework, based on Scheerens' (1990) educational evaluation model, is used to evaluate SEQUIP's effectiveness by showing how its interventions in access, safety, and inclusiveness lead to measurable results. The CIPO model also supports decision-making by helping policymakers and funders assess whether SEQUIP should be continued, modified, or scaled (Scheerens, 2000, 2016).

The CIPO model is comprehensive and systematic, capturing the full chain of educational change from context to outcomes. Its explicit linkage of school inputs and processes to measurable outputs makes it well suited to programs that target school effectiveness, such as SEQUIP (Scheerens, 2016). The model is also evidence-based and decision-oriented, enabling policymakers to make informed choices regarding program continuation or modification (Scheerens, 2000). Moreover, its adaptability allows evaluators to tailor the model to diverse educational settings and both formative and summative assessments.

The model is resource-intensive because it requires the collection and analysis of extensive data from multiple stakeholders, including students, teachers, school administrators, parents, and policy documents, making the evaluation process costly and time-consuming, particularly for large-scale educational interventions (Scheerens, 2016). This challenge is especially where limited financial resources, inadequate infrastructure, and shortages of skilled personnel may hinder effective implementation of the evaluation process. Furthermore, the model's highly structured format may oversimplify the complex social, cultural, economic, and political factors that influence educational outcomes if applied without sufficient flexibility. Important contextual issues such as community attitudes toward

girls' education, gender norms, poverty, parental involvement, and local school conditions may not be adequately captured through standardized indicators alone. Consequently, relying solely on the model may result in an incomplete understanding of intervention effectiveness (Scheerens, 2016).

The CIPO framework is highly relevant to assessing SEQUIP's effectiveness in enhancing responsive learning environments for girls. Context evaluation highlights cultural and environmental barriers affecting girls' participation. Input evaluation determines whether SEQUIP's resources, training, infrastructure improvements, and gender-responsive materials were adequate. Process evaluation examines the fidelity and quality of implementation, including teaching practices and monitoring systems. Outcome evaluation assesses improvements in girls' access, safety, and participation. By integrating these dimensions, the CIPO model ensures a comprehensive and outcome-driven summative evaluation of SEQUIP, offering valuable insights for strengthening gender-responsive education initiatives in Tanzania.

6. Review of Empirical Studies

This section presents a review of empirical studies related to the implementation of programmes aimed at promoting safe school environments for girls. The review is organized according to the major themes derived from the research question, which seeks to assess the extent to which the Secondary Education Quality Improvement Programme (SEQUIP) ensures a safe school environment among girls in public secondary schools. The purpose of the review is to identify existing knowledge, highlight key findings from previous studies, and establish the research gap that justifies the present study.

6.1 Extent to Which SEQUIP Ensures Safe School Environment Among Girls in Public Secondary Schools

Under this theme, the studies reviewed are those that focus on finding out the extent to which SEQUIP ensures a safe school environment for girls in secondary schools, as the following literature has tried to examine. This review is based on studies conducted within five years in the global context, Africa, East Africa and in Tanzania. These studies will be useful as they reflect the current study and reveal the gaps that the current study has to fill.

Gunnes et al. (2024) conducted a cross-sectional pre-post quasi-experimental study on school climate during the COVID-19 pandemic in three European countries, safety

relationships and implications for girls' wellbeing. The study findings were obtained from 2376 respondents who were selected through multi-site purposive sampling. Data were collected via online questionnaires and analyzed through descriptive statistics and multivariable regression. The findings revealed that girls have a positive perception of school climate and their well-being and that strong teacher-student relationships and clear safeguarding increase school safety. The study revealed the necessity of the safety and well-being of students, which is positively affected by girls who are also the target of the SEQUIP intervention. Although the study provides valuable evidence on the relationship between school climate and girls' well-being, the study was conducted in different context making it difficult to generalize the findings to developing-country contexts such as Tanzania, where schools face different social, cultural, and institutional challenges. Hence, the present study employed both quantitative and qualitative approaches to generate a deeper understanding of girls lived experiences and perceptions of safe school environments in public secondary schools in Geita District.

Rambunda (2023) carried out a study on the impact of gender-based violence on girls in the selected secondary schools in Limpopo, South Africa, which was guided by a qualitative approach under a case study design. The study was based on 15 participants who were selected through purposive sampling and gave their responses through literature review and semi-structured interviews. The data were analyzed through thematic analysis; the findings showed that gender-based violence led to low school performance, dropout and students failed to exercise their human rights and their right to education. The study revealed the concern of gender-based violence as a contributing factor to students' dropout; however, the study findings focused primarily on the consequences of gender-based violence without examining the effectiveness of existing school-based interventions designed to prevent violence and promote learner safety. The findings provide inadequate evidence on how educational programmes and policies contribute to creating safe learning environments for girls. Furthermore, differences in educational systems, cultural settings, and policy frameworks between South Africa and Tanzania affect the applicability of the findings to the Tanzanian context. To address the gaps, the current study adopted a mixed-methods approach and focuses on evaluating the extent to which SEQUIP interventions contribute to ensuring a safe school environment among girls in public secondary schools in Geita District.

