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## One Hundred Percent Transition Policy in Kenya & Self-Esteem among Learners: Reviewing Butula Sub County's Secondary Schools, Busia County

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### Abstract

This article progresses from a research that was done to investigate the effects of one hundred percent transition policy on the self-esteem of learners in public secondary schools, within Butula Sub County, Busia County, Kenya. Guided by resilience theory, the article employs a descriptive survey design. The target comprises of 3235 participants, including 3206 students, 28 school principals and 1 Sub County Director of Education. Stratified random sampling was employed to ensure that all parts of the population were represented in the sample, as a measure of increasing its efficiency. Simple random sampling is utilized to give all participants an equal opportunity to participate in the study where the selection process was entirely based on luck. Purposive sampling was used to gain a deep understanding of phenomena from Sub County Director of Education sample as representative of education office. Data collection tools included interviews schedule, questionnaires, and observation guides. A pilot study ensured validity and reliability of data collection instrument. Quantitative data were analysed, revealed that implementation of 100% transition policy did not statistically significantly influence self-esteem of the learners,  $\beta = -0.694$ ,  $t = -0.1250$ ,  $p > 0.05$ . Consequently, the research article recommends for professional counselling to help students navigate emotional hurdles effectively thus improving their self-esteem.

**Keywords:** *Effects, Experience, Kenya's hundred percent, Learners, Transition policy, Self-esteem*

### Introduction

Worldwide, numerous governments have embraced a 100% transition policy with the goal of providing all children access to 12 years of education. This policy underscores the government's dedication to upholding the constitutional right to education. In European countries, different perspectives have been explored. In particular, swimming provides critical

policy frameworks on school transition. It empowers the learners as they make personal decisions, builds agency, and enables them to choose diverse aspects in the vicissitudes of life, including safe working near water among other places. Reflecting on the transition of students with special needs in Ireland, McCoy *et al.* (2020) acknowledge that these students face significant challenges during transitions. Furthermore, gender and socioeconomic status can also influence the transition to secondary schools. Research across various Asian countries highlights the critical importance of achieving full transition rates in schools. Indonesia's policy on transition Act no 20/2003 was founded on the need to ensure equal rights to obtain quality education and comprises aspects of transition all the way from kindergarten to university (Shaturaev, 2021). Zhong (2023) examined the transitions of learners from Chinese immigrant families in Australia, finding that well-managed early childhood transitions are crucial as they can significantly influence future school transitions. In India, Alcott *et al.* (2020) acknowledges existence of transition gaps, notably transition from home to pre-primary from pre-primary to primary education particularly in rural areas. However, the introduction of the New Education Policy (NEP) has been useful in restructuring various aspects of education including transition, gender equality, biodiversity awareness of social justice among others (Kaur & Sharma, 2021). In Malaysia, Adams *et al.* (2020) reflects on government efforts to improve the education sector in showcases the success of transition policy notably from primary to secondary schools across the country. The foregoing studies therefore serve as a foundation for examining how school transition policies can impact on psychological adjustment notably the self-esteem of the learners which is the primary objective of this research article.

Progressively, various definitions have been presented in scholarly literature with regards to what exactly constitutes school transition. School transition can be defined as (Bravo, 2019) the movement from one school to another school based on age or academic progress. School transition can also refer to as situation where students transition from one level of education to the next (Keskinen, 2020). Liao *et al.* (2024) on the other hand define post-school transition as the transmission from school to adult life. The idea of 100% transition policy can therefore be termed as the physical, social, emotional and cognitive progression that occurs simultaneously as learners move from elementary to middle school, and from middle schools to high school at a 100% rate (Smithbennett, 2020). In essence, 100% transition policy can be viewed as a situation where all learners are in a position to transit from one level of education to the next, for instance from elementary school to primary school or from primary school to secondary school etc. These conceptualizations it will be useful in the current research in an effort to understand how this form of transition policy influences self-esteem of the learners from the sample to schools.

