

**INFLUENCE OF FREE SECONDARY EDUCATION FUNDS MANAGEMENT
PRACTICES ON STUDENTS' RETENTION IN PUBLIC SECONDARY
SCHOOLS IN CHONYI SUB-COUNTY, KILIFI
COUNTY, KENYA**

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DECLARATION AND APPROVAL

Declaration by the Student

This research project is my original work and has not been presented in any other university or for any other award.

Signature 

Date...12th April 2025.....

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Approval by the Supervisor

I confirm that the work in this research project has been carried out by the candidate under my supervision.

Signature 

Date...19-04-2025.....

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DEDICATION

I wish to dedicate this project to my husband, Jimmy Kazungu and children, Michelle Salama, Natalia Rehema and Ronny Fadhili, for their continued support during my studies.



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I want to express my gratitude to the individuals who have actively participated in the research process and other stages leading to the development of this project. Special thanks to my supervisor, Dr. George A. Ojwang', for his invaluable contributions in compiling this document through his numerous, yet essential, corrections. I am thankful to God for His immeasurable divine guidance and for instilling in me the spirit of dedication, patience, and resilience in the creation and completion of this work. To my colleagues at Mount Kenya University, whom I may not be able to thank personally, I am truly grateful to all of you. Thank you, and may God bless you.



ABSTRACT

Principals' management strategies are crucial in improving student retention in schools. However, in many public secondary schools in Chonyi Sub-county, students' retention is low. The purpose of this study was to examine the influence of free secondary education funds management strategies on student retention in public high schools in Chonyi Sub-county, Kilifi County, Kenya. The objectives were; determine the influence of principals' financial planning, expenditure, record-keeping and monitoring and evaluation practices on students' retention in public secondary schools. The study was guided by the financial management theory and the retention theory. The investigation used a contemporaneous triangulation a research methodology and a hybrid approach. Twelve administrators and sixty heads of departments made up the target population, 12 Chairs of BoM, 12 Bursars and 2 Sub-county Auditors, which totaled 98 respondents from which all respondents were considered for the study using census method considering the small number of participants. Two (2) strata were created using stratified sampling in accordance with the number of wards in Chonyi Sub-county. Six principals, 60 heads of department, six chairs of the board of management, 6 bursars and 2 sub-county auditors were specifically chosen for the research project from every zone. Twelve principals, sixty heads of department, twelve chairs of the board of directors, twelve bursars, and two S sub-county auditors were sampled in this process. Data from HoDs was gathered via a questionnaire, and principals, BoM chairs, bursars, and sub-county auditors were interviewed. To assess the validity, reliability, credibility, and dependability, a pilot study was carried out with ten respondents drawn from a sample of public high schools in Kilifi North Sub-county. Validity was determined by applying expert judgment. The test-retest approach was used to determine reliability, and the Cronbach Alpha approach yielded a reliability index of $r = 0.725$, indicating strong internal reliability. Data triangulation via numerous analyses and dependability through thorough documentation of the data collecting procedure were used to determine credibility. The objectives guided the thematic analysis of the qualitative data, which were then presented in narrative formats. Using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS Version 25), quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and inferentially using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Analysis and results presented using tables. The study found that public secondary schools have poor student retention rates. Few students finish their education, even with this increase in enrollment. This is attributed to free secondary education funds management practices. That is, many principals rarely undertake effective financial planning, rarely draw learner-responsive expenditure budgets, rarely keep proper financial records nor do they undertake regular monitoring and evaluation of financial operations. Thus, the study recommends that principals should adopt planning strategies which are aimed at ensuring that much resources are allocated for learner-centered activities. They should develop a budget with learner-centered programmes and ensure that all the financial records are properly kept for proper auditing. Ministry of Education should train principals on how to undertake monitoring and evaluation of financial operations in their schools.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AIDS	Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome
ARRA	American Recovery and Reinvestment Act
BOM	School's Board of Management
CNA	Child National Association
CSCQBE	Civil Society Coalition for Quality Basic Education
EFA	Education for All
EA	Education Authority
FDSE	Free Day Secondary Education
FDSE	Free Day Secondary Education
FTSE	Free Tuition Secondary Education
GER	Gross Enrolment Ratio
GMI	Grant Maintained Integrated
HODs	Heads of Departments
IPAR	Institute of Policy Analysis and Research
KCSE	Kenya Secondary Examination Certificate
KEMI	Kenya Management Institute
KESSP	Kenya Education Sector Support Programme
MOEST	Ministry of Education, Science and Technology
NCLB	No Child Left Behind
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PPOA	Public Procurement Oversight Authority
PTA	Parents Teachers Association
SIP	Senegal's Improvement Plans
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UPE	Universal Primary Education
USE	Universal Secondary Education
VG	Voluntary Grammar

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

This chapter focuses on background to the study, statement of research problem, purpose of the study, objectives, research questions, rationale and significance, limitations, delimitations and scope, assumptions of the study and operational definitions of terms.

1.1 Background to the Study

The adoption of various curricula and educational systems throughout the entire globe has greatly expanded in response to the right of every child to get educational opportunities. SDGs whose basic tenet is that nations strive beyond the achievement of comprehensive primary and secondary education for all by 2030, were adopted in response to these requests, according to Muralidharan and Prakash (2013). In light of this, educational institutions have created many programs to guarantee that secondary educational institutions achieve high the involvement of learners through enhanced retention of learners in secondary educational establishments, according to Muralidharan and Prakash (2013).

According to Bishop (2014), student retention measures how many learners there are retained in school in comparison to those enrolled in any particular academic year. In the words of Tinto (1975), students' retention is the ability of educational institutions to keep students enrolled until they complete their academic programmes. According to Tinto (1975), this concept encompasses various dimensions, including persistence, engagement, and academic success, which are pivotal in shaping a student's educational journey. But this is no longer the situation, with a downward trend in the number of learners moving from registration to graduation.

In other words, these noble expectations have not been achieved in situations where the efficiency of the education system is questionable and leads to wastage. In Mexico, for example, Cisneros- Notwithstanding the growth of educational institutions and the development of curricula designed to ensure the implementation of Education For All, Chernour, Cisneros, and Moreno (2013) contend that, at 23.9 percent, the percentage of learners who remain in educational institutions after enrolling to finish their high school career remains startlingly low. The continued enrollment of students who attend secondary school in Colombia continues to be declining.

For instance, Woessmann's (2020) study demonstrates that, Austrian high-school completion percentages in 2015 were 57.9%, it fell to 54.9 percent in the year 2016, in the year 2018, this percentage was 44.8 percent, compared to 49.4 percent in the year 2017, and 43.1 percent in the year 2019. This demonstrates that the challenge of high-school retention of learners is a worldwide one that affects educational institutions globally. This has been attributed to a multiplicity of dynamics such as students' personal characteristics, such as motivation and resilience, play a crucial role in determining retention rates and above all, socio-economic status of students. To mitigate these challenges, different countries initiated Free Education policies to cushion parents from heavy burden of fee-payment and ensure that students are kept in school and proceed with their academic activities.

For example, in the United Kingdom, the 1944 Education Act in England and Wales was introduced and was mandated to ensure that the Ministry of Education took over the provision of school physical facilities, instructional resources, recruitment of teachers, supervision and control over schools through Local Education Authorities (Robert & Elizabeth, 2016). In Nicaragua, Universal Education Policy was developed by the Ministry of Education to cushion students from paying school fees and was driven by

the government's belief in a direct relationship between education and economic growth and development (Clark, 2010). This was also the case in Austria where the government took it upon itself to provide trained teachers, school facilities as well as learning materials that are tailored to the needs of individual students. In spite of everything that has been said, the degree to which management of such free education funds and practices therein impact scholars' retention in secondary institutions Owned by the government is still not thoroughly investigated. According to Black, Owens, Randall, Boxley and White (2023), free education funds management practices entail a set of activities which school heads undertake to ensure that funds provided by the government in the form of capitation per student is effectively and properly utilized.

Black et al (2023) posit that the concept of free education represents a pivotal initiative aimed at ensuring equitable access to quality education for all students, irrespective of their socio-economic backgrounds. Hence, effective management of free education funds is essential for maximizing educational resources and enhancing the overall effectiveness of school programmes. These practices include but not limited to financial planning, expenditure, record-keeping as well as monitoring and evaluation.

In many countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, secondary education forms the basis of economic growth and development thus, the effect of its successful implementation cannot be overemphasized. In Nigeria, Adesehinwa and Aremu (2014) assert that secondary education serves as the most important educational foundation for students and its implementation is only achievable in an environment that is conducive and motivating. Adesehinwa and Aremu (2014) further note that to realize such objectives of education, governments have introduced free secondary education funds policies. In the same token, Omoregie, Udoh and Ehimwencha (2020) assert that, in many Nigerian schools, there have been challenges posed by inadequate financial management and its

correlation with student dropout rates. According to Omoregie et al. (2020), effective allocation and utilization of free secondary funds are crucial for mitigating barriers to educational access. Conversely, mismanagement often exacerbates financial constraints, leading to increased attrition among students from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds. Similarly, in Ghana, the implementation of the Free Senior High School policy, introduced in 2017, serves as a focal point for understanding retention dynamics. According to Owusu, Asare and Nkansah (2021), transparent management of these funds significantly contributes to improved infrastructure and resource availability, which in turn fosters an environment conducive to learning. Schools demonstrating sound financial practices reportedly experience better retention rates, as students and families perceive tangible benefits.

In South Africa, the narrative reflects a parallel trend. The work of Khumalo (2019) suggests that the judicious management of public funds allocated to secondary education facilitates enhanced student engagement and lower dropout rates. Institutions with robust financial oversight mechanisms are better equipped to address the diverse needs of their student populations, thereby reinforcing retention. In Rwanda, the government's initiative to implement free secondary education has increased enrollments; however, it has also highlighted the challenges associated with effective funds management.

Studies indicate that poor allocation and oversight of educational funds have led to resource shortages, which negatively impacts the quality of education and student retention rates. Notably, Mugenzi, Uwizeye and Ndoli (2022) emphasize that transparency and accountability in funds management correlate positively with improved retention outcomes. Similarly, in Uganda, the government's commitment to free secondary education has encouraged student attendance but has simultaneously

strained the education budget. Nalubega and Katana (2021) indicate that ineffective management of secondary school funds has resulted in insufficient learning materials and inadequate infrastructure, contributing to higher dropout rates. Through proper financial oversight and inclusive stakeholder engagement, schools can utilize these funds more effectively, thereby enhancing the educational experience and promoting retention. In Kenya, the scenario is the same with students' retention in secondary schools being regarded as the key to economic success in accordance with the international convention on human rights, Education for All and Vision 2030 (Onsomu, Mungai, Oulai, Sankale & Mujidi, 2014). The Ministry of Education (2023) claims that administration of the 100 percent transition policy and Free Secondary Education Funds has resulted in a significant rise in secondary-level registration as shown in Table 1:

Table 1: Students' Enrollment Rates in Kenya from 2019 to 2023

Year	Students' Enrollment Rates (%)
2019	68.1
2020	70.9
2021	76.2
2022	81.5
2023	89.3

Source: Ministry of Education (2023)

Nevertheless, in Chonyi Sub-county, students' retention in public secondary schools has been low. This supports the findings of a report authored by the Kenya Education Sector Report (2021) which indicated that students' retention rates in public secondary schools in Kilifi County, especially Chonyi Sub-county, ranged from 40% to 60%, a stark contrast to urban areas where rates often exceed 80%. These results demonstrate that learners have registered in secondary education, But not all of them go on to finish their secondary schooling. Similarly, a Ministry of Education study from 2023 demonstrates that student retention rates in public secondary schools in Chonyi Sub-county hover

around 55%, significantly lower than the national average of 75% with dropout rates being on an increasing trend as shown in Table 2:

Table 2: Students' Retention Rates in Chonyi Sub-county from 2019 to 2023

Year	Students' Enrollment Rates (%)	Students' Dropout Rates (%)
2019	58.3	13.9
2020	60.7	15.3
2021	69.4	17.5
2022	73.7	19.8
2023	77.9	24.8

Source: Ministry of Education (2023)

Notwithstanding a rise in admission, Table 2 indicates that the proportion of high-school dropouts is rising. This has occasioned much attention on education financing in Kenya, particularly regarding the management of free secondary education funds and its implications for student retention. According to Karanja (2023), strong financial management practices, including regular financial audits and inclusive decision-making processes, foster trust within the school community. This trust is pivotal for enhancing student engagement and promoting retention.

In the context of Chonyi Sub-county, Karanja (2023) notes that, while the provision of free secondary education has led to increased enrollment, the sustainability of this growth depends significantly on how funds are managed at the school level. Despite this state of affairs, few empirical studies have interrogated the extent to which free secondary education funds management practices influence students' retention in public secondary schools, hence the need for this study.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The achievement of academic objectives depends on high-school retention rates. Nevertheless, in Chonyi Sub-county, the situation is quite different with students' retention in public secondary schools being low.

As noted earlier, a report authored by the Kenya Education Sector Report (2021) indicated that students' retention rates in public secondary schools in Kilifi County, especially Chonyi Sub-county, ranged from 40% to 60%, a stark contrast to urban areas where rates often exceed 80%. This suggests that while a large number of learners register in secondary educational institutions, not all of them go on to complete their high school education. This was corroborated by a research by the MoE (2023) which shows that student retention rates in public secondary schools in Chonyi Sub-county hover around 55%, significantly lower than the national average of 75% with dropout rates being on an increasing trend as indicated in Table 2. To mitigate these challenges, the government introduced FSE to lessen the burden of socio-economic challenges which make students drop out of school. Despite this state of affairs, few empirical studies have interrogated the extent to which free secondary education funds management practices influence students' retention in public secondary schools, hence the need for this study.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to analyze the influence of free secondary education funds management practices on students' retention in public secondary schools in Chonyi Sub-County, Kilifi County, Kenya.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The investigation was guided by the following research objectives:

- i. To investigate the influence of financial planning practices on students' retention in public secondary schools in Chonyi Sub-county.
- ii. To assess the influence of financial expenditure practices on students' retention in public secondary schools in Chonyi Sub-county.

- iii. To determine the influence of financial record-keeping practices on students' retention in public secondary schools in Chonyi Sub-county.
- iv. To investigate the influence of principals' financial monitoring and evaluation practices on students' retention in public secondary schools in Chonyi Sub-county.

1.5 Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

- i. What is the influence of financial planning practices on students' retention in public secondary schools in Chonyi Sub-county?
- ii. To what extent does financial expenditure practices influence students' retention in public secondary schools in Chonyi Sub-county?
- iii. How do financial record-keeping practices influence students' retention in public secondary schools in Chonyi Sub-county?
- iv. What influence do financial monitoring and evaluation practices have on students' retention in public secondary schools in Chonyi Sub-county?

1.6 Rationale of the Study

Since it may fill in the information vacuum indicated in the issue statement, an inquiry into how free secondary education funding management techniques affect retention of learners in public secondary schools will be both legitimate and essential. To identify the policy loopholes regarding the 100% retention of learner's standards, an inquiry is necessary. This research will add to the corpus of information on the administration of schools, publicly funded secondary schooling money customs, and retention of learners. It is necessary to determine how free secondary schooling funding operational procedures are carried out in terms of student retention in publicly funded secondary education in Chonyi Sub-County.

Using a hybrid approach and simultaneously triangulation framework using descriptive correlational survey layouts, this study aims to raise the public's awareness of the problem of the administration of cost-free secondary schooling funding procedures. This may enable the investigator to seek an enhanced comprehension of the topic at hand. As the research may back up the administration of with public secondary school funding activities as the variable that is independent theme and retention of learner rates as the dependent variable subject matter, it is equally necessary to add value to the theoretical framework that anchors the examination with regard to financial management performance theory and student retention theory.

1.7 Significance of the study

Principals, members of school BoM, and other interested parties in the educational institutions may find this test useful in helping them keep an eye on the school's resources in order to reduce waste and improve the educational institution for learners. Through the adoption of enhanced managerial capacities and the application of lessons learned from previous instances of inadequate administration, secondary educational institutions may pinpoint areas of inadequacy and execute efficacious financial oversight procedures, therefore augmenting how their finances are performing.

The findings of this research might potentially be beneficial to school administrators, particularly BoM members, principals, PTA members and school bursars. They may encourage taking responsibility and efficient utilization of instructional finances, which may enhance the availability of assets for instruction and learning. Likewise, by offering information that could be examined and used to apply fiscal oversight at establishments across multiple counties, this inquiry can advance the body of expertise in academia. The results of the inquiry may be crucial for program designers as they create well-informed policies and procedures to improve the management of finances throughout

Kenyan educational establishments. It may be crucial for the inquiry to offer the most up-to-date along with exhaustive data regarding the financial health of principals of public secondary schools, in addition to any obstacles or limitations that might impede the successful and effective utilization of the funds granted to the institutions. The study's suggestions may assist the region under examination and administrators in Kenya enhance their abilities in effectively handling and supervising finances. Further study and inquiry might be conducted based on the findings of the study.

1.8 Scope of the Study

This investigation focused on examining how free secondary education management practices such as principals' financial planning, expenditure, record-keeping as well as monitoring and evaluation influence students' retention in public secondary schools. Data were gathered using questionnaires for heads of departments and interviews for principals, chairs of school BoM, bursars and Sub-county Auditors. The study employed A combination of simultaneous triangulation research methodologies and a hybrid approach. the study was conducted between September and November 2024.

1.9 Limitations of the Study

Among the investigation's limitations were:

- i. The participants, especially principals, were unwilling to provide details on practices they adopt to manage free secondary education funds for fear of victimization since this is a sensitive issue. They were assured by the investigator that their identities would not be mentioned in the results.
- ii. The aim of the investigation was constrained by the investigator's choice not to control respondents' attitudes as they react to the tools, which was biased. To mitigate this, participants were assured by the investigator on the privacy of their personal information.

- iii. The study faced challenges in that the financial information confidentiality that may be sensitive to disclose. To control this challenge, the researcher reassured the respondents to be as truthful as possible. The researcher assured all the respondents of confidentiality in dealing with any data collected and also ensured anonymity of all the respondents. In the questionnaires, there were assured that their names would not appear in the tools.