Sulaiman et al. (2023) conducted a study to examine the influence of school environment-based factors on girls' retention in Uganda secondary schools. The study was guided by a cross-sectional survey design, which gathered information from 162 girls who were selected randomly from government schools. The information from respondents was collected by using questionnaires and analyzed through frequency and percentage. The findings revealed that girls were motivated to stay in school due to the availability of adequate physical facilities, counselling services and learning facilities. The study indicates the benefit of school-based factors on students' retention in secondary schools, which the SEQUIP intervention aims to provide; though, the study relied solely on a quantitative approach and a single data collection instrument, limiting understanding of girls' personal experiences and restricting data triangulation. This study therefore addresses this by including qualitative data and employing multiple data collection tools to allow triangulation and generate more comprehensive and validated findings.

Okello et al. (2024) conducted a longitudinal study on unmet menstrual needs and psychosocial well-being among school girls in Northern Tanzania. The study sample was 486 girls, who were selected and their information was collected through questionnaires. The sampling techniques were not indicated; the information was analyzed using ANOVA and logistic regression, and the findings revealed that 16% of respondents missed at least one day of school due to menstruation and needed self-efficacy of the school environment, which is associated with confidence to seek menstrual support, participate in class and menstrual prediction. This study revealed the necessary components of the SEQUIP intervention of menstrual hygiene to ensure a safe school environment among girls. However, relying on single method data collection overlook other valuable information's. To address this gap, the current study adopted a mixed-methods approach to evaluate the extent to which SEQUIP interventions collectively ensure a safe school environment among girls in public secondary schools in Geita District which help to get qualitative and quantitative data for more understanding

Mtasigwa and Mwaipopo (2022) conducted a study on Gender-based violence and its impact on secondary school students' participation, retention and performance in Bagamoyo and Chalinze districts. The study was based on a mixed approach, where 220 participants were selected through purposive sampling. The information from respondents was collected through questionnaires, focus group discussions, in-depth interviews and document review,

the information was analyzed through descriptive statistics and thematic analysis, this study showed that gender-based violence emanate from home, school and community where gender-based violence result to poor performance, early engagement in sexual activities, early pregnancy, dropout, truancy, complications during child birth, STIs and HIV. The study revealed the outcome of gender-based violence against female students which SEQIP aims to eradicate and provide a safe school environment. However, the study was based on gender-based violence and left other aspects that contribute to a safe school environment. To fill this gap, this current summative evaluation study focuses on other aspects of a safe school environment as indicated by SEQUIP and employ both probability and non-probability sampling techniques to have respondents with different characteristics.

7. Research Gaps

The reviewed studies provide valuable understandings into school safety, girls' wellbeing, retention, and gender-based violence in secondary schools (Gunnes et al., 2024; Rambunda, 2023; Sulaiman et al., 2023; Okello et al., 2024; Mtasigwa & Mwaipopo, 2022). However, contextual gaps exist because most of these studies were conducted outside Tanzania or in settings different from Geita District, where social, institutional, and educational conditions may differ. Although Mtasigwa and Mwaipopo (2022) conducted their study in Tanzania, it was undertaken in a different geographical context and did not evaluate the implementation of the Secondary Education Quality Improvement Project (SEQUIP) in promoting a safe school environment for girls. Consequently, its findings cannot be directly generalized to public secondary schools in Geita District under the SEQUIP intervention. Methodological gaps are also evident, as Gunnes et al. (2024), Sulaiman et al. (2023), and Rambunda (2023) employed qualitative approaches with relatively small samples, limiting the generalizability of their findings. Okello et al. (2024) primarily used a quantitative approach, which limited an in-depth understanding of participants' experiences. Population gaps were identified because most studies focused mainly on girls and teachers, with limited inclusion of school heads, guidance and counselling teachers, and education officers. Furthermore, few studies evaluated the effectiveness of school-based monitoring systems, guidance and counselling services, and gender-responsive interventions implemented through SEQUIP. Therefore, the current study addressed these contextual, methodological, population, and practical gaps by employing a convergent mixed-methods design to evaluate

the extent to which SEQUIP ensures a safe school environment among girls in public secondary schools in Geita District, Tanzania.

8. Evaluation Methodology

The summative evaluation study employed a convergent research design under a mixed-methods approach, whereby both qualitative and quantitative data were collected concurrently to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the extent to which the implementation of the Secondary Education Quality Improvement Programme (SEQUIP) ensures a safe school environment among girls in public secondary schools in Geita District (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). The target population consisted of 1,323 respondents which included 1301 girl students, 7 head of schools, 14 Guidance and Counselling Teachers and 1 District Secondary Educational Officer drawn from 7 public secondary schools implementing SEQUIP in Geita District. The sample included 351 respondents where by Proportionate stratified random sampling was used to select 338 girl students from form 2, form 3 and form 4 depending on their number in school as different class have different number of girl students, total population sampling was used to select 6 Heads of Schools, Criterion purposive sampling was used to obtain 6 Guidance and Counselling Teachers as they play role in guidance and counselling service in school and have received training on ensuring school safety for girls , while total population sampling was used to include 1 District Education Officer as there is one district secondary educational officer who oversee all academic maters in a district. The research instruments used for data collection included questionnaires administered to girl students, interview guides used with Heads of Schools, the District Secondary Education Officer, and Guidance and Counselling Teachers, and an observation guide used to assess school facilities and environmental conditions in public secondary schools. The validity of the research instruments was ensured through a research experts from the field of Assessment and evaluation from Mwenge Catholic University to critically review content, construct, and face-to-face validity. Pilot study was conducted in 1 public secondary school implementing SEQUIP which was selected using simple random sampling, 1 head of schools obtained through expert sampling as they are responsible for administration roles in school, 1 guidance and counselling teachers obtained through criterion sampling due to the position they hold in guidance and counselling and have received training on safe school environment. Reliability of questionnaires was established using Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient which yielded coefficient of 0.837, while the trustworthiness of qualitative

instruments will be ensured through triangulation Quantitative data was analyzed descriptively using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 27 to yield mean, percentages and frequencies, while qualitative data will be analyzed through thematic analysis. The researcher adhered to ethical considerations throughout the study, including obtaining a research permit, informed consent from participants, ensuring confidentiality and anonymity, and avoiding plagiarism during the entire evaluation process.