1.10 Delimitations of the Study

The investigation was based on these delimitations;

- i. The study was delimited to public secondary schools in Chonyi Sub-county.
- ii. Principals, HoDs, bursars, BoM chairs as well as the Sub-county Auditors were the only participants in the study.
- iii. The study focused on the influence of principals' financial planning, expenditure, record-keeping as well as monitoring and evaluation practices on learner's retention in secondary institutions owned by the government in Chonyi Sub-county.

1.11 Assumptions of the Study

The study made the following assumptions:

- i. That all principals understand the essence of FDSE in public secondary schools
- ii. That free secondary education funds management practices influence students' retention in public secondary schools
- iii. That principals' financial planning, expenditure, record-keeping as well as tracking and evaluation techniques have an impact on retention of learners in secondary educational institutions.
- iv. That the respondents cooperated and volunteer correct information.
- v. That most of the respondents were competent to answer the research questions.

1.12 Operational Definitions of Key Terms

Financial Expenditure Practices: refer to those activities which schools undertake to express school financial operations in terms of incomes, assets and projected expenditure.

Financial Monitoring & Evaluation Practices: are a set of activities which public secondary schools engage in to assess the extent to which financial resources have achieved the intended purpose or not and determine which changes and reviews to be made.

Financial Planning Practices: are a set of activities which public secondary schools undertake to set aside financial resources for specific activities within schools.

Financial Record-keeping Practices: are activities which schools undertake to ensure that financial records purchases, sales, receipts and payments are well-kept.

Free Secondary Education Funds Management Practices: are activities which public secondary schools engage in to ensure prudent use of financial resources. In this study, these include, principals' financial planning, expenditure, record-keeping and monitoring and evaluation practices.

Students' Retention: the number of learners who continue with their education after some have dropped out of public secondary schools.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This section examines financial management strategies for Free Secondary Education Funds (FSEF) in educational institutions and their impact on student retention rates. A variety of literature, including books, academic articles, and reports, was reviewed to understand the effects of FSEF management practices on retention in public secondary schools. The study will analyze each source's contribution, present a conceptual framework, and include empirical and theoretical reviews, along with a gap analysis and summary of findings.

2.1 Empirical Literature Review

The review of the literature includes advancements related to the subject of investigation on a worldwide, regional, national, and local scale. It will take into account the study objectives along with the dependent and independent variables listed in the inquiry title.

2.1.1 The Concept of Free Secondary Education Funds Management Practices

Scholars have differing definitions of management. As to the Report of the Committee of Assessment into the Educational Institutions of Kenya (Republic of Kenya 1999), administration refers to the strategies and proficiencies of mastering efficient management, organizing, guidance, and oversight of a particular establishment. To be able to accomplish its the organizational objectives, a company's human, monetary, tangible, and electronically stored resource must be arranged, managed, and directed. The efficient utilization of the financial assets of the company is the focus of the management of finances. The administration of finances consists of three tasks: financing; putting resources into initiatives that would maximize profits while minimizing liabilities; and disbursing dividends to investors.

A normal corporate organization wants to handle its money in order to optimize the income of its shareholders. Non-profits are likewise accountable for managing their finances, not simply for-profit companies. It is advised that financial oversight goals be met and that the venture's assets be used appropriately (Lasher, 2010). This guarantees that all commercial transactions are carried out carefully, systematically, and under control. Lasher (2010) states that the field of managing finances strategy looks at the instruments that companies use as well as how they decide on different financial matters. According to Byoun (2010), financial management procedures encompass all activities related to the movement and administration of funds in all business dealings. It is involved with planning ahead and utilizing monetary assets to their fullest potential in order to enhance financial activities both now and in the years to come.

Improvements in implementation were observed as a result of improved records framework tracking of operations by effective finance management methods. The majority of entrepreneurs are horrified by their absence of expertise in this field, notwithstanding the significance of maintaining records and accounting, which involves planning, financial details, and investigation. The decision to include organizing, store network management, accommodating handling of resources, and supervision among other methods of accounting aligns with the theories of Abedian and Biggs, Mc Thomas (2003), who contend that effective economical the leadership team, whether in the public or private sector, depends on supervisors' timely, effective, operational, and successful accomplishment of objectives.

These goals, as established by strategic and critical planning, cannot be accomplished without a cycle of resource allocation to objectives, expenditure structure, implementation, tracking, and correction. It is evident that several factors might be at play when there is a breach in the link involving financial success and fiscal training for

managers. Even though these factors have no direct bearing on the relationship between success and budgeting control methods, they nonetheless need to be considered in order to lessen their influence on success. These elements will serve as control groups in the current study Moore and Reichert, (2013). It is imperative that firms have effective financial management procedures as they may prevent the majority of issues that they encounter. Specifically, working capital ensures that the business can consistently pay its invoices. Budget and bookkeeping make ensuring that commercial transactions inside a corporation are transparent and accountable.

The framework for capital administration ensures that all financial processes are properly coordinated. Risk administration guarantees readiness in the case of a bad occurrence. The goal is to effectively integrate each of these elements into an organization's activities in order to enhance its cash flow. As a result, the business may run economically whilst choosing the wisest economic plan of action to maximize its resources (McMahon, 2015). But putting these financial management practices into practice might be more expensive, taxing the company and yielding lower profits. As a consequence, many entrepreneurs may be reluctant to employ money-management practices.

2.1.2 The Concept of Students' Retention

A person's capacity for holistic development may be seriously hampered by a lack of schooling, which also serves as the basis for the expansion of the economy and human resources. It is an effective instrument for fostering both fair social progress and economic expansion. MOEST (1999). Because instruction is so important, all children, irrespective of gender or color, have the right to an education. Numerous strategies have been implemented both domestically and internationally to ensure that each child has a chance at schooling.

Mehendale (2014), for example, describes the Universal basic Training program as an interconnected endeavor that aims to provide basic schooling to all children worldwide. Each administration wants to offer excellent schooling to its people. Importantly, instruction comprises the following: an individual's complete maturation; a thorough and engaging academic curriculum; a favorable living and learning environment; and qualified teachers possessing the necessary skills and knowledge Generation All. Numerous complex connections, such as those involving the school environment, gender communications, ancestral histories, cultural characteristics, and ideas about learning, have an impact on the availability of schooling.

As a result, the difficulties related to retaining students in schools remain a complex global concern. In industrialized nations, problems including drug abuse, mental health disorders in parents, and underlying concerns with family socioeconomic position, gender, age, and race impede accessibility to and retention in middle and high school. A secondary-level learner opportunities for schooling and retention are negatively impacted by challenging classroom circumstances, absenteeism, truancy, inadequate direction, and unsatisfactory academic achievement, as per the National Center for Education Statistics (1998).

Concurring, Hunt and Harrington (2010) point out that very little retention is caused by academic challenges and poor attendance since test failure can seriously lower learners' spirit, which may force them to abandon learning. Various issues leading to inadequate access to learning and graduation rates in secondary educational institutions in the USA were recognized by the Alliance for Excellent Education (2008). Adverse work environments, poor academic standing, career commitments, and preset retention were some of these issues. Two-thirds of students left because they were bored, and a significant portion—roughly 27%—left because of inadequate grades.

About twenty percent of dropouts in 2012 said they felt school had little bearing on their life, while about twenty percent said they quit to take on parenting obligations. Additional contributing variables were being pregnant, being involved in gangs, being bullied, being under peer pressure, and not caring about going to school (Weiss, 1999). Research conducted in China by Yi, et al. (2012) emphasized the significant influence that a household's economic situation had on the educational decisions made.

In North and Northwest China, an examination was conducted in 2009–2010 to assess the dropout rates in 46 junior secondary schools located in two provinces. The findings indicated that there was a greater dropout rate among students from lower-class backgrounds. It was also shown that retention rates were impacted by students' academic achievement. Academically underachieving students were more likely to drop out of TVET programs, particularly if their parents thought the results of TVET were not as good as those of other learners. Lim and Rumberger (2008). According to UNICEF (2015), by 2012, Nigeria was responsible for more than 20 percent of all global drop-outs from school. The region's households relied on child labor to augment their earnings, and this trend was fueled by the shortage of readily available academic help.

Low admission and high dropping out rates are caused by a variety of factors, including cultural prejudices, financial difficulties, and separation from schools. Afisunlu (2013) also emphasizes how uncertainties and illegal activity within the nation impede access to and holding in schooling. One such example is the kidnapping of one hundred female students by the terrorist organization Boko Haram. These girls have no chance to receive a schooling as a consequence of this occurrence, and a few families are reluctant to take their daughters to educational institutions because they are worried about their personal security.

In Uganda in 2007, Okello highlights that the elite circles of the nation are increasingly acknowledging that people have a right to learning. Few responders, meanwhile, make a clear connection between this acknowledgment and national, worldwide, and regional constitutional standards—standards meant to support mobility and the delivery of schooling. However, the author identifies a number of barriers to learning that exist, such as widespread joblessness, poverty, armed conflict, sex inadequate resources, the effects of AIDS, and little government participation.

In a similar vein, the MacArthur Foundation (2015) emphasizes that financial difficulties play a major role in the 50% dropout rate that students experience in Ugandan schools. One of the main causes of low admission and high rates of dropping out is the frequency of pregnancies among females. Importantly, 81 percent of the families are unable to send their youngsters to secondary education due to budgetary constraints. Mpyangu, et al. (2014). Young people's engagement in household tasks, marriage at an early age, long commutes to school, and obligations related to family enterprises and farming operations are further obstacles regarding educational acquisition and preservation. Additionally, throughout its execution, the Universal Secondary Education (USE) program struggled from a lack of consideration for local circumstances and materials, while being intended with cooperation amongst pedagogical actors. As a result, Okello (2007) notes that the desired aim of increasing access to learning via the USE initiative has not yet been achieved.

Kenya demonstrates an intense dedication to guaranteeing that each child in the country has the opportunity to receive basic schooling by proactively working with a number of international organizations that work to advance schooling globally. These initiatives are in keeping with the goals stated in the Education for All program as well as universal ideals.

The nation has implemented a number of initiatives, like the Free primary schooling program, to achieve these aims. Kenya has also taken action to enable subsidized day high school enrollment, with the goal of facilitating opportunity to instruction at all ranks. Kenya made great progress in 2003 when it introduced free elementary and secondary instruction, which led to a notable increase in enrollment for learners. Remarkably, according to UNESCO's 2006 report, your average amount of students enrolled in schools rose from a total of 5.9 million in 2002 to a staggering 7.2 million the following year.

As noted by Mukudi in 2004, notwithstanding notable advancements in the enrollment of Kenyan children in educational institutions, the problem of comparatively low rate of graduation remains. These rates have even declined during the five-year period in question. Notably, disregarding the administration's consistent and sincere efforts, only a tiny percentage of pupils are able to enroll in and successfully graduate from their secondary schooling.

2.1.3 Principals' Financial Planning Practises and Students' Retention

Financial resource planning and optimization in education is a key aspect of strategic leadership which are aimed at improving students' retention in learning institutions. According to Odden and Picus (2011), financial planning practices involve making decisions about how to use the available resources, such as time, money, staff and facilities, to achieve the desired outcomes for students and stakeholders. Every facet of the educational system—national, state, district, and school—are extremely concerned about educational funding difficulties, according to a 2011 study by Willis and Hill in the United Kingdom. Actually, a community's overall future and the destiny of each individual kid are significantly influenced by the caliber of its schooling system. The question of how to most effectively promote this change by means of the successful and

cost-effective organizing of funds turns into more and more important as standards emerge for learners and educators to succeed at greater capacities and for educational institutions to ensure the achievement of every learner, according to Willis and Hill (2011). Efficient financial planning, as stated by Willis and Hill (2011), has to be predicated on a few key factors, including equality, the involvement of participants, and prioritization alignment. Consistent with this, Smart (2019) carried out research in France that found that equality and justice are key to money-management strategies for institutions that want to do well financially. For an application for resource planning to be efficient, equality must be prioritized, with a clear knowledge that some learners and school heads have extra educational requirements and demand extra funding, according to Smart (2019).

To achieve this process, Smart (2019) intimated that the role of stakeholders is crucial. Pursuant to Colombian research by Bayona and Ballén (2017), involvement by stakeholder groups is essential to comprehending what learners want and efficient planning of financial resources. Bayona and Ballén (2017) further revealed that schools which are financially buoyant tap into the expertise of different stakeholders in financial activities since the people who are closest to the learners, such as residents, households, and teachers and administrators have important knowledge about the particular monetary backing needed for an individual's educational achievement.

By drawing on a multitude of expertise that supports effective structuring of resources and usage, these findings highlight the importance of interested parties in arranging and setting up a budget procedure. According to Bayona and Ballén (2017), this is geared towards ensuring transparency in resource planning. To support this assertion, Asim, Bell, Boakye-Yiadom, Nudzor and Mundy (2024) conducted research in Ghana that showed, as a financial management practice, transparent resource planning processes

are paramount in helping facilitate stakeholder engagement by providing the necessary information for informed advocacy. Asim et al (2024) further found that by setting up intentional mechanisms, like advisory panels or educational site committees, to incorporate a range of viewpoints into the procedure of creating decisions, schools are able to ensure sound students' retention and operations. These findings affirm the fact that openness of the resources planning is essential to fostering stakeholder confidence and enabling their involvement in school financial management activities such as budgeting as well as planning processes. This further indicates that an unclear financial planning procedure may result in a decline in confidence among neighbors, families, schools and government agencies.

In several Sub-Saharan African nations, prudent planning of financial resources is regarded critical to the students' retention of secondary institutions. For example, an investigation partaken in Nigeria by Onyekan, Adelodun and Oresajo (2022) revealed that sound financial planning practices adopted by school heads encourage prudent utilization of the available financial resources. This makes it possible for institutions to run seamlessly, and successfully at all occasions in terms of educational results and productivity (Onyekan et al, 2022). This implies that the place of financial planning in the students' retention of schools cannot be wished away since it enables management to distribute financial resources to the areas where they are needed most to achieve the institution's strategic goals.

In an investigation carried out in KwaZulu Natal Province, South Africa, Molaudzi, Netshidzivhani and Mamokhere (2022) established that an unclear practice for allocating financial resources has led to apparent discrepancy, which irritates investors and educators, whose consequence is slowed financial operations in institutions. This highlights the reality that availability of financial resources alone does not guarantee

effective students' retention of a school, but their prudent planning of the same to specific activities as well as effective utilization and management. The Education Act of 2010 in Kenya requires the BoM to plan budgets, a loose and unaccountable form of management that prepares school budget estimates as well as resource planning decisions. A study carried out in Kenya by Kaberia, Kindiki and Ndiku (2014) found that Schools are distinguished by the absence of a comprehensive resource planning strategy, which might have produced models for equitable resource management. On the contrary, this crucial function is carried out without explicit instructions. Additionally, Kaberia et al. (2014) demonstrated how resource allocation in upgraded institutions entails a process of trade-offs wherein assets such as personnel, money, and time are allocated among conflicting demands.

In Chonyi Sub-county, the state of affairs is same with regard for financial planning practices adopted by school heads considered crucial to financial achievement of any school. For example, Ndege conducted research in a sample of eleven Kilifi County secondary schools operated by the government, Akala and Achieng' (2019) revealed that practices adopted for planning of resources in an organization is central to the organization's management activity that facilitates sufficient and effective strategy implementation.

Ndege et al (2019) further found that the effectiveness of resource planning is determined by the level of achievement of objectives of organizations including schools. There is still more work to be done, though, since the investigation was conducted because Ndege et al. (2019) and other evaluated investigations have not examined the ways in which certain money-management strategies used by administrators affect retention of learners in secondary schools that are publicly funded.

2.1.4 Principals' Financial Expenditure Practices and Students' Retention

Expenditure positively impacts on students' retention of secondary educational institutions. In other words, institutions run by administrators who employ smart spending reduce inefficiencies and incorrect documentation and promote fiscal responsibility. Consistent with these assertions, Chasten and Mangles (2018) note that secondary school principals are more inclined to employ formal capital spending strategies, such as the net- present-value approach, which is in line with maximizing company value, when they are involved in thorough strategic planning processes. To corroborate these views, Mitchell (2019), in a study carried out in Canada, noted that expenditure is crucial due to the dynamic and ever-changing nature of the educational setting. Mitchell (2019) points out that most institutions' investment plan is crucial since they are unable to take advantage of the financial markets. For several decades, the outcomes of capital spending choices tend to affect institutions.

The capacity of administrators to manage capital expenditures effectively can enhance the purchase and use of school assets. In the words of Bartlett (2019), evaluating capital investment initiatives, both new and existing is essential to the effectiveness of school administration of finances. In an ideal market, choosing the initiatives with the most significant net current value maximizes the institution's worth. Additionally, most institutions' effectiveness is improved by financial management and oversight. Planning is used to set targets. Through the monitoring procedure, it is crucial to determine actually observed retention of learner's rate at institutions with the desired rate.

In accordance with Archeier and Seibel (2019), working capital administration and institution liquidity are directly related. Effective working capital management gives the majority of institutions enough cash on hand to run their daily operations and meet their short-term maturing commitments when they become due.

These findings lend credence to the idea that the majority of high-school failures are mostly caused by administrators' incapacity of handling working capital, and as a result, administrator development. In the majority of Sub-Saharan African secondary educational institutions, the majority of school administrators lack spending policies, which has made it challenging for them to track down where money comes from as well as make certain all funds have been obtained and all initiated activities are finished. For instance, Amuseghan (2010) discovered in research conducted in Nigeria that, in institutions of learning, successful scheduling and handling of school money by teachers and administrators is crucial to achieving intended academic targets and goals.

In view of this, Amuseghan (2010), regretted that it is quite unfortunate that Nigerian schools do not adequately handle their scarce funds. The first is to raise money, while the other is to make certain that the school administrators make good use of the money generated. Nevertheless, school administrators arrange and set up their institutions' budgets to guarantee prudent expenditure and transparency. Amuseghan (2010) assert that expenditure prevents waste or careless utilization of money allocated for different educational activities. The rationale is that budget controllers are required to adhere to the proper estimate when allocating monies. Expenditure acts as a magnifying glass for detail investigation and has an additional role of sanctioning expenditure. To put it another way, learning institutions' spending policies adhere to a set process.

Budget preparation, defense, authorization, adoption, execution, and assessment are all included in this. Numerous administrators in the Kenyan educational system have been charged by caretakers of having poor spending behaviors, instructors, and administrators (Moses, 2010). In Kenyan secondary educational institutions, for example, it was noted that institution administrators fail to preserve and utilize the required monetary records, nor do they adhere to budgetary processes while preparing

and implementing the spending plan (Moses, 2010). In addition to providing reagents and exhibits for scientific hands-on activities, sporting events, and activities, little to no effort is put into repairing educational facilities. Pursuant to research conducted in Kisumu East Sub-county, Omondi (2011) supported this fact by lamenting that inadequate funding has contributed to the deterioration of structures and facilities in a larger proportion of schools over the past ten years, especially at secondary levels. The situation in Chonyi Sub-county is not different. For example, a study carried out by Juma (2021) found that, when assets like time, energy, money, and space are few yet the purposes for which they might be used are not just limitless but also simultaneously demanding attention, expenditure becomes the most sensible way to handle such circumstances.

Juma (2021) further established that principals' expenditure practices in secondary schools in areas such as Authorities and citizens with good intentions have been harshly criticizing Chonyi Sub-county. Educators, managers, and parents criticize administrators of questionable spending methods in these institutions. The majority of administrators lack technical expertise in school operations and leadership, which might be the cause of the bad spending habits. Juma (2021) and other evaluated research, nevertheless, have yet thoroughly examined the ways in which certain spending patterns affect students' retention in secondary school in the public sector.

2.1.5 Principals' Financial Record-keeping Practices and Students' Retention

Administrators of secondary schools should be proficient in bookkeeping and financial administration, since this will help them maintain accurate documentation, spending, cash flow forecasts, keeping track of every expense, monitoring inventory, and creating frequent reports on finances and assessments for the institution in question. Aware of these claims, Nakpodia (2017) investigated in the Czech Republic, concluded that

executives need to be proficient in accountancy and documentation in order to accurately document financial activities in the institution of learning. According to Nakpodia (2017), any books and files that provide information on the activities that take place in that school and the kinds of possessions it possesses are considered secondary educational records. Furthermore, Nakpodia (2017) disclosed that, aside from accountancy and financial documentation, among the other documents that are helpful for leadership are inventories, school logbooks, documentation of the year-end exams, and official communication files, drafting formal letters to managers and providing number of references for private files. These results confirm that although administrators are not taught to do so, they are required to maintain documentation of attendance for the purpose of managing the school effectively and efficiently.

In order to support these claims, Nelson (2018) found in an Antiguan study that admission letters are among the responsible documents maintained in secondary educational institutions, class records, employee records, attendance records, and regulations and conditions of employment. It is challenging for administrators to take responsibility for school money and maintain precise documentation as required when they lack sufficient accounting expertise (Nelson, 2018). Stated differently, the school administrator is responsible for maintaining the documents pertaining to the institution's assets. In order to effectively administer the educational institution, the head instructor is also expected to maintain documents pertaining to operations.

According to Nelson (2018), the implementation of concrete methods that provide proof in the form of documentation on the total amount of money obtained as earnings and unambiguous proof of whether the earnings are retained is necessary for the efficient management of school assets, especially finances. According to Ezeocha (2019), administrators in the majority of Sub-Saharan African nations are required to maintain

accurate records of their expenditures, reflecting the quality of the items they acquired, documentation of the products and services for which the specified transactions were paid, as well as the date of acquisition. Additionally, the instructor's professional development may be hampered or problematic if they are not introduced to the fundamental ideas. Additionally, administrators benefit from the cash vouchers, cashbooks, accounting records, notebooks, and check books as they help them oversee school finances. These results support the notion that inadequate documentation and a lack of fundamental managerial skills are key factors in failure of small enterprises. Financial recordkeeping procedures as well as transparency are relatively new concepts that are most prevalent in public law, philosophy, organization, and administration these days, according to a survey done among Ghanaian secondary schools (Abayi, 2018).

Administrators of secondary schools can use these technologies to keep tabs on records, check books of accounts, and assess how school funds are being used. Put differently, responsibility is predicated on the actions of the primary actors who have the responsibility of providing explanations and defending their choices. Financial accountability pertains to the management of honest use of public funds. Similarly, Sackney and Dibski (2018) proposed in Ugandan research that transparency and documentation procedures ensure the public that their funds have been used as planned, profitably, and responsibly.

Accounts related to finance are verified, legalized, and regulated by it. Accountability in an organization's financial governance is dependent on both internal and external controls that are meant to improve outcomes. It strengthens financial transparency across all government agencies and establishments. According to Sakney and Dibski (2018), accountability encompasses a number of tasks, such as internal audit, evaluation of efficiency, accountancy oversight, acquisition oversight, physical surveillance, and

reporting on finances. The allowed funds must be documented and then examined once they have been utilized. The two main approaches to accounting that are still applicable in the public sector today are accrued and cash management. When money gets handed over or paid, occurrences and transactions are recorded under cash. When financial worth is generated, altered, traded, passed on, or put out, and when all of this is documented—not just cash flows—accrual-based systems document the payment or occurrence. The main issues in Tanzania are administrators' incompetence in bookkeeping and their carelessness when it comes to using school finances or resources (Mutakyahwa, 2018).

Poor accounting information and financial documenting practices among school administrators make it difficult for lending institutions to assess possible hazards and returns, which makes them reluctant to lend to the majority of educational institutions whose managers lack adequate financial oversight practices. This situation is similar in Kenya and Chonyi Sub-county. According to a Mumia and Karanja (2021) investigation, management of money training should incorporate financial procedures as a necessary component. The majority of high-school administrators, nevertheless, continue to exhibit shortcomings in their ability to transfer information from the initial entry books, such as cash books and journals, to ledgers, as well as in their capacity to create trial balances and final institution accounts.

Mumia and Karanja (2021) also discovered that educational boards of development and administrators exert a significant influence in the administration of resources. Notwithstanding these claims, Mumia and Karanja (2021) have not specifically discussed the ways in which various financial recording techniques affect retention of learners in secondary educational institutions.

2.1.6 Principals' Financial Monitoring/Evaluation Practices and Students' Retention

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) practices are the activities which organizations undertake to analyze the extent to which a project has achieved its intended objectives or not and are intended to increase a project's or organization's effectiveness and productivity. Horvat (2014) asserts that M&E is predicated on goals established and tasks scheduled during the work's preparation stages. In addition to helping to keep the job on schedule, it may alert management to problems. According to Horvat (2014), When carried out correctly, it serves as a great foundation for assessment and is an indispensable instrument for successful leadership. It allows institutions to assess if their capacity is adequate and suitable, as well as whether the assets they have are adequate and being utilized effectively, and the likelihood that they are carrying out their intended course of action.

In the context of students' retention in secondary schools, M&E is critical since it enables schools to compare the actual project impacts against the agreed financial operations and performance. In research conducted in a sample of eleven Australian middle and high schools, Cherrington, Hubbard and Luthy (2015) found that, in secondary schools where heads have M&E practices, students' retention has been successful. According to Cherrington et al (2015), such skills have enabled school heads to look at what they set out to undertake, at their accomplishments, how they have accomplished and what is remaining of school projects.

This indicates that M&E practices are important to principals since they are tools which help them to assess the students' retention of their schools and improvements to be made therein. In other words, such skills give school heads the information they must decide on the institution's initiatives and any required adjustments to the plans or

approach. In keeping with these assertions, Bush (2016) asserts that students' retention is seen to be effective where it achieves the objectives of schools and efficient when these objectives are achieved at the minimum costs and efforts. Bush (2016) further opines that this stage of strategic planning process determines how good financial operations and performance are, its quality and the extent to which it agrees with the curriculum objectives of secondary schools. In an investigation carried out in Morocco, Haim (2016) established that the monitoring and evaluation is undertaken by professional evaluators. Haim (2016) notes that maintained schools are legally required to provide quarterly income and expenditure statements to the local authority.

In Algeria, Mehmood (2016) notes that monitoring and evaluation is considered a continuous process throughout the financial year. This implies that a monitoring and evaluation system not only provides essential data for monitoring the students' retention in secondary schools, but also helps in guiding the planning, coordination, and implementation processes of a programme and identifying areas for development, and thus improving the system as a whole. In other words, M&E is an ongoing function and very significant, not just this year to assess the real implementation procedure, but also to support making choices and planning for the future.

To undertake these functions effectively, secondary school principals ought to possess the ability to identify evaluators, provide feedback and above all, identify gaps in financial operations and performance. Cognizant of these assertions, according to research conducted in Nigeria by Adesina (2016), at secondary school levels where principals possess proactive M&E practices, students' retention is often very effective and smooth. In Kenya, Guthrie, Petersons and Brownell (2016) underscore the fact that resource use in secondary educational institutions is positively impacted by monitoring and assessment.

To support this assertion, Mwita (2017) carried out a study in Nairobi County, which revealed that Administrators of high schools with sound monitoring and assessment abilities have their own secondary educational institutions effectively implement financial operations and performance. Mwita (2017) found that secondary school principals with prudent skills in detailed strategic monitoring and evaluation are more likely to use formal capital expenditure techniques as a way of identifying challenges bedeviling the students' retention and thus, provide solutions.

Chonyi Sub-county is not different and M&E is recognized as a very important for assessing the extent to which students' retention has been achieved in secondary schools. For example, a study carried out among a sample of principals, teachers and student leaders in public secondary schools in Kilifi County by Nyonje and Jabuya (2016) revealed that principals who have had basic training on how to undertake monitoring and evaluation of projects have had their schools realize most of their financial operations and performance compared to secondary schools where principals are yet to undergo any formal training on M&E concepts.

Nyonje and Jabuya (2016) found that scholars' retention at several Chonyi Sub-county high schools because many schools adopt different monitoring and evaluation practices to help them assess how financial operations are being undertaken and thus, improve students' retention. However, much still needed to be done since Nyonje and Jabuya (2016) as did other empirical studies have not interrogated how specific monitoring and evaluation practices influence students' retention in public secondary schools.

2.2 Theoretical Literature Review

Two theories served as a guide for this investigation. These included the financial management theory and the retention theory.

2.2.1 The Finance Management Theory

The investigation was predicated on Adams' (1994) finance management theory, which serves as the foundational framework for handling money in charitable organizations. The theory will provide the framework for the investigation's autonomous theme on educational economic management of resources strategies. This educational institution of thought holds that everyone, especially school administrators, ought to be aware of safe money handling and spending practices. He claimed that being cautious only meant making prudent financial decisions to get the best possible outcome. It is important to remember that being prudent entails exercising exceptional judgment when dealing with real-world circumstances and acting prudently following providing it significant consideration, planning, or forethought.

The educational institution operator should cut back on wasteful spending and demands while controlling financial assets. In order to provide fair opportunity for secondary school training, theorists of financial administration education theory contend that encouraging learners' retention might be crucial. Alternatively, enrollment as well as retention would predominantly favor those with monetary resources if learning is restricted to those who are capable of paying the cost of tuition along with associated expenditures. This situation keeps inequality and inequities alive.

In the overall setting of this particular investigation, fiscal responsibility is essential for educational accessibility and retention in educational institutions, and a Lorenz curve with less sagging would indicate higher student retention rates if resources were allocated impartially with regard to parental lineage and income level. On the other hand, if educational possibilities are allocated in a biased manner, there would be a more noticeable drooping of the curve, which indicates greater rates of dropout. Adequate and consistent funding distribution can have a big impact on students'

retention. Improving student retention raises the economic standing of underprivileged people in addition to aiding in wealth redistribution. Consequently, society advances toward greater fairness, which eventually promotes the development of a community that is more just and equitable.

2.2.2 The Retention Theory

The study was also guided by retention theory whose proponent was Tinto (2010). This theory holds that a strong social support network inside the learning environment and a match between the academic demands of the learner and the actual learning environment are critical factors in determining the chances of the learner staying in schooling. A student has expectations for their schooling when they register in an institution of learning. In order to achieve these aims, the programs and services provided by the school—which include high-quality instruction and all-encompassing assistance from staff, colleagues, and administration—must be in harmony with these targets. The investigation's application of the learner retention theory is based on the knowledge that a student's decision to continue their education or think about dropping out is significantly influenced by the amount of assistance they get.

Reduced assistance in any way might make an individual feel uncomfortable, which will therefore affect their achievement in school as a whole. Instructors play a crucial part in the process of learning by giving pupils not just teaching but also guidance and moral support. Learners look to their teachers for direction when navigating the Ministry of Education's curriculum. Other students' friendships are also very important. In addition to helping with assignment discourse, engaging in extra-curricular endeavors, and giving a safe space to vent anxieties and feelings, peers can provide a sense of camaraderie. Peer support is a crucial component in a student's ability to transition to school life.

The institution's administrative team also makes a substantial contribution by offering essential amenities including appropriate educational institutions, filling food, safe drinking water, and sufficient hygienic facilities. These materials promote students in concentrating on their academics and enjoying their time in the classroom by fostering a friendly and encouraging environment. To put it briefly, the implementation to learner retention theory highlights the value of a thorough support network that encompasses peers, teachers, and administrators in encouraging students' perseverance and enthusiasm for learning.



2.3 The Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework was based on free secondary education funds management practices such as principals’ financial planning, expenditure, record-keeping as well as monitoring and evaluation which constituted independent variables whereas students’ retention constituted the dependent variable. Intervening variables included stakeholders’ ethical integrity, stakeholders’ interference and government school financial policies as shown in Figure 1;

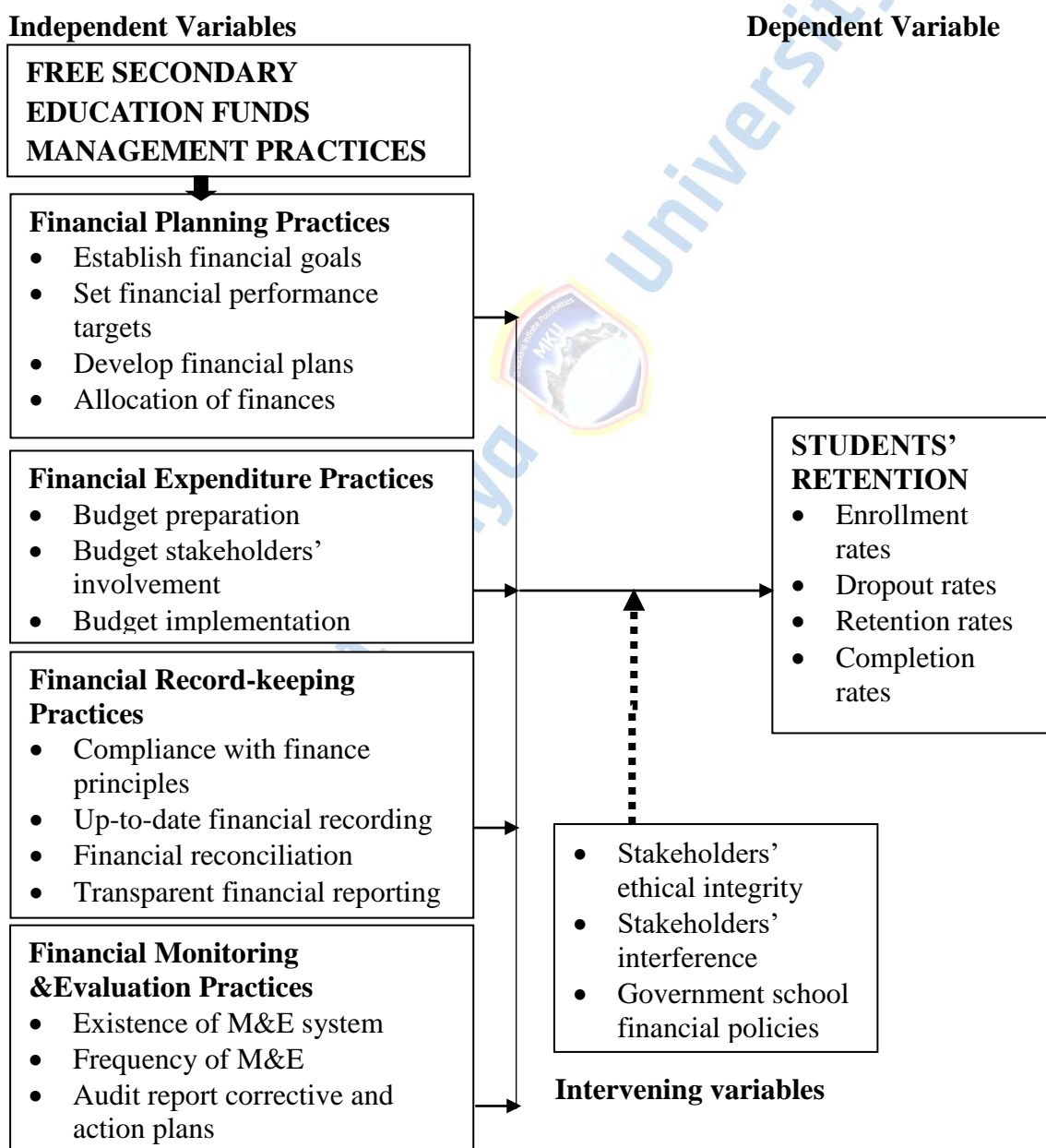


Figure 1: The Conceptual Framework of the Study
Source: Researcher (2025)

2.4 Research Gaps

Based on the literature review, it is clear that the financial practices adopted by free secondary education funds management practices partakes a vital part in the learners' retention in high-schools. These practices encompass principals' financial planning, expenditure, record-keeping, as well as monitoring and evaluation. Nevertheless, the review has also identified several gaps in knowledge and research. For instance, on financial planning practices and students' retention in state owned secondary institutions, a study partaken by Ndege et al (2019) in Kilifi County revealed that the practices used for resource planning play a crucial role in the management of an organization. However, there was still a need for further investigation as Ndege et al (2019) and other studies reviewed did not explore how the specific financial planning practices implemented by school principals impact the students' retention in public secondary schools.

On financial expenditure practices and students' retention in public secondary schools, a study conducted by Juma (2021) revealed that principals' expenditure practices in secondary schools in areas like Chonyi Sub-county have been under scrutiny from various individuals and authorities. Despite this, the study, along with other empirical research, has not thoroughly examined the impact of specific expenditure practices on students' retention.