9. Findings and Discussions

This study sought to investigate the extent to which the Secondary Education Quality Improvement Program (SEQUIP) ensures a safe school environment among girls in public secondary schools. A five-level Likert scale was employed for data analysis, where: 1 = Very Low Extent (VLE), 2 = Low Extent (LE), 3 = Moderate Extent (ME), 4 = High Extent (HE), and 5 = Very High Extent (VHE). Frequencies and percentages were used to analyze respondents' views, with response distribution interpreted as follows: ≤20 = extremely minority, 21–49 = minority, 50–59 = moderate, 60–79 = majority, 80–100 = very high majority, and 100 = overwhelming majority (Taherdoost, 2019). In examining the extent to which SEQUIP contributes to a safe school environment for girls in public secondary schools, the study analyzed responses using the mean score criteria developed by Chyung and Hutchinson (2023), where mean values of 1.00–1.99 indicate Very Low Extent (VLE), 2.00–2.99 Low Extent (LE), 3.00–3.99 Moderate Extent (ME), 4.00–4.49 High Extent (HE), and 4.50–5.00 Very High Extent (VHE). The responses from teachers and students are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1:
Girls Students' Responses on the Extent to Which SEQUIP Ensures a Safe School Environment Among Girls in Public Secondary Schools (n=332 Girls' Students)

S/N	Statement	VLE		LE		ME		HE		VHE		Mean
		f	%	F	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	
i.	Presence of Menstrual facilities for girls enhances a safe school environment through SEQUIP	40	12.0	55	16.6	54	16.3	61	18.4	122	36.7	**3.51**
ii.	SEQUIP trains guidance and counseling teachers to ensure a safe school environment for girls	24	7.2	29	8.7	48	14.5	85	25.6	146	44.0	**3.90**
iii.	Girls seek guidance and counselling services due to a safer school environment provided by SEQUIP	51	15.4	40	12.0	62	18.7	54	16.3	125	37.7	**3.49**
iv.	Reporting Mechanism improves girls' safety	58	17.5	43	13.0	34	10.3	72	21.8	124	37.5	**3.49**

	concerns in school due to SEQUIP											
v.	SEQUIP has improved safety measures to reduce incidents of harassment against girls in schools	52	15.7	70	21.1	56	16.9	51	15.4	102	30.8	**3.24**
vi.	SEQUIP strengthened parent-teacher association to ensure safety for girls in school	33	9.9	37	11.1	65	19.6	72	21.7	125	37.7	**3.66**
vii.	Parental involvement encouraged through the SEQUIP has contributed to a safer school environment for girls	38	11.4	37	11.1	71	21.4	69	20.8	117	35.2	**3.57**
viii.	Safe school environment promoted by SEQUIP reduces absenteeism of girls	37	11.1	37	11.1	88	26.5	55	16.6	115	34.6	**3.52**
ix.	SEQUIP has empowered girls to report unsafe behaviors confidently	78	23.5	59	17.8	54	16.3	55	16.6	86	25.9	**3.04**
x.	SEQUIP reduces safety-related complaints from girls in school	54	16.3	64	19.3	73	22.0	85	25.6	56	16.9	**3.08**
	Average											**3.45**

Source: Field Data (2025)

Key: 1= Very Low Extent (**VLE**), 2= Low Extent (**LE**), 3=Moderate (**M**), 4=High Extent (**HE**), 5=Very High Extent (**VHE**), **F**=frequencies, **%**=Percentages

Data in Table 4.5 reveal that a moderate (55.1%) of girls' students indicated to a high extent and very high extent that the presence of menstrual facilities for girls enhances a safe school environment through SEQUIP. A minority (28.6%) of girls' students indicated to a very low extent and low extent, while 16.3% indicated to a moderate extent. The mean score of 3.51 suggests that menstrual facilities contribute towards promoting safety and comfort for girls in schools. This implies that the provision of menstrual hygiene facilities through SEQUIP plays an important role in improving girls' welfare by reducing discomfort and absenteeism during menstrual periods. The findings further suggest that access to adequate and private hygiene facilities strengthens a conducive learning environment by supporting girls' continuous participation in academic activities and enhancing their overall sense of security and well-being within the school setting. The findings are in line with what was shared by the head of school from school "S1" during a face-to-face interview, who commented:

> Through Secondary Education Quality Improvement Program (SEQUIP), the construction and improvement of menstrual hygiene facilities have helped many girls feel safer and more comfortable while at school. Previously, some girls missed classes

> during their menstrual periods because there were no private and clean facilities. After the intervention, attendance and confidence among girls improved significantly. Therefore, these facilities contribute greatly to creating a conducive learning environment (HoS "S1" Personal Communication, April 30th, 2026).