On financial record-keeping practices and students' retention in state funded secondary institutions, much still needed to be done since a study carried out by Mumia and Karanja (2021) had not expressly articulated how different financial recording practices influence students' retention in public secondary schools. On financial monitoring and evaluation practices in relation to students' retention in public secondary schools, a study conducted in Kilifi County by Nyonje and Jabuya (2016) shed light on the

significance of financial monitoring and evaluation practices in public secondary schools. The study revealed that principals who received basic training on monitoring and evaluation of projects were able to enhance the financial operations and performance of their schools, unlike those principals who lacked formal training in M&E concepts. However, it is important to note that there are still research gaps in understanding how specific monitoring and evaluation practices impact the students' retention in high-school. The purpose of this investigation was to fill up these gaps in knowledge.

2.5 Summary of Literature Review

From the literature, it is evident that public secondary schools adopt different free secondary education funds management practices are crucial determinants of students' retention. In other words, the review has revealed that public secondary schools, which undertake prudent financial planning of resources, expenditure, record-keeping as well as monitoring and evaluation, are able to perform well financially and thus, improve students' retention. However, much was yet to be done to interrogate the extent to which specific free secondary education funds management practices influence students' retention in public secondary schools, thus, the study.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the research methodology and design which were followed when conducting this study. It also highlights the location of the study, target population, sampling procedures and sample size, research instruments, piloting, data collection techniques, data analysis and ethical considerations.

3.1 Research Methodology

The investigation used use a mixed methodology, which blended quantitative and qualitative methodologies to better comprehend the problem at hand. This methodology was suitable as the research encompassed gathering and evaluating both kinds of information in a single investigation. The investigator augmented the advantages of a combination of qualitative and quantitative techniques in this investigation. Creswell (2014) asserts that the statistical approach entails posing specific inquiries and obtaining measurable information from a large number of participants. Questionnaires were utilized in this case to gather information. Simultaneously, participant viewpoints and participant words were the primary means of gathering qualitative data. In this case, data collection was conducted through interviews.

3.2 Research Design

Because it is an a one-phase layout, the investigation employed a contemporaneous triangulation research methodology, where the researcher used the two types of approaches at the same period of time and with equal importance. Because there were no relationships between the people being interviewed and the people filling out surveys, this design produced findings that were well-validated and supported. In order to better comprehend the study topic, this strategy often entails the simultaneous but

distinct gathering and analysis of data that is both quantitative and qualitative (Creswell, 2014). Triangulation was used by the investigator to combine the two data sets. Because it allowed the investigator to gather data from both sides, this design was appropriate for this investigation. Data that characterized occurrences could be collected thanks to this architecture, which also made it possible to arrange, tabulate, illustrate, and describe the data collection. A limited selection of examples was then described in detail and narratively.

3.3 Location of Study

The investigation was conducted in Chonyi Sub-county in Kilifi County. The site is perfect given the inquiry concern with low retention rates, as indicated in table 1. The ideal location for any inquiry, as stated by Singleton et al. (1993), is one where the study's topic is very prevalent and accessible to the investigator. Many educational facilities, notably day and boarding schools for boys, girls, and mixed-gender learners, are located in the Sub-county. The Sub county is located in Kilifi County's most southern section. North to Kauma Sub-county, East to Kilifi South Sub-county, and West and South to Kaloleni Sub-county are its limits. The Sub-county has a southern boundary with the town of Mtwapa. The total population of this subcounty, as of the 2019 census, is 62,335. Essentially, the primary source of revenue is agricultural subsistence. Agribusiness-related tourism and entrepreneurship are also carried out.

3.4 Target Population

In accordance to the MoE (2024), Chonyi Sub-county has 12 public secondary institutions. Thus, the target population comprised 12 principals, 60 Heads of Departments, 12 Chairs of BoM, 12 Bursars and 2 Sub-county Auditors, which totaled 98 respondents as shown in Table 3;

Table 3: Target Population of the Study

Categories	Target Population
Principals	12
Heads of Departments	60
Chairs of School BoM	12
Bursars	12
Sub-county Auditors	2
Total	98

Source: Nyakach Sub-County Education Office (2025)

3.5 Sampling Procedures and Sample Size

In order to get a sample size that is appropriate for the goals of the investigation, an investigator considered all the 98 respondents under target population using census method considering the small size of the participants. This method was suitable since it enhanced reliability and validity of findings, facilitating the identification of effective strategies for optimizing resource allocation and promoting student engagement. Furthermore, the insights gained from such studies informed policy decisions, ultimately contributing to improved educational environments and higher retention rates in schools, thus fostering long-term academic success and institutional sustainability.

Using stratified sampling, two (2) strata or representative frames were created according to the number of wards in Chonyi Sub-county (Chasimba and Mwarakaya). This ensured homogeneity during sampling. From each zone, six (6) principals, 60 HoDs, six (6) Chairs of BoM, six (6) bursars and the two (2) Sub-county Auditors were purposively considered for the study. This sampling procedure realized a sample of 12 principals, 60 HoDs, 12 Chairs of BoM, 12 bursars and 2 S Sub-county Auditors as shown in Table 4;

Table 4: Sampling Grid

Categories	Target Population	Sample Size	Sampling Techniques
Principals	12	12	Purposive sampling
HoDs	60	60	Purposive sampling
Chairs of BoM	12	20	Purposive sampling
Bursars	12		
Sub-county Auditor	2	2	Purposive sampling
Total	98	98	

Source: Researcher (2025)

3.6 Research Instruments

These are the instruments that were employed to collect data about the particular themes of the study goals. These comprised department directors' surveys and interviews with administrators, bursars, chairs of the Board of Management, and sub-county auditors.

3.6.1 Questionnaire for Heads of Departments

In this study, surveys were employed to gather quantitative information from heads of departments. The surveys had both restricted and unrestricted assessments. This is so since a questionnaire, in the words of Morse (2010), is an instrument for study made up of a set of inquiries. jointly with additional suggestions to gather information from respondents. Often, when creating it, the statistical analysis of the answers is taken into consideration. There were two distinct sections of the questionnaire. Contributors in the investigation were able to provide additional details in response to broad inquiries, which provides the investigator with more contextualized and helpful feedback.

The times taken to respond to closed-end inquiries were shorter, which boosted percentages of responses. Additionally, the data were simpler to evaluate and assess attitude generally. The general characteristics of the participants were covered in the first portion, and the four objectives of the study were on the basis for 5-point Likert Scale-style items in the subsequent part.

3.6.2 Interview Guide for Principals, Bursars, BoM Chairs and Sub-county Auditors

Interviews were applied to gather data from principals, bursars, BoM chairs as well as Sub-county Auditors. For the purpose of this investigation, planned discussions was crucial since they allowed the investigator to ask follow-up and deeper inquiries. To help those who conduct them, scholars, and examiners gather data or additional knowledge on a certain topic or issue, interview schedules are essentially lists of organized inquiries that were previously established in advance. The researcher utilized the timeline, filling in the blanks with the responses obtained during the real inquiry.

3.7 Piloting of Research Instruments

Ten participants from a selection of secondary schools that were publicly funded participated in a pilot study using the investigation tools in the neighboring Kilifi North Sub-county because Kothari (2014) claims, the experimental sample constitutes 10 percent of the research sample (10.0 percent of 98). Assessing the appropriateness and lucidity of the inquiries in the assessments that were created was the aim of the testing phase, evaluate the details that are being collected for relevancy, and assess if the vocabulary used is suitable. The investigation's tools were pre-tested using experimental results, thereby verifying and proving their dependability.

This phase also aimed to identify potential issues or challenges that respondents might face, such as difficulties in interpretation while completing the questionnaires and managing their time during data collection. Furthermore, to make sure that the inquiries were well-written and produced an appropriate variety of replies, the interview programs were trialed, which helped the investigator pinpoint areas needing amendment. It is important to note that participants in the experimental process were excluded from the primary research in order to avoid prejudice.

3.7.1 Validity

There was triangulation of information gathered using several techniques with the objective to ensure the reliability of the investigation equipment. Thus, shortly after conducting interviews for the present investigation, the information from the interviews were transcribed by investigator and returned for member verification. The technique of group debriefing was also used to guarantee the correctness of the findings. Specialists in the field of research under investigation examined the information in this regard. The specialists went through the procedures and explanations and posed questions. The investigator intended to engage professionals with expertise in school management and administration in this investigation. The tools were revised in light of their feedback, opinions and ideas.

3.7.2 Reliability

The assessment items' reliability was established using the test-retest approach. In this instance, a selected number of responders received the examination components twice, separated by two weeks. Cronbach Alpha Technique served as the foundation for the reliability index, $r = 0.725$, between the two sets of scores, which indicated high internal consistency. This is because, according to Kothari (2014), the reliability coefficient's proximity to 1, the scale's test items' improved internal consistency. Kothari (2005) asserts that excellent internal consistency is implied by any coefficient that falls between zero and one.

3.7.3 Credibility

The credibility of instruments was ascertained by using numerous analysis and data triangulation because the only people who could fairly assess the outcome's legitimacy were the readers and respondents. Kothari (2014) asserts that Credibility is the process of demonstrating that the research's findings are plausible by depending more on the

caliber of the work than its quantity. According to Creswell (2014), Credibility involves proving that the conclusions drawn from the study are credible by relying more on the quality of evidence collected than on its quantity.

3.7.4 Dependability

Each step of the qualitative information collecting method in the current research was documented in detail to ensure reliability and allow the investigator to replicate the investigation with comparable outcomes. Dependability guarantees that the study outcomes are reliable and repeatable, as stated by Kothari (2014). The quality of the investigation's execution, analysis, and presentation serves as a gauge for this. Every step of the research endeavor was documented in detail so that the investigator may replicate the investigation and get comparable outcomes. The investigator was also able to comprehend the techniques and their efficacy thanks to this.

3.8 Data Collection Procedures

The investigator received an introduction note from Mount Kenya University's School of Postgraduate Training, in addition to the NACOSTI Investigation License and Clearance Note. Additionally, In Kilifi, the investigator requested a letter of approval from the County Commissioner and the County Director of Education. Once these documents are obtained, the researcher proceeded to schedule rendezvous with the participants to execute surveys and provide surveys, thereby collecting the necessary data for the study. Meetings with volunteers were arranged by the person conducting the study to give them questionnaires and carried out conversations to gather preliminary information for the investigation after acquiring investigation permissions and letters of authorization. The completed questionnaires were gathered and securely kept in preparation for the analysis of the information. Concurrently, interviews were carried out to get qualitative information from the participants.

3.9 Data Analysis Procedures

Data analysis commenced with the identification of prevalent themes derived from the participants' accounts of their understandings. The pertinent material was segmented into phrases or sentences, each encapsulating a distinct thought. Responses to the closed-ended questions were categorized with specific tags as well as coded. Frequency counts of these answers were calculated to provide insights into the characteristics of the volunteers. Qualitative information underwent thematic analysis aligned with the goals of the investigation and was then given in an essay style. The quantitative information was presented in tabular form after being subjected to descriptive analysis utilizing proportions and frequencies and inferential analysis using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Analysis (SPSS Version 25).

3.10 Ethical Considerations

In examinations, ethical issues include describing the study's objectives, volunteer requirements, informed authorization procedures, and anonymity measures.

3.10.1 Confidentiality and Privacy

The investigator made certain that whatever data provided by the participants that pertains to their secret or private affairs would remain secret. The people who responded received guarantees that no written or other correspondence would divulge any personally identifiable information concerning them. Those surveyed received assurances about anonymity that whatever data they submitted would only be utilized for the purpose they were intended for.

3.10.2 Anonymity

The responders were given the investigator's word that their names would not be disclosed in any way. Furthermore, no written or electronic correspondence would divulge any individually recognizable details regarding them or the organization.

3.10.3 Informed Consent

The investigator gave the responders an explanation of the purposes and goal of the study. In order for those who participated to voluntarily engage in, the investigator outlined the process that would be undertaken throughout the data gathering. In order to obtain the interviewees' approval, the investigator had them sign authorized permission documents.

3.10.4 Storage of Data Collected

For convenience, the obtained unprocessed information was filed. Following analysis of the material, electronic copies have been saved and electronic copies were kept on Discs and removable drives.

3.10.5 Intellectual Ownership and Plagiarism

The investigator ran the research project into the TURNITIN software to guarantee its originality free of duplication. Every time, this was completed prior to the defense. The overall proportion stayed at no higher than 15%. The citations were part of this. The research project was cleaned and resubmitted in the software for originality assessment anytime the likelihood of plagiarism rises. This ultimate originality index was attached in the document (Appendix XII).

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the investigation's findings. For clarity and chronology, it is organized around the four research objectives that the study aimed to address. In the first part, however, demographic information about the respondents is supplied since it may be useful in analyzing the data that they submitted.

4.1 Response Rate

58 of the sixty surveys that were sent to the heads of departments for the purpose of this investigation were completed and returned. Additionally, the investigator conducted interviews with two sub-county auditors, ten bursars, ten administrators, and ten chairs of the board of management. The rates of response as a result are displayed in Table 5;

Table 5: Response Rates

Respondents	Sampled Respondents	Those Who Participated	Achieved Return Rate (%)
Principals	12	10	83.3
Heads of Departments	60	58	96.7
Chairs of BoM	12	10	83.3
Bursars	12	10	83.3
Sub-county Auditors	2	2	100.0
Total	98	90	91.8

Source: Field Data (2024)

Administrators had a 83.3 percent percentage of responses, according to Table 5, Heads of Departments registered 96.7%, Chairs of BoM registered 83.3%, bursars registered 83.3% whereas Sub-county Auditors recorded a 100 percent response percentage. This resulted in a typical response rate of 94.4%, which is in line with Creswell's (2014) claims that an answer rate greater than 75 per cent is sufficient.

This data was crucial since it enabled the investigator to extrapolate the results of the investigation to the intended audience.

4.2 Respondents' Demographic Information

The study's analytical tools asked for the interviewees' demographic data. Gender and educational attainment were among them. This was required as this variable may affect their capacity to provide accurate details on the goals of the study.

4.2.1 Gender of the Respondents

Data on the interviewees' distribution according to gender was gathered, and Table 6 presents the results.:

Table 6: Distribution of Principals and Teachers by Gender

Gender	PRs		HoDs		CBoMs		BSRs		SAs	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Male	7	70.0	38	65.5	8	80.0	7	69.0	1	50.0
Female	3	30.0	20	34.5	2	20.0	3	31.0	1	50.0
Total	10	100.0	58	100.0	10	100.0	10	100.0	2	100.0

Key: **PRs**-Principals; **HoDs**-Heads of Departments; **CBoMs**-Chairs of BoM; **BSRs**-Bursars; **SAs**-Sub-county Auditors

Source: Field Data (2024)

Table 6 shows that 7(70 percent) of the administrators were male whereas 3(30 percent) were female. Similarly, most people, 38(65.5 percent), of the Heads of Departments were male with 27(30.3 percent) being female. Similarly, a record majority, 8(80.0 percent) of the Chairs of school BoM were male whereas their female counterparts encompassed 2(20 percent). Most of the bursars, 7(70 percent), were male while female bursars were 3(30 percent). However, all the Sub-county Auditors were male. These data demonstrate that there is reasonable gender balance at every academic level and, therefore, an influence exerted by management of free secondary education funds on students' retention in secondary public institutions apprehensions both male and female

stakeholders. It means that the information on the respondent's gender helps to trace hidden details and disparities on how these practices differently impact male and female students. For example, retention rates could vary between boys and girls due to socio-cultural or economic challenges one gender might face more than the other. The way funds are managed, for instance, within the framework of scholarships, infrastructure, and educational materials, could affect the retention of both boys and girls in different ways. Girls may drop out due to lack of sanitary facilities, early marriages, or expectations from society, while boys may leave school for income-generating activities.

Having gender-specific information enables policymakers to find out these inequalities and distribute resources accordingly. Moreover, understanding gender dynamics facilitates tailored interventions. For example, if data reveals higher dropout rates among girls, schools can prioritize gender-sensitive budgeting, such as improving sanitation or introducing mentorship programs. Conversely, if boys are disproportionately affected, initiatives may focus on curbing labor exploitation or addressing truancy. In essence, gender information ensures a comprehensive analysis of funds management effectiveness. It identifies the gaps, informs the targeted solutions, and creates an inclusive educational environment where all students feel retention is equal.

4.2.2 Respondents' Level of Education

All of the interviewees' educational backgrounds were also obtained using the study instruments. Table 7 displays the findings.

Table 7: Respondents' Level of Education

Gender	PRs		HoDs		CBoMs		BSRs		SAs	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Diplomas	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	10.0	0	0.0
Bachelors' Degrees	6	60.0	44	75.9	8	80.0	6	60.0	1	50.0
Postgraduate	4	40.0	14	24.1	2	20.0	3	30.0	1	50.0
Total	10	100.0	58	100.0	10	100.0	10	100.0	2	100.0

Key: **PRs**-Headteachers; **HoDs**-Teachers; **CBoMs**-Chairs of BoM; **BSRs**-Bursars; **SAs**-Sub-county Auditors

Source: Field Data (2024)

Table 7 demonstrates that most, 6(60.0%), of the principals had Bachelors' Degrees while on the other hand 4(40 percent) had postgraduate educations. Similarly, majority, 44(75.9%), of the Heads of Departments had Bachelors' Degrees whereas 14(24.1%) were having postgraduate degrees. In the same token, majority, 8(80 percent), of the Chairs of BoM had Bachelors' Degrees while 2(20.0%) had postgraduate qualifications. Most of the bursars, 6(60.0%) possessed Bachelors' Degrees, 3(30.0%) had postgraduate education whereas a paltry 1(10.0%) possessed Diplomas. Each of the Sub-county Auditors had Bachelors' Degrees as well as postgraduate qualifications. The education levels of respondents do indeed provide critical insights into their level of understanding and implementation of free education fund management practices.

Principals who hold higher qualifications will have a higher level of financial literacy and managerial competencies, which would ensure effective utilization of the funds for student needs: learning resources, infrastructure, and welfare programmes that bear directly on their retention. This further ascertained the assumptions that they were capable of answering questions regarding the extent to which the financial competencies of principals affect retention of students in secondary public educational institutions.

4.3 Status of Students' Retention

The objective of the investigation was to assess the retention of learners rates in Chonyi Sub-county's secondary schools that are publicly funded. This was assessed by counting the total number of learners. (cohorts) who registered from 2017 until 2023, individuals who stopped of school and those who finished their high school education. The results are shown in Table 8.