The Guidance and Counselling Teachers from school "S2" shared:

> The majority of girls appreciating these facilities shows that the program has had a positive impact. In our school, we have observed that girls are more confident and psychologically secure because they know their hygiene needs are considered. A safe school environment is not only about physical security but also about emotional and health well-being. SEQUIP has therefore strengthened girls' welfare and improved the general school climate (Guidance and Counselling Teachers "S2" Personal Communication, May 04th, 2026).

The District Secondary Education Officer (DSEO) also had this to say:

> The implementation of SEQUIP has contributed to improving girls' welfare in secondary schools. The provision of menstrual hygiene facilities has enhanced safety, privacy, and dignity for female students. Reports from schools indicate improved attendance and participation of girls in academic activities. Although some schools still require additional facilities due to increasing enrolment, the overall impact of the program is positive (DSEO Personal Communication, May 15th, 2026).

The views from the Head of Schools and Guidance and Counselling Teachers imply that the provision of menstrual hygiene facilities through the Secondary Education Quality Improvement Program (SEQUIP) has improved girls' welfare and created a more conducive learning environment in secondary schools. The Head of Schools emphasized that the availability of private and clean menstrual hygiene facilities has reduced absenteeism among girls during menstrual periods, enhanced their comfort, and increased their confidence to participate in school activities. These suggest that the provision of menstrual hygiene facilities not only addresses health and sanitation needs but also promotes gender-inclusive education by reducing barriers to learning, improving school attendance, and fostering a positive school climate that supports girls' academic engagement and overall well-being.

Figure 1: Shows S1 Changing room outside girl's toilets provided by SEQUIP and sanitary pads

During the school observation conducted in School "S1" (April 30th, 2026), menstrual hygiene facilities were available and accessible to female students. The school had emergency sanitary pads available for girls who required immediate assistance during school hours, as well as a designated changing room that provided privacy and comfort during menstruation. The facilities appeared to support girls in managing their menstrual hygiene needs safely and with dignity while remaining in school. The availability of menstrual facilities for girl students reduces disruptions to learning, enhances girls' confidence and well-being, and promotes a more inclusive and supportive school environment. This observation reflects the importance of adequate menstrual hygiene facilities in ensuring girls' continuous participation in academic activities and fostering a safe and conducive learning atmosphere.

These findings concur with Sulaiman et al. (2023) who established that the provision of gender-sensitive sanitation facilities in schools plays a significant role in reducing absenteeism and enhancing students' classroom participation and self-confidence. This agreement suggests that improving school infrastructure, particularly facilities that address girls' specific needs, is a critical factor in promoting regular attendance and active engagement in learning. It further implies that when schools create supportive and dignified environments, learners are more likely to feel comfortable, valued, and motivated to participate fully in academic activities. The results are also consistent with the Context, Input, Process and Output (CIPO) Model Scheerens' (1990), which explains that educational

outcomes emerge from the interaction between contextual conditions, available resources, implementation processes, and resulting outputs. In the context of SEQUIP, menstrual hygiene facilities such as emergency sanitary pads, private changing rooms, and adequate sanitation infrastructure represent essential inputs intended to address barriers that disproportionately affect girls' school participation. However, the effectiveness of these inputs is highly dependent on contextual factors such as school resource availability, administrative commitment, and cultural attitudes toward menstruation. When these inputs are adequately provided and properly utilized, they strengthen the implementation process by creating a more inclusive, safe, and gender-responsive school environment. This enables girls to manage menstrual hygiene with dignity and reduces disruptions to learning.

Data in Table 4.5 further show that the majority (69.6%) of girls' students indicated to a high extent and very high extent that SEQUIP trains guidance and counseling teachers to ensure a safe school environment for girls. A minority (15.9%) of girls' students indicated to a very low extent and low extent while 14.5% indicated to a moderate extent. The mean score of 3.90 indicates strong agreement among respondents regarding the effectiveness of guidance and counseling training under SEQUIP. This implies that the training has enhanced the capacity of counseling teachers to provide emotional, psychological, and social support to female students. The findings further suggest that strengthened guidance and counseling services have improved students' awareness of available support systems, increased their confidence in seeking assistance when facing challenges, and promoted a safer and more supportive school environment that fosters girls' well-being and academic engagement. This data reflects what was commented on by the head of school, "S3" during a face-to-face interview who had this to say:

> Through the Secondary Education Quality Improvement Program (SEQUIP), guidance and counseling teachers in our school received specialized training on how to support girls emotionally and socially. This has improved the relationship between teachers and students because girls now feel free to share their challenges (HoS "S3" Personal Communication, May 06th, 2026).

The Guidance and Counselling Teachers from school "S4" shared:

> The presence of trained counseling teachers has created a supportive learning environment for girls. Students receive advice on academic, psychological, and social matters, helping them cope with different challenges during adolescence. Although a

> few students may still hesitate to seek counseling services, the majority benefit from the improved guidance and counseling support introduced through SEQUIP (Guidance and Counselling Teachers "S4" Personal Communication, May 08th, 2026).

The District Secondary Education Officer (DSEO) also had this to say:

> The training has strengthened the ability of teachers to identify students experiencing stress, anxiety, harassment, discrimination and other social difficulties at an early stage and provide appropriate support. As a result, girls are now more willing to report their concerns and seek assistance from counseling teachers without fear. This has increased trust between students and teachers and contributed to emotional stability among girls in schools (DSEO Personal Communication, May 15th, 2026).

The information from the Heads of Schools and the District Secondary Education Officer indicates that the guidance and counseling training provided through the Secondary Education Quality Improvement Program (SEQUIP) has enhanced the capacity of teachers to support girls' emotional, psychological, and social well-being in schools. The Heads of Schools emphasized that the specialized training enabled counseling teachers to provide better support to girls, resulting in improved teacher–student relationships and increased openness among students to discuss their personal challenges. The District Secondary Education Officer further showed that the training has improved teachers' ability to identify and address issues such as stress, anxiety, harassment, discrimination, and other social difficulties at an early stage, encouraging girls to seek assistance without fear. These accounts suggest that strengthening guidance and counseling services contributes to building trust between students and teachers, promoting emotional stability, enhancing students' confidence to seek support, and fostering a safe and supportive school environment that is conducive to learning and personal development.

Figure 2: Shows S5 guidance and counselling facilities

During the school observation conducted in School "S5" (May 04th, 2026), differences were noted in the availability and use of guidance and counselling facilities in secondary schools. In school S5, like other schools a dedicated counselling room was available, well-arranged and easily accessible to girls, providing a structured and confidential environment for addressing their academic, social, and emotional challenges. However, in one school there was no specific counselling room, and counselling sessions were conducted in informal settings such as under trees or outside classrooms, which limited privacy and confidentiality. This situation suggests variation in the adequacy of counselling infrastructure, with schools lacking dedicated spaces potentially reducing the effectiveness of guidance services and discouraging some students from freely sharing personal concerns.

These findings are consistent with the Context, Input, Process and Output (CIPO) by Scheerens (1990), particularly the Input and Process dimensions. The Input component emphasizes that the availability of adequate resources and facilities is a prerequisite for effective program implementation. Similarly, a study conducted by Sulaiman et al (2023) revealed that girls were motivated to stay in school due to the availability of adequate physical facilities, counselling services and learning facilities. In the study, the provision of a dedicated counselling services due to presence of counselling room serves as a critical resource that enables trained counsellors to offer services in a private, secure, and supportive

environment. Such facilities promote confidentiality, which is essential for girls to openly discuss sensitive issues such as violence, harassment, emotional distress, and personal challenges without fear of exposure. When counselling services are delivered in an appropriate setting, students are more likely to trust counsellors and actively seek assistance when facing difficulties. This enhances the Process component of the model by improving the quality, consistency, and effectiveness of counselling interactions. Conversely, the absence of dedicated counselling spaces discourages girls from utilizing counselling services due to concerns about privacy and stigma, thereby limiting the effectiveness of interventions intended to promote safety and well-being. Therefore, the findings suggest that counselling infrastructure is not merely a physical resource but a fundamental condition that facilitates the successful implementation of guidance and counselling programs and contributes to the creation of a violence-free and supportive learning environment for girls in public secondary schools.

Data in Table 4.5 also indicate that a moderate (54.0%) of girls' students reported to a high extent and very high extent that girls seek guidance and counseling services due to the safer school environment provided by SEQUIP. A minority (27.4%) of girls' students indicated to a very low extent and low extent while 18.7% indicated to a moderate extent. The mean score of 3.49 demonstrates that girls utilizing counseling services because of improved safety conditions in schools. This implies that SEQUIP has supported trust and confidence among female students in accessing guidance and counseling support. The results suggest that a safer school environment encourages openness, reduces fear of reporting personal challenges, and promotes greater engagement with available psychosocial support services, thereby enhancing girls' emotional well-being and school participation. The data are supported by the arguments of the head of school "S5" who, through face-to-face interviews, shared the views that:

> SEQUIP has contributed to improving girls' confidence in accessing support services. Counseling programs conducted in schools have created awareness among girls about the importance of seeking professional guidance whenever they face challenges. Although a few students still hesitate due to personal fear or cultural reasons, the majority now understand the benefits of counseling services (HoS "S5" Personal Communication, May 11th, 2026).

The head of school from school "S6" had this to say:

> The improved safety conditions in schools have strengthened trust between students and teachers. Girls now perceive counseling teachers as supportive and approachable individuals who can help them solve different challenges. This has increased the use of counseling services and contributed positively to girls' emotional well-being and academic concentration (HoS "S6" Personal Communication, May 13rd, 2026).

The information from the Head of Schools indicates that the interventions implemented through the Secondary Education Quality Improvement Program (SEQUIP) have enhanced girls' confidence and willingness to access counseling and support services within schools. The Heads of Schools emphasized that counseling programs have increased awareness among girls about the value of seeking professional guidance when facing personal, social, and academic challenges, although some students still hesitate due to fear or cultural influences. These suggest that SEQUIP has contributed to creating a supportive and trusting school environment where girls feel more comfortable accessing counseling services. The increased utilization of counseling support has strengthened girls' emotional well-being, improved their ability to cope with challenges, and enhanced their academic concentration and overall participation in the learning process.