Table 8: Status of Students' Retention

Academic Year	Status of Students' Retention		
	Number of Students Enrolled in Form I	Number of Students who Complete Form IV	Number of Students who Dropped Out of School
2017	2199	1642(2017-2020 Cohort)	557 (25.3%)
2018	2303	1612(2018-2021 Cohort)	691 (30.0%)
2019	2511	1834(2019-2022 Cohort)	677 (27.0%)
2020	3009	2306(2020-2023 Cohort)	703 (23.4%)
Totals	10022	7394	2628 (26.2%)

Source: Field Data (2024)

Due to the administration's 100 percent transition program, Table 8 demonstrates that the total count of learners registered in Form I in state-run secondary-level institutions has increased from 2018 to 2023. Nevertheless, there aren't several children that finish their high-school after a full four years of attendance. The Ministry of Education's report from 2023 was supported by these conclusions, which estimated that Public secondary educational institutions student retention percentages in Chonyi Sub-county hover around 55%, significantly lower than the national average of 75%. In the same token, a report by the Kenya Education Sector Report (2021) highlighted Success rates in Kilifi County's government funded secondary educational institutions, especially Chonyi Sub-county, ranged from 40% to 60%, a stark contrast to urban areas where rates often exceed 80%.

These results highlight the reality that while certain learners register in secondary educational institutions, not all of them go on to complete their secondary school studies. Notwithstanding the federal government and various other actors' coordinated efforts in secondary schooling, the percentage of kids that leave school has continuously ranged between twenty percent to thirty percent. This confirms that in situations when student retention has been low, the lofty goals for learning might not have been fulfilled, resulting in waste. To put it another way, one of the biggest problems facing the educational systems of the majority of nations with developing economies has been the keeping of learners in high schools.

4.4 Principals' Financial Planning Practices and Students' Retention

The aim of the examination was to ascertain how administrators' money-management strategies affected secondary public educational institution maintaining learners. Heads of Departments provided information that was descriptive, and Table 9 displays the findings;

Table 9: Views of Heads of Departments on the Influence of Principals' Financial Planning Practices on Students' Retention

Test Items	Ratings				
	SA %	A %	U %	D %	SD %
Principals rarely set financial goals aimed at ensuring that all learners are retained in Secondary public educational facilities	51.7	11.3	5.6	5.6	25.8
In Secondary public educational facilities, principals sometimes set financial performance targets which has improved students' retention	53.7	14.8	5.6	11.1	14.8
Principals do not regularly set financial plans to achieve as a way of ensuring that all students are retained in Secondary public educational facilities	57.4	9.3	7.4	9.3	16.7
In Secondary public educational facilities, principals sometimes ensure prudent allocation of financial resources to students' academic programmes as a way of retaining them in school	48.1	18.5	5.6	9.3	18.5
Despite the financial planning done by principals, many students still drop out of school	66.7	11.1	3.7	5.6	13.0

Source: Field Data (2024)

Table 9 demonstrates that little over half (51.7%) of Heads of Departments were firmly in favor of the idea that principals rarely set financial goals aimed at ensuring that all learners are retained in public secondary schools with slightly more than a quarter (25.8%) strongly disagreeing. In the same token, most of the HoDs (53.7%) strongly endorsed the idea that, in publicly owned secondary institutions, administrators sometimes set financial performance targets which has improved students' retention while 14.8% Very opposed. Slightly more than half (57.4%) of the Heads of Departments fully concurred with the opinion that administrators do not regularly set financial plans to achieve as a way of ensuring that all students are retained in public secondary schools with only 16.7% strongly disagreeing.

These results support the conclusions of a research conducted by Tendai and Mugambi (2022) which also revealed that underfunding in rural schools exacerbates retention challenges, particularly for girls and economically disadvantaged students. According to Tendai and Mugambi (2022), while governments may allocate funds, the absence of robust financial goals tailored to retention often leads to misaligned priorities and limited impact. These results also corroborate those of research undertaken by Ngigi, Maina and Wanjiru (2021) which found that most principals are focused on short-term operational needs, such as teacher salaries and infrastructure maintenance, while neglecting long-term financial planning for initiatives like scholarships or fee subsidies.

According to Ngigi et al (2021), the absence of such programmes has left economically disadvantaged learners vulnerable to dropping out due to the inability to afford school-related expenses. Furthermore, research by Smith and Taylor (2022) in USA revealed that principals rarely align their financial goals with retention strategies. Instead, they often rely on external funding or government grants without tailoring these resources to meet specific retention needs (Smith & Taylor, 2022). This misalignment frequently results in ineffective interventions, such as poorly targeted financial aid, which fails to address the root causes of dropout rates, such as transportation costs or the need for family income support.

These results demonstrate that a large number of secondary-school administrators often overlook the importance of setting financial goals to ensure all learners are retained. This oversight can result in increased dropout rates, particularly among students from low-income families. By failing to prioritize financial planning, schools miss opportunities to allocate resources toward scholarships, lunch programmes, or fee waivers, which are critical for supporting disadvantaged learners. A fair proportion (48.1%) of the Heads of Departments totally concurred with the belief that, secondary-

level public educational institutions, principals sometimes ensure prudent allocation of financial resources to students' academic programmes as a way of retaining them in school whereas 18.5% opposed wholeheartedly. The results presented support the conclusions of a research conducted by Mulford and Silins (2021) who emphasized that principals who strategically allocate resources to academic programmes foster an environment conducive to learning, directly influencing students' decisions to remain in school. These programmes often include tutoring services, extracurricular activities, and interventions targeting at-risk students. By prioritizing academic needs, schools can address barriers to learning that often lead to dropouts.

These results corroborate the conclusions of studies conducted by Peters and Banjo (2023) who examined how transparent financial management by principals builds trust among stakeholders and secures additional funding from donors. This transparency ensures sustained support for academic programmes that mitigate financial pressures on students, enabling them to stay enrolled. These findings affirm the fact that, while some principals may occasionally overlook this critical aspect, prioritizing financial prudence remains essential to sustaining students' academic programmes and retaining them in school.

When resources are misallocated, essential programs risk being underfunded, resulting in a drop in quality of instruction and support services. This directly impacts student engagement and academic performance, increasing the likelihood of school dropouts. Conversely, principals who prioritize strategic financial management ensure that resources are channeled toward impactful initiatives, such as academic support services, extracurricular activities, and infrastructural improvements. These efforts create an enriched learning environment, fostering student retention by addressing their academic and holistic needs.

This further indicates that financial prudence enables schools to respond to unexpected challenges, such as funding shortages or emergencies, without compromising essential programmes. While it may be tempting for principals to focus on other administrative priorities, a commitment to effective resource allocation demonstrates accountability and vision. Two-thirds (66.7%) of the HoDs totally concurred with the opinion that, despite the financial planning done by principals, many students still drop out of school while 13.0% opposed wholeheartedly. The results presented backs the conclusions of a investigation carried out by Johnson et al. (2021) which highlighted that, while most school principals implement strategic financial management to ensure the availability of resources, their efforts often fail to address non-financial factors driving student attrition.

In the same token, research undertaken by Smith and Taylor (2020) examined the efficiency of school funding in communities with low incomes, revealing that despite principals prioritizing subsidies for tuition, books, and meals, dropout rates remained high. Their analysis suggested that, while financial planning alleviated immediate material barriers, it could not mitigate broader systemic issues such as inadequate home support, mental health challenges, or the need for students to work to support their families.

These findings affirm the fact that, despite planning efforts by school principals, student dropouts remain a significant challenge in many educational institutions. Principals often implement strategic measures, such as fostering inclusive learning environments, providing access to resources, and engaging with parents and the community. However, these efforts sometimes fail to address the complex, multifaceted factors leading to dropouts.

4.4.1 Inferential Analysis

To verify the impact of principals' financial planning practices on learners' retention in state funded secondary institutions, information was obtained from the Sub-county Auditors on how often (Very Often = 5, Often = 4, Sometimes = 3, Rarely = 2 and Never = 1) the administrators of the 10 sampled secondary public educational institutions. undertake financial planning and the quantity of learners enrolled in secondary public educational institutions for the last four years (2020-2023). Table 10 displays the results:

Table 10: Principals' Financial Planning Practices and Students' Retention

Frequency of Principals' Financial Planning Activities	Number of Students
3	787
3	764
2	896
3	617
2	648
1	564
4	818
5	909
3	733
1	658

Source: Field Data (2024)

Table 10 indicates that in secondary public educational institutions where administrators regularly undertake financial planning to factor in programmes aimed at enhancing students' retention, the number of students in such schools tend to be higher than those that rarely. This indicates that schools where principals actively engage in financial planning to support retention-focused programs often see higher student populations compared to schools that neglect this approach. By prioritizing resources for initiatives like scholarships, extracurricular activities, and counseling, these schools create a supportive environment that addresses both academic and social challenges. Effective financial planning allows principals to allocate funds strategically, fostering an

atmosphere where students feel valued and motivated to stay in school. Conversely, schools with limited planning miss opportunities to address barriers to retention, leading to higher dropout rates. These results were further analyzed using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Analysis, with the outcomes displayed in Table 11;

Table 11: Relationship Between Principals' Financial Planning Practices and Students' Retention

		Principals' Financial Planning Practices	Students' Retention
Principals' Financial Planning Practices	Pearson Correlation	1	.657*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.039
	N	10	10
Students' Retention	Pearson Correlation	.657*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.039	
	N	10	10

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

With a correlation coefficient of $r = 0.657$ and an associated statistically significant figure (p-value) of 0.039, Table 11's correlation coefficient for the Pearson Product Moment Test Analysis was below the predefined threshold of statistical significance, 0.05, meaning that $p\text{-value} = 0.039 < 0.05$. This suggests that the financial planning strategies used by administrators have a significant impact on the retention of learners in secondary schools that are publicly owned.

Additionally, this suggests that prudent financial planning ensures that institutions allocate resources efficiently, addressing essential areas such as infrastructure, teaching materials, extracurricular programmes, and student welfare. When schools prioritize these aspects, they create an environment conducive to learning and personal development, reducing dropout rates and promoting retention. For instance, financial planning allows schools to establish bursaries, scholarships, and feeding programmes for underprivileged students, addressing socioeconomic barriers to education. Principals who implement transparent and equitable budgeting practices build trust within the school community, encouraging parents to keep their children enrolled.

Moreover, funds allocated for teacher capacity building improve the quality of instruction, fostering academic success and motivation among students to remain in school. In other words, well-planned investments in extracurricular activities also enhance student engagement and a sense of belonging, key factors in retention. Conversely, poor financial management leads to inadequate facilities, overcrowded classrooms, and resource shortages, contributing to higher dropout rates. By strategically planning and effectively utilizing available funds, principals can mitigate these challenges. In conclusion, the statistically significant influence of principals' financial planning practices highlights their critical role in fostering a supportive educational environment that promotes retention and long-term academic success.

4.4.2 Thematic Analysis

During the interviews, however, principals and Chairs of BoM as well as the bursars responded on the contrary by stating that principals often set financial goals aimed at ensuring that all learners are retained in secondary public educational institutions. On further probing, principal, P1, stated;

In my institution, we often set out financial goals and allocate resources for activities aimed at keeping students in school. These plans include offering bursaries for needy students, school feeding programmes and income-generating activities to fund budget deficits occasioned by limited government capitation and inability of many parents to pay subsidized fees. This has enabled us to keep many bright but needy students at school.

On their part, the Sub-county Auditors observed that many school principals occasionally develop financial plans and objectives aimed at generating funds to support students' academic endeavors and enhance retention rates. Despite differing perspectives, these findings highlight the importance of principals establishing financial goals as essential for maintaining student enrollment in public secondary schools. Regarding financial performance targets, interviewees concurred that principals

frequently set these targets, which have positively influenced student retention. Similar to the quantitative data, these opinions align with the assertions of Tendai and Mugambi (2022), indicating that many school leaders lack comprehensive financial goals focused on retention, resulting in misaligned priorities and limited effectiveness. These sentiments resonate with those articulated by Ngigi et al. (2021), who noted that most principals prioritize immediate operational needs, such as teacher salaries and infrastructure upkeep, while overlooking long-term financial strategies for initiatives like scholarships or fee waivers.

This perspective further emphasizes that student dropouts continue to pose a significant challenge for numerous educational institutions. Although principals often adopt strategic initiatives such as promoting inclusive learning environments, ensuring resource accessibility, and engaging with parents and the community, these efforts may not fully address the complex and multifaceted issues contributing to student dropouts.

4.4.3 Triangulation of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

Quantitative and qualitative research findings demonstrate that principals in public secondary schools rarely engage in key financial planning practices aimed at improving students' retention. This gap is attributed to multiple factors, including limited training in financial management, inadequate funding, and competing administrative priorities. Quantitative research highlights that a significant proportion of principals lack formal training in budgeting and resource allocation, which undermines their ability to optimize available funds for retention-oriented programs. Data from school financial reports often reveal an imbalance in spending, with more resources allocated to operational expenses than to targeted interventions such as mentorship programmes, academic support, or extracurricular activities that directly influence student retention. Additionally, schools in underprivileged areas frequently experience acute funding

shortages, leaving principals with insufficient resources to address the underlying causes of dropouts, such as poverty and lack of access to basic needs like school meals. Qualitative studies provide deeper insights into this issue by exploring the perspectives of school leaders and stakeholders. Interviews with principals often reveal that they view financial planning as a secondary concern compared to the immediate demands of daily school operations. Many principals report feeling overwhelmed by administrative duties and external pressures, such as meeting performance benchmarks, which divert their attention from strategic financial planning.

Respondents expressed concerns about the lack of targeted initiatives to support at-risk students, further highlighting the consequences of inadequate financial planning. In conclusion, these mixed findings underscore the critical need for targeted training programmes and greater financial autonomy for principals. In other words, increased cases of students' dropout from schools are partly attributed to the principals' inability to undertake sound financial planning to allocate resources in targeted students'-driven programmes which may ensure that they are constantly kept in school.

4.5 Principals' Financial Expenditure Practices and Students' Retention

The goal of the investigation was to look into how administrators' fiscal spending strategies affected secondary public educational institutions retained learners. The findings are displayed in Table 12;

Table 12: Views of Heads of Departments on the Influence of Principals' Financial Expenditure Practices on Students' Retention

Test Items	Ratings in %				
	SA	A	U	D	SD
In secondary public educational institutions, principals rarely prepare budget with focus on activities aimed at retaining students in school	59.3	13.0	7.4	9.3	11.1
In secondary public educational institutions, principals sometimes involve stakeholders during budgeting to suggest activities for retaining students in school	61.1	14.8	5.6	9.3	9.3
Principals often implement budget activities geared towards students' retention in secondary public educational institutions	48.1	14.8	5.6	14.8	16.7
In secondary public educational institutions, principals rarely adopt sound financial expenditure practices as a way of retaining students	51.7	13.2	7.4	18.5	9.3

Source: Field Data (2024)

Table 12 demonstrates that little over half (59.3%) of the Heads of Departments totally concurred regarding the opinion that, in secondary public educational institutions, principals rarely prepare budget with focus on activities aimed at retaining students in school with a paltry 11.1%) responding on the contrary. These findings are consistent with the conclusions of research undertaken by Johnson, Smith and Patel (2021) which also revealed that school principals often allocate budgets predominantly to administrative expenses, infrastructure maintenance, and staff salaries, leaving limited resources for targeted programs aimed at retaining students. This oversight stems from a lack of awareness of the direct relationship between budgeted retention activities and long-term school success. Similarly, a report by Anderson and Taylor (2022) emphasized that many school leaders view retention initiatives as secondary to academic programmes. They argue that insufficient professional development on strategic budgeting contributes to this issue.

Further, research by Moyo and Odhiambo (2023) explored budgetary practices in African public secondary schools. They found that budget constraints and governmental policies focused on quantitative outputs, such as enrollment and test scores, pressure principals to deprioritize learner retention-focused initiatives. Consequently, dropout rates remain high, especially among economically disadvantaged students, as budgets fail to address barriers such as lack of transportation or school meals. These findings underscore the urgent need for policy adjustments and training programmes to equip principals with skills for student-centered budgeting. Retention activities, though often perceived as non-essential, play a critical role in ensuring consistent student attendance, reducing dropout rates, and fostering inclusive learning environments.

In the same token, most of them (61.1%) strongly stated that, in public secondary schools, principals sometimes involve stakeholders during budgeting to suggest activities for retaining students in school while 26(14.8%) agreed. Only a small proportion of the HoDs (9.3%) opposed wholeheartedly. These discoveries corroborate the results of a research conducted by Addi-Racah and Gavish (2020), which found that involving stakeholders in the budgeting process enhances accountability and ensures that resources are allocated to activities addressing student needs.

These activities may include mentorship programs, extracurricular activities, and counseling services that cater to students' social and academic challenges. These results add credence to those of research conducted by Muriithi (2021) on Kenyan public secondary schools which revealed that when principals engaged stakeholders in budgeting, it led to the implementation of initiatives like feeding programs and scholarship schemes, which directly impacted student retention. Similarly, Akala and Karanja (2022) observed that schools with robust stakeholder involvement demonstrated higher success rates in addressing dropout causes, such as economic

hardship and lack of motivation. Despite these obstacles, principals who actively solicit input from stakeholders during budgeting build trust and foster a shared vision, creating a supportive environment for students. These findings underscore the importance of stakeholder collaboration in budgeting as a strategy for student retention. While challenges remain, the practice demonstrates significant potential in addressing students' multifaceted needs through inclusive and transparent decision-making processes. A fair proportion of the HoDs (48.1%) totally concurred with the view that principals often implement budget activities geared towards students' retention in public secondary school whereas 16.7% opposed wholeheartedly. Slightly more than half of the HoDs (51.7%) answered in favour of the opinion that, in secondary public institutions, principals rarely adopt sound financial expenditure practices as a way of retaining students. Only a paltry 9.3% opposed wholeheartedly.

These results support the claims made by Smith (2021) that school leaders often lack sufficient training in financial management, leading to misallocation of funds and underfunded initiatives that could help retain students. The results presented corroborate those of a study carried out by Brown and Green (2022) showed that principals frequently face budgetary constraints that limit their ability to invest in student retention strategies. This lack of investment is often linked to external factors such as inadequate state funding or bureaucratic inefficiencies.