The findings are consistent with Mtasigwa (2022), who found that school-based counselling programs and supportive teacher–student relationships enhanced students' emotional well-being, confidence in seeking support, and academic engagement. This suggests that effective guidance and counselling services are critical in promoting a safe and supportive school environment, particularly for girls. Accessible counselling enables female students to report experiences of violence, harassment, discrimination, and psychological distress, thereby facilitating timely support and intervention. As a result, girls develop a greater sense of safety and belonging, which contributes to improved attendance, concentration, participation in learning, and academic performance. Moreover, counselling services play a preventive role by identifying girls at-risk of dropping out from school. fostering resilience, and addressing challenges before they escalate. Therefore, strengthening guidance and counselling services is essential for creating violence-free learning environments and enhancing the holistic development and educational success of girls in public secondary schools.

Data in Table 4.5 further reveal that a moderate (59.3%) of girls' students indicated to a high extent and very high extent that reporting mechanisms improve girls' safety concerns in schools due to SEQUIP. A minority (30.5%) of girls' students indicated to a very low extent and low extent while extreme minority (10.3%) of girls indicated to a moderate extent. The mean score of 3.49 suggests that, on average, students acknowledge that the established channels such as suggestion boxes, school-based reporting desks, teachers, and guidance and counselling structures are operational and accessible, thereby improving their confidence in reporting sensitive issues. This implies that the presence of structured reporting systems under SEQUIP has enhanced institutional responsiveness to safety concerns by creating formal pathways through which issues can be documented and addressed. As a result, schools are better positioned to identify recurring safety challenges and intervene appropriately. This data reflects what has been shared by the head of school, "S3" who commented:

> SEQUIP has strengthened reporting systems by encouraging openness and confidentiality in handling students' concerns. Girls are now more confident in reporting problems because they know their issues will be listened to and addressed appropriately and students feel more protected and secure within the school environment (HoS "S3" Personal Communication, May 06th, 2026).

The District Secondary Education Officer also had this to say:

> Before the implementation of the program, many students lacked confidence in reporting cases related to violence, harassment, discrimination and emotional abuse because there were unclear reporting channels. Through SEQUIP, schools have established more reliable systems that encourage students to report their concerns safely and confidentially. The availability of suggestion boxes, counseling services, designated teachers, and open communication channels has increased girls' willingness to speak about challenges affecting their welfare (DSEO Personal Communication, May 15th, 2026).

The information from the Head of School and the District Secondary Education Officer indicates that the Secondary Education Quality Improvement Program (SEQUIP) has strengthened reporting mechanisms and enhanced girls' confidence in reporting issues affecting their welfare in schools. The Head of School emphasized that the program has

promoted openness and confidentiality in handling students' concerns, enabling girls to report problems with the assurance that their issues will be taken seriously and addressed appropriately. Similarly, the District Secondary Education Officer noted that prior to the implementation of SEQUIP, many students were reluctant to report cases of violence, harassment, discrimination, and emotional abuse due to the absence of clear and reliable reporting channels. These accounts suggest that SEQUIP has contributed to building a culture of trust, accountability, and protection within schools, thereby increasing girls' willingness to seek support, strengthening their sense of security, and promoting a safer learning environment that supports their emotional well-being and educational participation.

Figure 3: Shows report instruments available in secondary schools

During the school observation conducted in School "S4" (May 04th, 2026), differences were observed in the availability and effectiveness of reporting mechanisms for addressing girls' safety concerns. In one school, clear and well-established reporting channels were available, including designated teachers, suggestion boxes, and confidential procedures that enabled students especially girl students to report their concern such as incidents of violence, harassment, or other safety-related issues without fear. These mechanisms were actively utilized and supported timely responses from school authorities. In contrast, another school lacked formal and confidential reporting systems, making it difficult for girls to communicate safety concerns and seek appropriate support. This situation suggests variation in the effectiveness of reporting mechanisms across schools, with schools lacking structured reporting procedures potentially limiting girls' willingness to report incidents, reducing

timely intervention, and weakening efforts to ensure a safe and supportive school environment. These observations concur with the findings of Bisika et al. (2021), who found that the availability of confidential and accessible reporting channels in schools encouraged students, particularly girls, to report cases of abuse, harassment, and violence, thereby enhancing their sense of security and protection.

The findings are consistent with the Context, Input, Process, and Output (CIPO) Model developed by Scheerens (1990), particularly the Input, Process, and Output components. The Input component emphasizes the importance of providing adequate resources, strategies, and support systems necessary for effective program implementation. In this study, SEQUIP strengthened student protection by introducing improved reporting mechanisms, clear communication channels, and supportive guidance structures that enabled girls to report their concerns safely and confidentially. The Process component focuses on the implementation of interventions and activities designed to achieve program objectives. Cahill et al (2023) found that providing clear framework criteria for identifying and safely reporting harm caused a distinct drop in adolescent safety threats: the overall rate of school bullying fell from 11.8% to 10.3%, and instances of sexual harassment decreased from 8.7% to 5.9% These resources created a strong foundation for promoting student welfare and protection within schools. The findings indicate that schools adopted transparent, confidential, and responsive procedures in handling students' concerns, which enhanced trust between girls and school authorities and encouraged students to report cases of violence, harassment, and discrimination without fear of victimization or neglect. Through the effective implementation of these reporting systems, schools became more accountable and responsive to students' needs. These outcomes contributed to the creation of a safer, more inclusive, and supportive learning environment, demonstrating that adequate inputs and effective implementation processes can generate positive results in enhancing girls' protection and participation in education.

Data in Table 4.5 show that a minority (46.2%) of girls' students indicated to a high extent and very high extent that SEQUIP improved safety measures to reduce incidents of harassment against girls in schools. Meanwhile, a minority (36.8%) of girls' students indicated to a very low extent and low extent while an extreme minority (16.9%) of girls' students indicated to a moderate extent. The mean score of 3.24 suggests moderate agreement

regarding the effectiveness of SEQUIP in improving safety measures and reducing harassment incidents against girls in schools. This implies that although SEQUIP has contributed to strengthening girls' safety and protection within schools, additional interventions are still needed to further minimize harassment cases and create a more secure learning environment for female students. This data is in line with the views of the head of school "S4" shared:

> Safety initiatives introduced through SEQUIP have improved awareness among students and teachers regarding the prevention of harassment against girls. Female students are increasingly confident in seeking support from teachers and counseling personnel whenever challenges arise. Still, more emphasis should be placed on strengthening preventive measures and ensuring timely responses to reported incidents (HoS "S4" Personal Communication, May 08th, 2026).

The head of school from "S5" had this to say:

> In school, SEQUIP has shown an important role in promoting a safer learning environment for girls through improved supervision, counseling services, and safety awareness programs. School management now responds more effectively to students' concerns related to harassment and misconduct (HoS "S5" Personal Communication, May 11th, 2026).

The Guidance and Counselling Teacher from school "S2" commented:

> There has been clear improvement in schools' responsiveness to harassment-related concerns affecting female students. School administrators and teachers are now more proactive in handling reported cases and providing the necessary support to affected students. In addition, girls have become more aware of the available channels for reporting inappropriate behavior and seeking assistance whenever challenges arise (HoS "S2" Personal Communication, May 04th, 2026).

The views of Heads of Schools and Guidance and Counselling Teachers suggest that SEQUIP has enhanced both the prevention and management of harassment cases by increasing safety awareness, strengthening reporting mechanisms, and improving institutional responsiveness to students' concerns. As girls become more aware of their rights and available support services, they are more likely to report incidents of violence and seek assistance when

needed. At the same time, improved responsiveness from teachers and school authorities reinforces students' trust in the protection systems established within schools. These findings imply that SEQUIP has not only strengthened school accountability but has also created a safer environment that supports girls' well-being and participation in learning. Similar findings were reported by Gunnes et al. (2024), who found that school safety and gender protection initiatives enhanced awareness of harassment prevention, improved reporting practices, and increased students' confidence in seeking support, thereby strengthening protection and emotional security among female students.

Data in Table 4.5 further indicate that a moderate (59.4%) of girls' students stated to a high extent and very high extent that SEQUIP strengthened parent-teacher associations to ensure safety for girls in schools. A minority (21.0%) of girls' students indicated to a very low extent and low extent while an extreme minority (19.6%) of girls' students indicated to a moderate extent. The mean score of 3.66 demonstrates that collaboration between parents and teachers has been enhanced through SEQUIP initiatives. This implies that active stakeholder participation contributes significantly towards improving school safety for girls. During the in-person interviews with the head of school "S1" and the guidance counselling teacher reported that:

> Through SEQUIP initiatives, parents have become more involved in school activities related to students' safety and well-being. Regular meetings between teachers and parents have increased awareness regarding challenges facing girls both at school and at home. Such collaboration has contributed positively to creating a supportive and secure learning environment for female students (Guidance and Counselling Teachers "S1" Personal Communication, May 30th, 2026).

Head of school "S3" commented:

> SEQUIP has encouraged schools to involve parents more actively in decision-making processes concerning students' welfare and safety. Parent-teacher associations now serve as important platforms for discussing strategies to improve girls' protection and academic progress; as a result, schools are experiencing stronger community support in maintaining a safe school environment (HoS "S3" Personal Communication, May 06th, 2026).

The information from the Heads of Schools implies that SEQUIP initiatives have increased parents' participation in school activities, particularly through regular meetings with teachers that enhance awareness of challenges affecting girls both at school and at home. This improved engagement has contributed to a more supportive and secure learning environment for female students. Similarly, SEQUIP has encouraged greater parental involvement in school decision-making processes, with parent–teacher associations serving as key platforms for discussing strategies to enhance girls' protection and academic progress. This has resulted in stronger community support in maintaining school safety and addressing students' welfare concerns. These accounts suggest that SEQUIP has facilitated meaningful collaboration between schools and parents, thereby strengthening shared responsibility for student protection, improving communication on girls' welfare issues, and reinforcing a safer and more supportive educational environment.

The findings are consistent with the Context, Input, Process, and Output (CIPO) Model developed by Jaap Scheerens (1990), particularly the Process and Output components. The Process component emphasizes the effective implementation of strategies that engage key stakeholders in achieving educational objectives. Through SEQUIP, schools strengthened parent–teacher associations and created opportunities for regular communication and collaboration between parents and school authorities on issues related to girls' safety and welfare. The Output component focuses on the outcomes generated by program implementation. The strengthened partnership between schools and parents, increased community awareness of girls' protection needs, and greater shared responsibility for student welfare reflect important outcomes of the intervention. As a result, girls are more likely to learn in an environment where safety concerns are promptly addressed, emotional well-being is supported, and barriers to participation in education are minimized. These findings are supported by the study conducted by Epstein (2021), which found that active collaboration between schools, families, and communities enhances students' safety, well-being, and academic success by creating a supportive learning environment.