The importance of sound financial management is emphasized in numerous reports, with experts urging schools to adopt more strategic financial practices to improve student outcomes. Overall, these findings indicate that although financial expenditure is critical to student retention, many principals still fail to implement effective strategies due to systemic challenges and limited resources. This is particularly evident in their struggle to adopt sound expenditure practices that enhance student retention.

Poor financial planning can result in inadequate infrastructure, limited learning materials, and substandard facilities, all of which contribute to a discouraging school environment. Consequently, students may feel disengaged, leading to higher dropout rates.

4.5.1 Inferential Analysis

To verify the impact of administrator’s financial expenditure practices on learners’ retention in secondary public institutions, for instance, information was obtained on how often (Very Often = 5, Often = 4, Sometimes = 3, Rarely = 2 and Never = 1) The administrators of the ten publicly accessible secondary educational institutions that were sampled involve stakeholders in budget preparation and The quantity of learners enrolled in secondary public education programs for the last four years (2020-2023).

Table 13 displays the outcomes:

Table 13: Principals’ Financial Expenditure Practices and Students’ Retention

Frequency of Principals’ Involvement of Stakeholders in Budgeting	Number of Students
4	787
2	764
3	896
3	617
2	648
1	564
3	818
5	909
3	733
2	658

Source: Field Data (2024)

According to Table 13, at publicly accessible secondary educational institutions with administrators carry out financial expenditure by frequently involving stakeholders, the number of students in such schools tend to be higher than those that rarely. This implies that, in secondary public educational institutions where administrators usually involve stakeholders in financial expenditure decisions, student enrollment tends to be higher.

This inclusive approach fosters transparency, trust, and collaboration among parents, teachers, and the community, encouraging a sense of ownership and commitment to the school's development. By addressing stakeholder concerns and aligning expenditures with student needs, schools can create better learning environments, attract more families, and retain students. Conversely, schools with limited stakeholder engagement often struggle with mismanagement and inadequate resources, discouraging enrollment. Active participation ensures accountability, promotes equitable resource distribution, and enhances the overall reputation and attractiveness of the school. These results were further examined using Pearson's product-moment Analysis; Table 14 displays the findings;

Table 14: Relationship Between Principals' Financial Expenditure Practices and Students' Retention

		Principals' Financial Expenditure Practices	Students' Retention
Principals' Financial Expenditure Practices	Pearson Correlation	1	.741*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.014
	N	10	10
Students' Retention	Pearson Correlation	.741*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.014	
	N	10	10

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

A coefficient of correlation of $r = 0.741$ and an associated significant level (the p-value) of 0.014 were produced by the Pearson Product Moments Correlation Test Analysis, as shown in Table 14. This was less than the predefined level of significance, 0.05; $p\text{-value} = 0.014 < 0.05$. This suggests that the financial expenditure habits of administrators have a statistically significant impact on the continued attendance of learners in secondary schools that were publicly funded. This further indicates that principals' financial expenditure practices play a pivotal role in influencing student retention in public secondary schools.

Effective allocation of funds towards critical areas such as learning resources, extracurricular activities, and infrastructure fosters an engaging and supportive school environment. Research indicates a statistically significant relationship between prudent financial management and improved retention rates, as students benefit from enhanced facilities and learning opportunities. Schools with transparent budgeting prioritize student welfare, addressing factors like affordability and inclusivity. Conversely, mismanagement often leads to resource shortages, directly impacting student engagement and dropout rates. Therefore, sound financial practices by principals are integral to sustaining higher retention in schools.

4.5.2 Thematic Analysis

In the course of the interviews, the principals, Chairs of BoM and bursars, however, did not respond in favour of the view that public secondary school principals rarely prepare budget with focus on activities aimed at retaining students in school. They stated that budgets are often prepared by taking into consideration activities which are aimed promoting learning and retention of students. Bursar, BSR1, noted;

In my secondary, we prepare budgets which are meant to capture the needs of students and fund programmes which are geared towards retaining bright but needy students at school.

Sub-county Auditors also noted that many students are owed fee balances by many students and yet schools still retain them. Schools have budget lines which cater for the basic needs of many needy learners at risk of dropping out without such support. Similar to scientific outcomes, these opinions further support the beliefs of Johnson et al (2021) which also revealed that school principals often allocate budgets predominantly to administrative expenses, infrastructure maintenance, and staff salaries, leaving limited resources for targeted programmes aimed at retaining students. This oversight stems from a lack of awareness of the direct relationship between budgeted retention

activities and long-term school success. These views also support those expressed by Anderson and Taylor (2022) who also noted school heads view retention initiatives as secondary to academic programmes. On stakeholders' involvement, the interviewees noted that stakeholders are crucial in budgeting processes and thus, make key decisions on students' retention in schools. Principal, P2, noted;

In the institution I come from, I always involve stakeholders in all stages of budget-making. This has created ownership of school programmes including developing and fundings of activities aimed at improving students' retention in school.

The Sub-county Auditors endorsed these opinions, stating that stakeholders are supposed to be part and parcel of budgeting process. This supports the views expressed by Addi-Raccah and Gavish (2020) that involving stakeholders in the budgeting process enhances accountability and ensures that resources are allocated to activities addressing student needs. In other words, principals who effectively involve stakeholders in the budgeting build trust and foster a shared vision, creating a supportive setting for students. These outcomes affirm the fact that, to ensure that policies key on students' retention are fully realized, role of stakeholders cannot be wished away during the budgeting processes.

4.5.3 Triangulation of Quantative and Qualitative Findings

From the mixed findings, principals adopt a multiplicity of financial expenditure practices aimed at reducing instances of students' dropout in public secondary schools. Quantitative data frequently show that budgets allocated explicitly for retention initiatives, such as mentoring programmes, extracurricular activities, and student support services, are minimal or absent. This suggests that principals rarely align budgetary priorities with the specific goal of retaining students. Such oversight could result from limited training in strategic financial planning or an overwhelming focus on immediate operational needs over long-term goals.

Qualitative findings offer deeper insights, highlighting that while principals sometimes involve stakeholders in the budgeting process, this engagement tends to be sporadic or surface-level. Stakeholders, including parents, teachers, and community members, could provide valuable input on the needs and preferences of students. However, their irregular participation limits the opportunity for collaborative efforts to design effective retention-focused initiatives. Despite these shortcomings, mixed findings affirm the fact that there is evidence that some budgeted activities, whether intentionally or not, indirectly support retention.

Examples include investments in improving classroom environments or enhancing teacher capacity, which can positively impact student satisfaction and performance. For significant progress, principals need to adopt a more intentional approach, actively involving stakeholders and aligning budgetary decisions with targeted retention strategies to foster a supportive and engaging school environment.

4.6 Principals' Financial Record-keeping Practices and Students' Retention

The study sought to determine how principals' financial record-keeping practices influence retention of secondary-level learners. The findings are displayed in Table 15;

Table 15: Views of Heads of Departments on the Influence of Principals' Financial Record-keeping Practices and Students' Retention

Test Items	Ratings				
	SA %	A %	U %	D %	SD %
In secondary public institutions, principals sometimes comply with finance principles which allocate resources to ensure retention of students	59.3	14.8	5.6	11.1	9.3
Principals rarely keep up-to-date financial records to provide information on how to adopt new strategies for students' retention in secondary public institutions	42.6	13.0	5.6	22.2	16.7
Principals rarely know how to undertake financial reconciliation so as to refocus resources on students' retention in secondary public institutions	40.7	9.3	7.4	29.6	13.0
In secondary public institutions, principals rarely know how to provide transparent financial reports as a way of improving students' retention	68.5	14.8	3.7	9.3	3.7

Source: Field Data (2024)

Table 15 demonstrates that just over half (59.3%) of the Heads of Departments totally concurred in regards to the opinion that, in public secondary schools, principals sometimes comply with finance principles which allocate resources to ensure retention of students whereas only 9.3% opposed wholeheartedly. The results are consistent with a study carried done by Gómez and Mendez (2022) which also revealed that principals are often tasked with managing limited budgets, and evidence suggests that adhering to finance principles such as transparency, efficiency, and equity enhances retention rates.

According to Gómez and Mendez (2022), efficient financial planning enables schools to offer co-curricular activities and support programs that foster student engagement and attendance. The study found that 76(42.6%) of the HoDs totally concurred with the view that principals rarely keep up-to-date financial records to provide information on how to adopt new strategies for students' retention in public secondary schools while 16.7% opposed wholeheartedly.

This implies that many principals struggle to maintain up-to-date financial records, which hinders effective planning and implementation of programs to retain students. This aligns with the results of a research conducted by Oduor, Achieng and Okumu (2021) which revealed that outdated financial practices limit the ability to allocate resources for initiatives such as scholarship programs, infrastructural improvements, and extracurricular activities, which are critical for enhancing student retention. Additionally, inadequate financial documentation contributes to poor accountability and transparency, discouraging stakeholders from contributing to school development.

In accordance with the survey, 73 (40.7%) of the HoDs totally concurred with the idea that administrators rarely know how to undertake financial reconciliation so as to refocus resources on students' retention in public secondary schools while 13.0% opposed wholeheartedly. This corroborates the findings of research conducted by Oluoch, Nyaboke and Ochieng (2021), which also found that many principals enter their roles with strong academic and administrative skills but limited knowledge of financial oversight, leaving them unprepared to align resources effectively with retention-focused strategies. Mugenda and Omondi (2020) also found that inadequate financial planning often results in misallocated budgets, depriving essential student retention programmes such as mentorship, extracurricular activities, and remedial lessons.

Furthermore, Onyango, Wanyama and Abuto (2022) noted that bureaucratic hurdles exacerbate this issue, as principals struggle with cumbersome auditing processes, reducing time and focus on implementing student-centric retention strategies. These results corroborate the conclusions of studies conducted by Njoroge and Kiplagat (2021) which found that targeted training programmes in financial reconciliation could equip principals to identify fiscal inefficiencies, channeling resources toward initiatives like bursaries for disadvantaged students and school infrastructure improvement.

These results demonstrate that the ability of principals to undertake effective financial reconciliation has been a challenge and thus, underscores the need for comprehensive policy reforms and training workshops to empower principals, ensuring financial management practices prioritize retention of learners in secondary public educational institutions. Most of the HoDs (68.5%) totally concurred in the belief that, in public secondary schools, principals rarely know how to provide transparent financial reports as a way of improving students' retention whereas 3.7% opposed wholeheartedly. This implies that transparency in public secondary schools indicates that many principals lack the requisite knowledge to provide clear and accurate financial reports, which could potentially improve student retention.

Transparency in school finances fosters trust among stakeholders, ensuring that funds are allocated effectively to address critical areas, such as infrastructure, learning materials, and support programmes. This aligns with the results of studies carried out by Obondo and Wanjiku (2021) which highlighted that principals in Kenyan public schools often lack training in financial management. This deficiency contributes to mistrust from parents and community members, which can lead to reduced financial support and negatively impact student retention. Mwangi and Otieno (2020) also noted that opaque financial practices discourage parental engagement, resulting in students dropping out due to financial challenges like unpaid fees or lack of essential materials.

This is also consistent with the outcomes of an investigation carried out by Smith, Brown and Green (2022) which reported that schools in low-income areas with transparent financial systems had higher retention rates, as parents felt reassured that funds were used effectively. They argued that proper training and policy enforcement are essential for improving financial transparency.

These findings indicate that principals' financial reporting practices are crucial in enhancing enhance student retention by building stakeholder trust and ensuring efficient resource allocation.

4.6.1 Inferential Analysis

To verify the impact of administrator's financial record-keeping practices on learners' retention in secondary public institutions, information was obtained from Sub-county Auditors on how often (Very Often = 5, Often = 4, Sometimes = 3, Rarely = 2 and Never = 1) the principals of the 10 sampled public secondary schools keep proper financial records for auditing and The quantity of learners enrolled in secondary public educational institutions for the last four years (2020-2023) as shown in Table 16:

Table 16: Principals' Financial Record-keeping Practices and Students' Retention

How Often Principals Keep Proper Financial Records	Number of Students in Public Secondary Schools
2	787
1	764
3	896
1	617
1	648
2	564
3	818
4	909
3	733
1	658

Source: Field Data (2024)

According to Table 16, at publicly listed secondary educational institutions with administrators often keep proper financial records, the number of students in such schools tend to be higher than those who do not. This indicates that schools with principals who maintain proper financial records tend to attract more students than those that do not. Proper financial management enhances transparency and accountability, fostering trust among parents and stakeholders. It allows schools to allocate resources effectively, improving infrastructure, learning materials, and staff support, which are

crucial for quality education. Parents are inclined to sign up youngsters for institutions demonstrating responsible financial practices, ensuring better learning environments. Conversely, schools lacking such management often face inefficiencies and diminished trust, leading to lower enrollment. Therefore, financial accountability directly influences a school's reputation and capacity to cater to a larger student population. These results were further analyzed using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Analysis, with the outcomes displayed in Table 17;

Table 17: Relationship Between Principals' Financial Record-keeping Practices and Students' Retention

		Principals' Financial Record-keeping Practices	Students' Retention
Principals' Financial Record-keeping Practices	Pearson Correlation	1	.723*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.027
	N	10	10
Students' Retention	Pearson Correlation	.723*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.027	
	N	10	10

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

A correlation coefficient of $r = 0.723$ and a corresponding significant level (p-value) of 0.027 were produced by the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Test Analysis, as shown in Table 17. This was less than the predefined threshold of significance, 0.05, meaning that $p\text{-value} = 0.027 < 0.05$. This suggests that the financial documentation methods of administrators have a statistically significant impact on the retention of pupils in secondary schools that are publicly funded. This further demonstrates that proper financial management ensures timely allocation of materials, such as instructional resources and infrastructure upkeep, and co-curricular support, fostering a conducive learning environment. Accurate records enable transparency, promoting trust among stakeholders like parents and donors, which often leads to sustained financial support.

Conversely, poor financial practices can result in mismanagement, limiting access to essential services like fee subsidies, meals, or scholarships, forcing students to drop out. Thus, robust financial record-keeping directly correlates with improved retention rates by addressing critical student needs, maintaining operational efficiency, and enhancing educational outcomes.

4.6.2 Thematic Analysis

During the interviews, the principals, Chairs of BoM and bursars, however, stated that principals always comply with finance principles which allocate resources to ensure retention of students. Principal, P3, noted;

I always ensure that all financial records are properly kept for auditing purposes. This has enabled my school to have adequate information to upon which to review our budgeting priorities and adopt those key budget lines which are crucial in enhancing students' retention at school

On their part, however, the Sub-county Auditors recalled that many administrators fail to maintain precise accounting records. Books of accounts, receipts and other financial inventories are haphazardly arranged. Similar to quantitative results, these opinions further bolster the opinions stated by Gómez and Mendez (2022) that many school heads do not keep proper financial records. This further indicates that keeping well-maintained financial records is still a major challenge to many public secondary school principals. This has hampered effective planning and implementation of programmes to retain students. On financial reconciliation, the interviewees also stated that this exercise is often a challenge to many principals as a way of refocusing resources on learners' retention in state funded secondary institutions. Sub-county Auditor, SA1, noted;

Many public secondary school principals still find it hard to ensure that their incomes match their expenditure. In other words, reconciling books of accounts still poses a major challenge to many school heads.

This further supports the viewpoints held by Oluoch et al (2021) that many principals have limited knowledge of financial oversight, leaving them unprepared to align resources effectively with retention-focused strategies. The interviewees also noted that many principals are still unable to prepare and provide transparent financial reports as a way of improving students' retention. This is consistent with the opinions stated by Mwangi and Otieno (2020) that many school heads lack skills to prepare transparent financial reports and thus, opaque financial practices discourage parental engagement, resulting in students dropping out due to financial challenges like unpaid fees or lack of essential resources. Similar to statistical evidence, these views further point to the fact that principals' financial reporting practices are crucial in enhancing enhance student retention by building stakeholder trust and ensuring efficient resource allocation.

4.6.3 Triangulation of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

Both quantitative and qualitative findings found that, in public secondary schools, many principals often neglect proper financial record-keeping, which can significantly impact student retention rates. Quantitative findings revealed a correlation between inadequate financial management and declining school performance, affecting students' academic experiences and retention. For instance, schools with poor budgeting and allocation of resources tend to suffer from inadequate learning materials, dilapidated infrastructure, and insufficient support services for students. These factors contribute to an environment where students may feel undervalued or unsupported, leading to higher dropout rates.

Qualitative findings also highlight the importance of financial transparency and accountability in fostering a positive school culture. When principals fail to provide clear, well-organized financial records, it undermines trust among stakeholders and hinders efforts to improve student retention.

Together, these findings underscore the crucial role that effective financial record-keeping plays in creating a supportive learning environment. Proper management of funds ensures that resources are directed toward improving the quality of education, supporting extracurricular activities, and maintaining facilities—all of which contribute to student engagement and retention in public secondary schools.

4.7 Principals’ Financial Monitoring/Evaluation Practices and Students’ Retention

The research investigation intended to look into the effects of principals’ financial monitoring and evaluation practices on students’ retention in secondary public educational institutions. The results are displayed in Table 18.

Table 18: Views of Heads of Departments on the Influence of Principals’ Financial Monitoring and Evaluation Practices Students’ Retention

Test Items	Ratings				
	SA %	A %	U %	D %	SD %
Principals rarely adhere to existing monitoring and evaluation system as a way of boosting students’ retention in secondary public educational institutions	50.0	14.8	7.4	11.1	16.7
Principals do not frequently monitor and evaluate how funds are used to improve students’ retention in secondary public educational institutions	68.5	25.9	1.9	1.9	1.9
In secondary public educational institutions, principals often prepare audit reports and actions which has improved students’ retention in secondary public educational institutions	44.4	18.5	7.4	20.4	9.3
In secondary public educational institutions, M & E practices adopted by principals have not led to improved students’ retention	42.9	16.7	5.6	9.3	25.9

Source: Field Data (2024)

Table 18 shows that half (50.0%) of the Heads of Departments totally concurred with the view that principals rarely adhere to existing monitoring and evaluation system as a way of boosting students’ retention in public secondary schools whereas 16.7%

opposed wholeheartedly. This indicates that although M&E systems are designed to track students' academic progress and identify potential barriers to retention, many principals fail to effectively adhere to these systems. This aligns with the results of studies carried out by Murray (2021) that lack of adherence is often due to limited training, inadequate resources, and a lack of accountability within school management structures. According to Murray (2021), there is a lack of clear understanding regarding the connection between regular monitoring, evaluation, and student outcomes, resulting in inconsistent use of M&E data to inform decision-making. This implies that, while some schools successfully integrate M&E practices to improve retention rates by identifying struggling students early, others suffer from poor implementation, which undermines the potential benefits of such systems.