Data in Table 4.5 show that a minority (42.5%) of girl students reported that SEQUIP has reduced safety-related complaints in schools to a high and very high extent. In contrast, a minority (35.6%) of girl students indicated a low and very low extent, while minority (22.0%) of girl students reported a moderate extent of reduction. The mean score of 3.08 falls

within the moderate category, indicating that SEQUIP has moderately contributed to reducing safety-related complaints among girls. This implies that while the program has improved reporting systems, school safety awareness, and responsiveness to students' concerns, some safety-related challenges persist in certain schools. The findings further suggest that existing protection mechanisms are not yet fully uniform across all schools, resulting in varying levels of effectiveness in addressing and preventing safety-related complaints among female students. Headteacher "S4" during a face-to-face interview explained that:

"SEQUIP safety initiatives have improved awareness among students and teachers regarding the prevention of harassment, and have increased girls' confidence in seeking support from teachers and counseling personnel when challenges arise" (HoS "S4" Personal Communication, May 08th, 2026).

Similarly, Guidance and Counselling Teacher "S2" noted that:
"SEQUIP has contributed to a safer learning environment through improved supervision, counseling services, and safety awareness programs, leading to more effective school responses to students' concerns related to harassment and misconduct" (Guidance and Counselling Teacher "S2" Personal Communication, May 04th, 2026).

In the same line, District Secondary Education Officer reported that:
"There are improvements in school responsiveness to harassment cases, with administrators and teachers becoming more proactive in handling reported incidents and guiding affected students, while also noting increased awareness among girls about available reporting channels" (DSEO Personal Communication, May 15th, 2026).

The interview responses suggest that SEQUIP has strengthened the capacity of schools to prevent and respond to harassment affecting girls. Increased awareness of safety issues, improved access to counselling services, and greater responsiveness from teachers and school administrators appear to have enhanced girls' confidence in seeking support when facing challenges. This is important because students are more likely to report incidents of violence and misconduct when they trust that their concerns will be taken seriously and addressed promptly. Consequently, strengthened reporting and support mechanisms contribute to improved protection, emotional security, and participation in learning. The findings are consistent with Rambunda (2023), who found that supportive school

environments characterized by effective supervision, counselling support, and clear reporting procedures reduced fear among girls and encouraged them to report challenges affecting their well-being.

Figure 4: Shows S1 availability of water facilities

During the school observation conducted in School "S1" (April 30th, 2026), notable differences were identified in the availability and adequacy of water and handwashing facilities across schools. In the school, water and handwashing facilities were available, adequately supplied, and actively used by students, supporting proper hygiene practices and contributing to a healthier school environment. In contrast, other school had limited access to clean water, where supply was insufficient to meet students' needs, forcing some learners to fetch water from unsafe sources such as ponds. This exposes students to potential health risks and undermines hygiene practices within the school. The findings indicate disparities in water and sanitation provision, with inadequate access in some schools likely affecting student health, safety, and well-being.

Generally, the data in Table 1 show that the average mean score of all ten items is 3.45, indicating that SEQUIP has ensured a safe school environment among girls in public secondary schools to a moderate extent. The findings suggest that the program has made notable contributions through the provision of menstrual hygiene facilities, training of guidance and counseling teachers, strengthening of parent-teacher associations, promotion of parental involvement, improvement of reporting mechanisms, and implementation of measures aimed at enhancing girls' safety and well-being in schools. The results further indicate that guidance and counseling services and strengthened collaboration between schools and parents have been among the most effective interventions in supporting girls' safety. However, the relatively lower mean scores on items related to girls' confidence in

reporting unsafe behaviors and the reduction of safety-related complaints imply that some challenges still persist in fully addressing safety concerns. The findings therefore demonstrate that while SEQUIP has established important structures and support systems that contribute to a safer and more supportive learning environment for girls, additional efforts are needed to strengthen reporting mechanisms, increase girls' confidence in seeking assistance, and enhance the overall effectiveness of school safety interventions.

10. Conclusion

The study concludes that the Secondary Education Quality Improvement Program (SEQUIP) has improves the safety of girls in public secondary schools; however, its effectiveness has been realized to a moderate extent due to challenges related to the sustainability and effectiveness of the support systems established in schools. SEQUIP interventions, including strengthening guidance and counselling services, improving menstrual hygiene facilities, establishing safety reporting mechanisms, and promoting the involvement of parents and Parent-Teacher Associations, have enhanced schools' capacity to provide a safer and more supportive learning environment for girls. Nevertheless, continued strengthening of these mechanisms is necessary to ensure long-term improvements in girls' safety and wellbeing.

11. Recommendations

The study recommends that school administrators intensify the implementation and monitoring of SEQUIP-supported interventions aimed at enhancing girls' safety and well-being in public secondary schools by strengthening guidance and counseling services through the provision of trained counselors, regular counseling sessions, and confidential support systems that encourage girls to report safety-related concerns without fear. Schools should also ensure the continuous availability, accessibility, and proper maintenance of gender-responsive facilities, including adequate menstrual hygiene management resources, clean water, sanitation facilities, and private changing spaces, to support girls' attendance and participation in learning. Furthermore, school management should establish effective, transparent, and responsive reporting and referral mechanisms for addressing incidents of harassment, bullying, violence, and other forms of unsafe behavior while guaranteeing confidentiality and timely intervention. The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, in collaboration with local government authorities, should provide regular supervision,

capacity-building programs, and adequate resources to strengthen the implementation of school safety initiatives.

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