Most (68.5%) of the HoDs totally concurred in the belief that principals do not frequently monitor and evaluate how funds are used to improve students' retention in public secondary schools whereas a paltry 1.9% opposed wholeheartedly. These discoveries corroborate the findings of an investigation conducted by Smith (2021) that principals, overwhelmed by administrative tasks, may not have the necessary time or expertise to ensure that funds are being used for their intended purposes, particularly in retention efforts.

According to Patel (2023), the lack of robust monitoring mechanisms results in the mismanagement of funds, which undermines efforts to implement programs designed to keep students in school. The absence of clear accountability frameworks and proper evaluation tools prevents principals from assessing the impact of their financial decisions on student retention. Consequently, without regular oversight, resources that could address dropout rates, such as counseling services and extracurricular activities, are often underutilized or misdirected.

These gaps in financial monitoring are a critical barrier to improving retention of students in secondary public educational institutions. A fair proportion of the HoDs (44.4%) totally concurred in the belief that, in state funded secondary institutions, principals often prepare audit reports and actions which has improved students' retention in public secondary schools while 9.3% opposed wholeheartedly. This corroborates the findings of studies carried out by Okumu (2021) which revealed that principals in many public secondary schools fail to prepare or act on audit reports. This lack of oversight contributes to inefficient use of resources and poor management practices, both of which can directly impact the quality of education.

Without accurate financial or operational audits, schools struggle to address underlying issues that might affect students' academic experience, ultimately leading to decreased retention. According to Okumu (2021), while some schools attempt to implement retention strategies, a lack of structured audit processes prevents the identification of areas for improvement. Furthermore, audit reports offer valuable insights into areas such as teacher performance, curriculum effectiveness, and facilities management, all of which are essential factors in ensuring that students remain engaged and continue their education. These results demonstrate that audit reports are critical in managing school operations and improving retention rates. Principals who neglect these tools are likely to miss opportunities to address systemic problems that hinder student success.

In the same token, a fair majority (42.9%) of the HoDs totally concurred in the belief that, in secondary public institutions, M & E practices adopted by principals have not led to improved students' retention while slightly more than a quarter (25.9%) opposed wholeheartedly. These findings support the conclusions of an investigation undertaken by Ochieng and Otieno (2021) which found that, while principals adopted various monitoring and evaluation strategies, such as tracking student performance and

attendance, the results in terms of retention were minimal. The researchers further established that principals often lacked the resources and support needed to act on the data collected, which further hindered the potential impact of M&E practices on retention. Similarly, in Uganda, a study by Nakitende and Kigozi (2020) underlined how crucial data-driven choice-making is in school management. However, they noted that the M&E practices adopted by principals often lacked a clear focus on addressing the underlying causes of student dropouts, such as socio-economic challenges, poor teaching quality, and lack of parental engrossment.

Also, a study carried out by Kamau and Mwangi (2022) argued that effective M&E systems could improve student retention if tailored to the specific needs of students, supported by strong leadership and community involvement. However, they stressed that for these systems to be effective, they must be continuously refined, with real-time feedback mechanisms and targeted interventions. These results confirm that, despite the implementation of various M&E strategies, such as regular assessments, feedback loops, and progress tracking, the underlying factors contributing to retention, such as socio-economic challenges, lack of parental support, and inadequate infrastructure, remain largely unaddressed. Additionally, principals often focus on academic performance rather than holistic student well-being.

4.7.1 Inferential Analysis

To confirm the impact of the educational administrators' financial monitoring and evaluation practices regarding secondary public educational institutions retention among learners, information was gathered from the administrators of the How frequently ten state-run secondary schools were sampled (Very Often = 5, Often = 4, Sometimes = 3, Rarely = 2 and Never = 1) they undertake financial monitoring and evaluation and t the

total number of learners enrolled in secondary educational institutions throughout the 2020–2023 timeframe. The findings are displayed in Table 19:

Table 19: Principals’ Financial Monitoring/Evaluation Practices and Students’ Retention

How Often Principals Undertake Financial Monitoring and Evaluation	Number of Students
3	787
2	764
4	896
2	617
2	648
1	564
4	818
5	909
3	733
2	658

Table 19 demonstrates that in secondary public educational institutions with administrators often undertake financial monitoring and evaluation, the number of students in such schools tend to be higher than those who do not. This implies that principals who actively engage in these practices ensure optimal resource allocation, thereby enhancing the overall educational environment. Schools with robust financial oversight often experience improved facilities, better teaching materials, and increased extracurricular offerings, all of which attract more students. This fosters a reputation for quality education, further increasing enrollment and retention numbers. Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Analysis was used to further examine these findings. is seen in the following Table 20;

Table 20: Relationship Between Principals’ Financial Monitoring/Evaluation Practices and Students’ Retention

		Principals’ Financial Monitoring and Evaluation Practices	Students’ Retention
Principals’ Financial Monitoring and Evaluation Practices	Pearson Correlation	1	.598*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.044
	N	10	10
Students’ Retention	Pearson Correlation	.598*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.044	
	N	10	10

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The Pearson Product Moment Correlation Test yielded a correlation coefficient of $r = 0.598$ and a corresponding p-value of 0.044, as shown in Table 20. The results show a statistically significant association between principals' financial monitoring and evaluation techniques and student retention in public secondary schools, since the p-value is less than the predetermined significance threshold of 0.05 ($p = 0.044 < 0.05$). These findings further point to the fact that effective financial monitoring and oversight play a pivotal role in fostering an environment conducive to student retention. Administrators who engage in rigorous financial monitoring are better equipped to allocate resources judiciously, ensuring that essential services, such as instructional materials, extracurricular activities, and student support systems, are sufficiently funded. In other words, ensuring effective monitoring and evaluation not only enhances resource allocation but also strengthens community ties, ultimately contributing to higher rates of secondary public educational institutions retention rates.

4.7.2 Thematic Analysis

Throughout the interviews, principals, Chairs of BoM and bursars, however, stated that principals always follow laid down financial regulations on monitoring and evaluation system as a way of boosting students’ retention in public secondary schools. Principal, P4;

In my secondary school, there are clear guidelines for undertaking monitoring evaluation of financial operations, which I always adhere to. I must always follow these guidelines and prepare a report which must be submitted to the Ministry of Education and other donors before release of any further funding of school programmes. This has enabled continued funding of our school projects and improved students' enrollment and retention rates.

These views were echoed by the Sub-county Auditors who stated that it is a requirement for all school heads to adhere to monitoring and evaluation regulations and procedures. Despite these contradictions expressed by respondents, these findings underscore the vitality of adherence to laid down procedures for financial monitoring and evaluation by school heads. Just like quantitative findings, these views also lend credence to the views expressed by Murray (2021) that there is a lack of clear understanding regarding the connection between regular monitoring, evaluation, and student outcomes, resulting in inconsistent use of M&E data to inform decision-making. On the frequency of monitoring and evaluation, the interviewees responded on the contrary and stated that M&E is a continuous process and principals always undertake the activities. Principal, P5, noted;

In my school, I am required to regularly monitor the progress of school projects and financial activities in the school. I frequently monitor and evaluate how funds are used to improve students' retention.

These views, though differing from those expressed by majority of the teachers, indicate that regular monitoring and evaluation of financial activities is crucial in enhancing students' retention in public secondary schools. Just as indicated by Smith (2021), principals, overwhelmed by administrative tasks, may not have the necessary time or expertise to ensure that funds are being used for their intended purposes, particularly in retention efforts. This is because, without regular oversight, resources that could address dropout rates, such as counseling services and extracurricular activities, are often underutilized or misdirected. On the question of financial audit reports, the interviews also noted that it is a requirement that all school heads prepare audit reports and action

plans as a strategy for improving students' retention in public secondary schools. Sub-county Auditor, SA2, noted;

At the end of every fiscal year, all school heads are required to submit all financial records necessary for drawing audit reports. They are also required any internal audit reports. This is useful for making changes where necessary on financial activities aimed at improving students' retention in public secondary schools

As indicated earlier, these views also indicate that, despite the implementation of various M&E strategies, such as regular assessments, feedback loops, and progress tracking, the underlying factors contributing to retention, such as socio-economic challenges, lack of parental support, and inadequate infrastructure, remain largely unaddressed. In other words, principals often focus on academic performance rather than holistic student well-being.

4.7.3 Triangulation of Quantitative and Qualitative Results

Both quantitative and qualitative findings reveal that many school principals inadequately engage in regular financial monitoring and evaluation as a strategic approach to enhance student retention. Public secondary schools with robust financial oversight mechanisms tend to experience higher student retention rates. However, statistical analysis reveals that a significant portion of principals neglect these practices, often leading to misallocated resources and insufficient support for student services. This lack of financial diligence correlates negatively with retention outcomes, indicating that effective financial management is crucial for fostering an environment conducive to student success.

From the mixed findings, many principals prioritize immediate operational needs over long-term strategic financial planning, which diminishes their capacity to address retention challenges effectively. Furthermore, the absence of systematic financial review processes hampers informed decision-making, ultimately impacting the quality

of educational experiences provided to students. In conclusion, the convergence of quantitative data and qualitative insights underscores a critical gap in financial management among school principals, suggesting that regular monitoring and evaluation are essential strategies for improving student retention in public secondary schools.



CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter summarizes the key study findings, conclusions, recommendations, and proposals for further research, as mentioned in the research goals.

5.1 Summary of Research Findings

This portion summarizes the results of the study objectives, which consisted of: evaluating the state for learner's retention in government-run secondary institutions and the impact of principals' financial planning, expenditure, record-keeping and monitoring and evaluation practices on students' retention in secondary State-run institutions in Chonyi Sub-county.

5.1.1 Status of Students' Retention

The research indicated that student retention rates in secondary State-run institutions are notably low. Thanks to the government's 100% transition policy, enrollment figures for Form I in these schools have risen steadily from 2018 to 2023. Nevertheless, after four consecutive years of attendance, the percentage of pupils who finish secondary schooling stays minimal. This highlights that the ambitious goals of secondary education are not being met in contexts where student retention is inadequate, resulting in significant wastage. In essence, the challenge of student retention in secondary schools is a pressing concern for the education systems in many developing nations.

5.1.2 Principals' Financial Planning Practices and Students' Retention

The research indicated that principals in secondary State-run institutions seldom participate in essential financial planning practices that could enhance student retention. This deficiency is linked to several factors, including a lack of training in financial management, insufficient funding, and competing administrative demands.

Many principals do not possess formal training in budgeting and resource allocation, which hampers their capacity to effectively utilize available funds for programs aimed at retention. Analysis of school financial reports often shows a disproportionate allocation of resources, with a greater emphasis on operational costs rather than on specific initiatives like mentorship programs, academic assistance, or extracurricular activities that have a direct impact on student retention. The findings also highlighted that secondary State-run institutions in economically disadvantaged areas frequently face severe funding shortages, leaving principals with inadequate resources to tackle the underlying cause of student dropouts, such as poverty and the lack of essential services like school meals.

Many principals expressed feeling overwhelmed by administrative responsibilities and external pressures, such as the need to meet performance targets, which distracts them from engaged in smart financial preparation. Additionally, the analysis revealed that the rising rates of student dropouts can be partially attributed to principals' challenges in implementing effective financial planning to allocate resources toward student-centered programs that could help keep students in school.

5.1.3 Principals' Financial Expenditure Practices and Students' Retention

The research indicated that school administrators employ a variety of financial expenditure practices aimed at minimizing student dropout rates in public secondary schools. However, budgets specifically designated for retention efforts, such as mentoring programs, extracurricular activities, and student support services, are often insufficient or nonexistent. This implies that principals infrequently prioritize budget allocations with the explicit aim of student retention. Such a gap may stem from inadequate training in strategic financial management or a predominant focus on immediate operational demands rather than long-term objectives.

Stakeholders, including parents, educators, and community members, could offer essential insights into the needs and preferences of students. Nevertheless, their sporadic involvement hinders the potential for collaborative initiatives designed to enhance retention. These observations highlight the necessity for principals to adopt a more deliberate strategy, engaging stakeholders and aligning financial decisions with specific retention goals to create a more supportive and engaging educational environment.

5.1.4 Principals' Financial Record-keeping Practices and Students' Retention

The research revealed that several principals in secondary State-run institutions frequently overlook the importance of maintaining accurate financial records, which can adversely affect student retention rates. Schools that struggle with budgeting and resource allocation often face challenges such as insufficient learning materials, deteriorating infrastructure, and a lack of adequate support services for students. These issues create an atmosphere where students may feel neglected or unsupported, resulting in increased dropout rates. Additionally, the study highlighted that financial transparency and accountability are essential for cultivating a positive school culture.

When principals do not provide clear and organized financial documentation, it erodes trust among stakeholders and obstructs initiatives aimed at enhancing student retention. Collectively, these insights emphasize the vital importance of effective financial record-keeping in fostering a nurturing educational environment. Proper management of funds and record-keeping ensures that resources are effectively utilized to enhance educational quality, support extracurricular programs, and maintain facilities, all of which are critical for promoting student engagement and retention in public secondary schools.

5.1.5 Principals' Financial Monitoring/Evaluation Practices and Students' Retention

The research revealed that many school administrators fail to engage adequately in ongoing financial monitoring and evaluation, which is essential for improving student retention. Secondary State-run institutions that implement strong financial oversight mechanisms generally see higher rates of student retention. Conversely, many principals overlook these practices, resulting in misallocation of resources and inadequate support for student services. This lack of financial attention has a detrimental effect on retention outcomes, underscoring the importance of effective financial management in creating a supportive atmosphere for student achievement. Additionally, the investigation indicated that many principals focus on immediate operational demands rather than long-term strategic financial planning, which weakens their ability to tackle retention issues effectively. Moreover, the lack of structured financial review processes obstructs informed decision-making, ultimately affecting the quality of educational experiences available to students.

5.2 Conclusions

Drawing on the aforementioned observations, student retention rates in secondary State-run institutions are low. The approach taken by the government of 100 percent transitioning has contributed to a consistent increase in enrollment for Form I from 2018 to 2023. However, despite this rise in admission, the percentage of learners who successfully complete their secondary institution after four years remains disappointingly low. Findings from the research indicate that principals in secondary State-run institutions seldom engage in critical financial planning practices that could potentially improve student retention. This lack of engagement has resulted in an increase in student dropout rates within these institutions.

The investigation identified that while principals implement various financial expenditure strategies aimed at reducing dropout rates, budgets allocated specifically for retention initiatives, such as mentoring programs, extracurricular activities, and student support services, are frequently inadequate or entirely absent. Furthermore, the research highlighted that many principals neglect the importance of maintaining precise financial records, which can negatively impact student retention. Schools that encounter difficulties in budgeting and resource allocation often experience issues such as a shortage of learning materials, declining infrastructure, and insufficient support services for students. Additionally, it is clear that many school leaders do not sufficiently participate in ongoing financial monitoring and evaluation, which is crucial for enhancing student retention.

5.3 Recommendations of the Study

This section outlines the investigation recommendations in terms of practice, policy and further research.

5.3.1 Recommendations for Practice

The report provides a number of recommendations:

- i. On principals' financial planning practices and learner's retention in Secondary educational institutions that are publicly funded, the principals should adopt planning strategies which are aimed at ensuring that much resources are allocated for learner-centered activities to keep as many students as possible in school.
- ii. On principals' financial expenditure practices and students' retention in Secondary educational institutions that are publicly funded, the principals should develop a budget with learner-centered programmes aimed at ensuring that students never drop out of school.

- iii. On principals' financial record-keeping practices and students' retention in Secondary educational institutions that are publicly funded, the principals should ensure that all the financial records are properly kept for proper auditing.
- iv. On principals' financial monitoring/evaluation practices and students' retention in Secondary educational institutions that are publicly funded, the Ministry of Education should train school heads on how to undertake monitoring and evaluation of financial operations within their schools.

5.3.2 Recommendations for Policy

The Ministry of Education should implement a mandatory, standardized financial management training program for all public secondary school principals. This training would focus on equipping principals with key financial competencies, including budgeting, accounting, procurement, and resource allocation skills.

5.3.3 Recommendations for Further Research

- i. An investigation should be conducted to examine the degree to which administrators' attitude influences students' retention in Secondary educational institutions that are publicly funded.
- ii. A study could be conducted to examine the influence of principals' management strategies on students' retention in Secondary educational institutions that are publicly funded.
- iii. An investigation ought to be undertaken to assess how principals' personality characteristics influence students' retention in Secondary educational institutions that are publicly funded.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX I: LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

August 2024

Dear Sir/Madam,

RE: PERMISSION TO CARRY OUT RESEARCH IN YOUR SECONDARY SCHOOL

At Mount Kenya University, I am enrolled in a Master of Education program in Educational Management, Leadership, and Administration. My topic is: **Influence of Free Secondary Education Funds Management Practices on Students' Retention in Public Secondary Schools in Chonyi Sub-county, Kilifi County, Kenya**. In order to do this, you were specifically selected to take part in the research. I respectfully ask that all responders take part in the investigation completely. Your identity will not appear in the final product, and the data you submit will only be utilized for study-related reasons. You will get access to the investigation's results upon demand.

Your collaboration and support are going to be greatly valued.

Thank you in advance,

Yours faithfully

Dorris Furaha Mashaka

APPENDIX II
INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Dear respondent,

The investigator is pursuing studies at Mount Kenya University's Master of Education program in Educational Management, Leadership, and Administration, carrying out research on **Influence of Free Secondary Education Funds Management Practices on Students' Retention in Public Secondary Schools in Chonyi Sub-county, Kilifi County, Kenya**. Please allow me a moment for this investigation, since I will be asking you certain inquiries. I promise to keep all of your details anonymous and secure. Only the investigator will be granted permission to use what you have submitted, and none of the documentation will have your identity. You will not directly gain anything from the investigation. You are free to change things up and stop participating in the investigation at any point prior to or throughout it. For this engagement, we will not provide any funding or resources. Kindly complete the following form if you would want to get involved in this investigation.

Participant:

-----	-----	-----
Code of Participant	Signature	Date

Researcher:

-----	-----	-----
Name of Researcher	Signature	Date

APPENDIX III

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR HEADS OF DEPARTMENTS

Dear respondent,

I'm a Mount Kenya University master's student studying Educational Management, Leadership and Administration. My area of focus is **Influence of Free Secondary Education Funds Management Practices on Students' Retention in Public Secondary Schools in Chonyi Sub-County, Kilifi County, Kenya.**

Section A: Demographic Information

Instructions: Kindly select the box next to the response that best fits your response and complete in the blanks.

1. Gender: Male Female

2. Highest qualification

Diploma Degree Post-graduate

Section B: Students' Retention

1. State the quantity of learners who have been retained in your school for the last four years?

.....

2. What steps can be implemented to enhance students' retention rates in your institution?

.....

Section C: Financial Planning Practices and Students' Retention Rates

1. On a scale 1-3, kindly indicate the frequency with which your school undertakes the financial planning activities in your school

Financial Mobilization Practices	Very Often (3)	Rarely (2)	Never (1)
Establish financial goals			
Set financial performance targets			
Develop financial plans			
Allocation of finances			

2. Please indicate how much you concur with the impact of financial planning practices on students' retention rates in your school

Key: **SA**-Strongly Agree **A**-Agree **U**-Undecided **D**-Disagree **SD**-Strongly Disagree

Test Items	SA	A	U	D	SD
	5	4	3	2	1
My principal rarely sets financial goals aimed at ensuring that all learners are retained in my public secondary school					
In my school, the principal sometimes set financial performance targets which has improved students' retention					
My principal does not regularly set financial plans to achieve as a way of ensuring that all students are retained in my school					
In my school, the principal sometimes ensures prudent allocation of financial resources to students' academic programmes as a way of retaining them in school					
Despite the financial planning done by my principal, many students still drop out of school					

Section D: Financial Expenditure Practices and Students' Retention

1. On a rating system of 1-3, rate how frequent your school undertakes the following financial expenditure practices

Financial Expenditure Practices	Very Often (3)	Rarely (2)	Never (1)
Budget preparation			
Involvement of stakeholders			
Budget implementation			

2. Rate your level of agreement with these assertions on the influence of financial expenditure practices on learner's retention rates in your institution

Test Items	SA	A	U	D	SD
	5	4	3	2	1
In my school, the principal rarely prepares budget with focus on activities aimed at retaining students					
In my school, the principal sometimes involves stakeholders during budgeting to suggest activities for retaining students					
My principal often implements budget activities geared towards students' retention in school					
In my school, the principal rarely adopts sound financial expenditure practices as a way of retaining students					

Section E: Financial Record-keeping Practices and Students' Retention

1. On a scale of 1-3, indicate how frequent your school undertakes the following financial record-keeping practices

Financial Recording Practices	Very Often (3)	Rarely (2)	Never (1)
Compliance with finance principles			
Up-to-date financial recording			
Financial reconciliation			
Transparent financial reporting			

2. Please indicate the degree to which you concur with these claims on the financial record-keeping practices on students' retention rates in your school

Test Items	SA	A	U	D	SD
	5	4	3	2	1
In my school, the principal sometimes complies with finance principles which allocate resources to ensure retention of students					
My principal rarely keeps up-to-date financial records to provide information on how to adopt new strategies for students' retention in school					
My principal rarely knows how to undertake financial reconciliation so as to refocus resources on students' retention in school					
In my school, the principal rarely knows how to provide transparent financial reports as a way of improving students' retention					

Section F: Financial Monitoring/Evaluation Practices and Students' Retention

1. On a scale of 1-3, rate how often your school undertakes financial monitoring and evaluation activities

Financial performance	Very Often (3)	Rarely (2)	Never (1)
Existence of M&E system			
Frequency of M&E			
Audit report corrective and action plans			

2. Please indicate the degree to which you concur with these assertions on the effect of financial monitoring and evaluation practices on students' retention rates in your school

Test Items	SA	A	U	D	SD
	5	4	3	2	1
My principal rarely adheres to existing monitoring and evaluation system as a way of boosting students' retention in school					
My principal does not frequently monitor and evaluate how funds are used to improve students' retention in school					
In my school, the principal often prepares audit reports and actions which has improved students' retention in school					

Thanks

Dorris Mashaka



APPENDIX IV

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR PRINCIPALS, CHAIRS OF BoM AND BURSARS

Dear interviewee,

I'm a Mount Kenya University Master's student in Educational Management, Leadership and Administration. My area of study is **Influence of School Management Financial Practices on Students' Retention in Public Secondary Schools in Chonyi Sub-County, Kilifi County, Kenya.**

Section A: Demographic Information

1. Gender: _____
2. What is your educational level? _____

Section B: Students' Retention

1. What is the count of learners who have been retained in your institution for the last four years?
2. What steps may be done to enhance students' retention rates in your institution?

Section C: Financial Planning Practices and Students' Retention Rates

1. How often frequent does your school undertake financial planning activities?
2. How has financial planning practices influenced students' retention rates in your school?
3. How may financial planning techniques be enhanced, in your perspective, to enhance students' retention rates in your school?

Section D: Financial Expenditure Practices and Students' Retention

1. How often does your school undertake financial expenditure practices?
2. What has been the effect of financial expenditure practices on students' retention rates in your school?
3. What improvements, in your opinion, can be made on financial expenditure practices to enhance students' retention rates in your school?

Section E: Financial Record-keeping Practices and Students' Retention

1. How frequent does your school carry out financial record-keeping practices?
2. To what extent have financial record-keeping practices affected students' retention rates in your school?
3. What improvements, in your opinion, can be made to the financial record-keeping practices to enhance students' retention rates in your school?

Section F: Financial Monitoring/Evaluation Practices and Students' Retention

1. How frequent does your school carry out financial monitoring and evaluation activities?
2. How have financial monitoring and evaluation practices influenced students' retention rates in your school?
3. In what ways can financial monitoring and evaluation practices be enhanced to improve students' retention rates in your school?

Thanks

Dorris Mashaka

APPENDIX V

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR SUB-COUNTY AUDITORS

Dear respondent,

I'm a Mount Kenya University Master's student in Educational Management, Leadership and Administration. My area of study is **Influence of School Management Financial Practices on Students' Retention in Public Secondary Schools in Chonyi Sub-County, Kilifi County, Kenya.**

Section A: Demographic Information

1. Gender: _____
2. What is your educational level? _____

Section B: Students' Retention

1. How many learners are there that have been retained in secondary State-run institutions for the last four years?
2. What steps can be taken to improve the degree of retention of learners in secondary public educational institutions?

Section C: Financial Planning Practices and Students' Retention Rates

1. How often frequent do secondary State-run institutions undertake financial planning activities?
2. How has financial planning practices influenced the degree of retention of learners in secondary public educational institutions?
3. How may financial planning techniques be enhanced, in your perspective, to enhance students' retention rates in secondary public institutions?

Section D: Financial Expenditure Practices and Students' Retention

1. How often do secondary State-run institutions undertake financial expenditure practices?

2. What has been the effect of financial expenditure practices on the degree of retention of learners in secondary public educational institutions?
3. What improvements, in your opinion, can be made on financial expenditure practices in order to improve the level of student permanence in public secondary educational institutions?

Section E: Financial Record-keeping Practices and Students' Retention

1. How frequent do secondary State-run institutions carry out financial record-keeping practices?
2. To what extent have financial record-keeping practices affected the degree of retention of learners in secondary public educational institutions?
3. What improvements, in your opinion, can be made to the financial record-keeping practices to enhance students' retention rates in public secondary schools?

Section F: Financial Monitoring/Evaluation Practices and Students' Retention

1. How frequent do secondary State-run institutions carry out financial monitoring and evaluation activities?
2. How have financial monitoring and evaluation practices influenced the degree of retention of learners in secondary public educational institutions?
3. In what ways can financial monitoring and evaluation practices be enhanced to improve the degree of retention of learners in secondary public educational institutions?

Thanks

Dorris Mashaka

APPENDIX VI

ETHICAL CLEARANCE FROM MOUNT KENYA UNIVERSITY



REF: MKU/ISERC/4423
TO: DORRIS FURAHA MASHAKA

Date: 23 September 2024

REG: MED/2019/45761

Dear Sir/Madam,

RE: INFLUENCE OF FREE SECONDARY EDUCATION FUNDS MANAGEMENT PRACTICES ON STUDENTS' RETENTION IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN CHONYI SUB-COUNTY, KILIFI COUNTY, KENYA

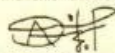
This is to inform you that **Mount Kenya University** has reviewed and approved your above research proposal. Your application approval number is **3144**. The approval period is **23/09/2024 - 22/09/2025**.

This approval is subject to compliance with the following requirements;

- i. Only approved documents including informed consents, study instruments, MTA will be used
- ii. All changes including amendments, deviations and violations are submitted for review and approval by **Mount Kenya University**
- iii. Death and life-threatening problems and serious adverse events or unexpected adverse events whether related or unrelated to the study must be reported to **Mount Kenya University** within 72 hours of notification
- iv. Any changes, anticipated or otherwise that may increase the risks or affect the safety or welfare of study participants and others or affect the integrity of the research must be reported to **Mount Kenya University** within 72 hours
- v. Clearance for export of biological specimens must be obtained from relevant institutions
- vi. Submission of a request for renewal of approval at least 60 days prior to expiry of the approval period. Attach a comprehensive progress report to support the renewal
- vii. Submission of an executive summary report within 90 days upon completion of the study to **Mount Kenya University**

Prior to commencing your study, you will be expected to obtain a research license from National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) <https://research-portal.nacosti.go.ke> and also obtain other clearances needed.

Yours sincerely,




Dr. Alfred Owino, PhD
Chairman, Mount Kenya University ISERC



APPENDIX VII

INTRODUCTION LETTER FROM THE SCHOOL OF POSTGRADUATE
STUDIES OF MOUNT KENYA UNIVERSITY



Mount Kenya University

DIRECTORATE OF GRADUATE STUDIES

MED/2019/45761

26th September, 2024

*National Commission for Science Technology & Innovation (NACOSTI)
Off Waiyaki, Upper Kabete
P.O Box 30623- 00100
NAIROBI, KENYA*

Dear Sir / Madam,


RE: DORRIS FURAHA MASHAKA- REGISTRATION NO. MED/2019/45761


The purpose of this letter is to introduce the above named student who is pursuing **Master of Education** in the **Department of Educational Management and Curriculum Studies** in the **School of Education**.

The title of the research is **“Influence of Free Secondary Education Funds Management Practices on Students’ Retention in Public Secondary Schools in Chonyi Sub -County, Kilifi County, Kenya.”** It has been cleared by the University’s Ethics Review Committee (Certificate attached) and now has to proceed to the field to collect data between **October, 2024 and December, 2024**.

Any assistance accorded to the student will be highly appreciated.

Thank you.


Dr. Samuel M. Karenga, Ph.D
Director, Graduate Studies
Enc.


Mount Kenya University
P.O. Box 342-01000 THIKA
Office of the Director,
Graduate Studies

Main Campus, General Kago Road, P.O. Box 342-01000 Thika.
Cell: +254 709 153 000 | +254 709 153 200

APPENDIX IX

RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION FROM COUNTY COMMISSIONER, KILIFI



**OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
MINISTRY OF INTERIOR AND NATIONAL ADMINISTRATION
State Department for Internal Security & National Administration**

Telephone: Kilifi 7522103
Fax: 041-7522474
Email: cckilificoordination@gmail.com

County Commissioner
Kilifi County
P.O. Box 29 - 80108
KILIFI

When replying please quote:

Ref. No. EDUC.12/7 VOL.12/18

Date: 15th October, 2024

DORRIS FURAHA MASHAKA
P.O.BOX 16990 - 80100
MOMBASA

RE: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION
DORRIS FURAHA MASHAKA LICENSE NO: NACOSTI/P/24/40749

Your unreferenced letter date 12th October, 2024 on the above subject matter refers.

This office has no objection with your carrying research on *"Influence of Free Secondary Education Funds Management Practices on Students' Retention in Public Secondary Schools in Chonyi Sub County, Kilifi County, Kenya"* which is scheduled between 11th October, 2024 to 11th October, 2025 in Chonyi Sub County, Kilifi County so long as it is conducted within Ministry of Education Guidelines.

You are therefore required to liaise with the County Director of Education for guidance.

Thank you.

COUNTY COMMISSIONER
KILIFI COUNTY
P. O. Box 29 - 80108
KILIFI

MISKEY AHMED
FOR: COUNTY COMMISSIONER
KILIFI

c.c.
Deputy County Commissioners
Chonyi Sub County
Kilifi County

County Director of Education
Kilifi County

Chairman
Mount Kenya University ISERC

APPENDIX X

RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION FROM COUNTY DIRECTOR OF
EDUCATION, KILIFI



MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
State Department of Early Learning and Basic Education
KILIFI COUNTY

Telephone 041-7522432
EMAIL: cdekilifcounty@yahoo.com
Fax no. 7522432
When replying/telephoning quote

County Education Office
P O Box 42 -80108
KILIFI

Ref: KLF/CDE/G.10/4/85

15th October, 2024

The Sub County Director of Education
CHONYI

RE: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION
DORRIS FURAHA MASHAKA - LICENSE NO: NACOSTI/P/24/40749

The abovenamed student has been authorized to carry out research on "*Influence of Free Secondary Education Funds Management Practices on Students' Retention in Public Secondary Schools*".

The Research study will be conducted in Kilifi County, **Chonyi Sub County** starting from **11th October, 2024** to **11th October, 2025**.

Any assistance accorded will be highly appreciated.

VERONICAH KALUNGU
COUNTY DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION
KILIFI



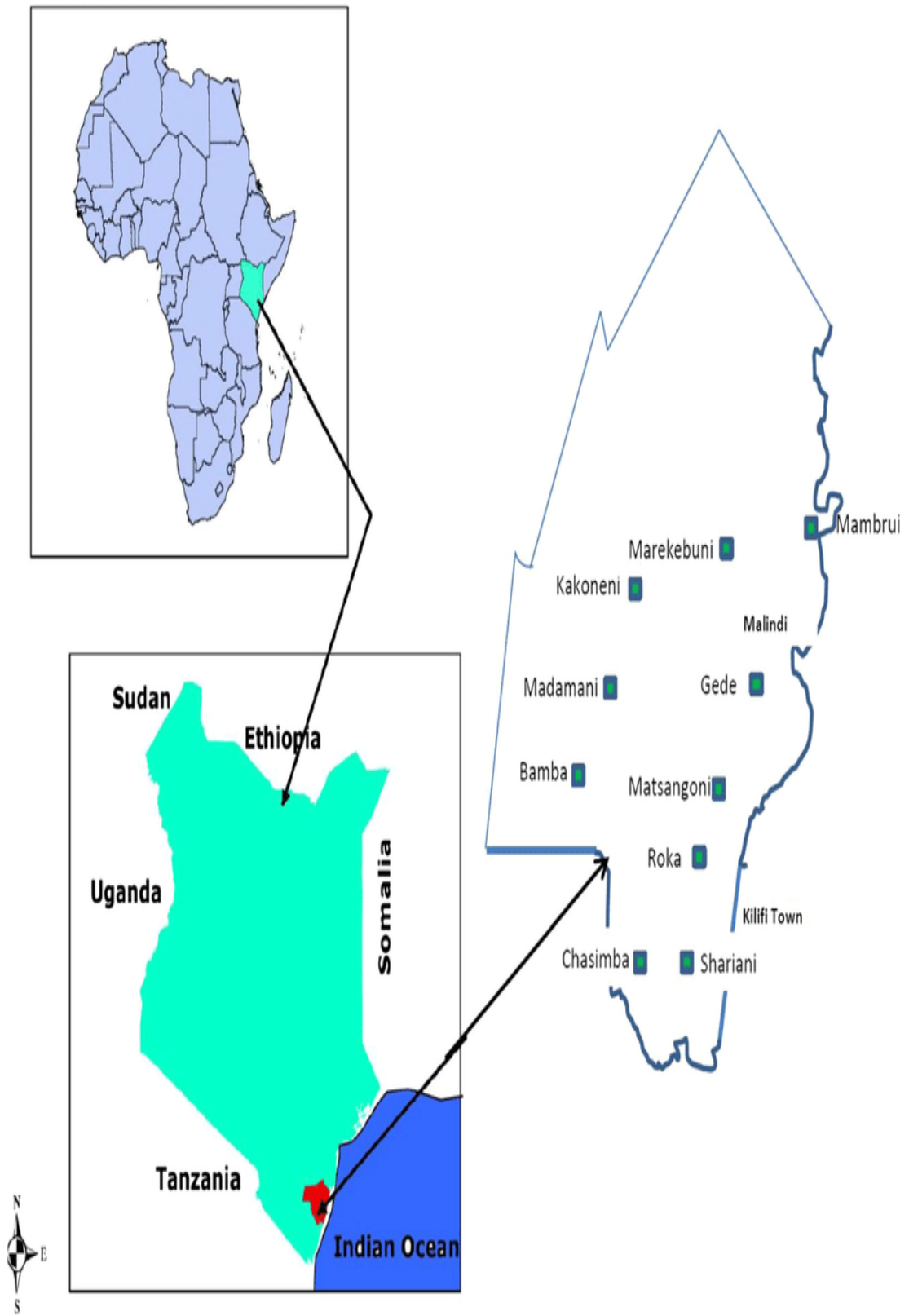
Copy to:

County Commissioner - **KILIFI**

Dorris Furaha Mashaka - **MT. KENYA UNIVERSITY**

APPENDIX XI

MAP OF KILIF COUNTY SHOWING CHONYI SUB-COUNTY




Source: IEBC (2012)

APPENDIX XII

TURNITIN SIMILARITY INDEX REPORT

DORRIS FURAHA MASHAKA

**INFLUENCE OF FREE SECONDARY EDUCATION FUNDS
MANAGEMENT PRACTICES ON STUDENTS' RETENTION IN PU...**

 Mount Kenya University

Document Details

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