Self-esteem can be defined as either a positive or negative attitude towards self (Sherma, 2020). Self-esteem can also be termed as a situation where one appreciates and values oneself (Mingli *et al.*, 2020). Stated otherwise, self-esteem can also refer to individuals' overall assessment of his or her skills (Mihaela *et al.*, 2022). Self-esteem can also be termed as an individual's evaluation of his or her worth. It can also be defined as the individual's perception of the ego state and the ideal ego state and adjustment of the gap between the two (Kaur, 2023; Zheng *et al.*, 2023). Santari and Karmiyati (2024) define self-esteem as individuals' attitude towards themselves as a valuable object. Self-esteem can also refer to the positive or negative feelings resulting from self-evaluation (Subiyakto *et al.*, 2024). Mingli *et al.* (2024) define self-esteem as a situation where one appreciates and values oneself. According to Bratu and Cioca (2024), self-esteem is the level of self-appreciation, self-respect and self-acceptance. Subsequently, this article bases the idea of self-esteem from these definitions in understanding how it can be impacted by 100% transition policy of the learners from the selected schools.

The justification for achieving 100% transition has been a prominent focus in educational research. The 100% transition policy can ultimately ensure universal access to education, considering that every child stands an equal opportunity to continue with education beyond primary schools which aligns with sustainable development goal No. 4 which advocates for inclusive and equitable education for all. While agreeing with this, Arkorful *et al.* (2020) also note that in the Ghanaian context, lack of sustainable education policy coupled with lack of political goodwill is a key impediment to attainment of high transitions from primary to higher levels of education. High quality of life can also be a consequence of the robust policy on transitions in different levels of education in schools. Through a systematic review, Mazzotti *et al.* (2021) identify school transition policy as a critical predictor of post school success especially in terms of improved quality of life. Economic and social development can also result from a robust policy on transition of learners across different levels. Garcia-Aracil *et al.* (2021) highlight the importance of transition policies in schools, noting that they significantly enhance students' chances of transitioning to work after graduation. This, in turn, positively impacts socio economic development. On the other hand, Bagnall *et al.* (2020) opine that involvement of the key stakeholders —students, teachers and parents is critical towards crafting an effective and beneficial 100% transition policy in schools. In Kazakhstan, the

enactment of school transition policy has been useful towards promoting inclusive education (Makoelle, 2020). Clearly, the 100% transition policy is essential for achieving educational outcomes at both the school and national policy levels. Skopek and Passaretta (2021) also argue from the standpoint that instituting robust school transition policy is useful towards reducing social economic inequalities. This study addresses the knowledge gap by examining how the 100% transition policy affects the self-esteem of the sampled learners.

The achievement of 100% transition from primary to secondary education is a complex endeavour influenced by various factors. Gender differences, as well as regional disparities are some of the factors that can contribute to these. Research targeting Chinese educational institutions finds gender differences as one of the key bottlenecks towards achievement over 100% transition policy. McCoy *et al.* (2020) study targeting schools in Ireland reveal that gender alongside socioeconomic factors can influence implementation of transition policy in schools. Additionally, some studies identify curriculum as one of the key factors that influence implementation of school transition policies (Loizou, 2020). Purtell *et al.* (2020) also agrees with the fact that the nature of the school curriculum also dictates how school transition will be achieved. Jindal-Snape *et al.* (2021), through a systematic literature review of the school transition ontologies identifies curriculum as one of the key factors that impact on implementation of school transition policy. Mackatiani *et al.* (2022) study on Kenyan secondary schools highlight the gender disparity in terms of poor transition rates, noting that girls were more adversely affected than boys. The researchers further attribute poor transition rates amongst girls to economic challenges faced by the parents. In summary, addressing gender disparities and regional variations is essential for achieving the goal of 100% transition from primary to secondary education. By promoting equal opportunities and targeted interventions, it is possible to work toward a more inclusive and equitable education system.

Failure to attain 100% transition can occasion various challenges. The long-term effects of failing to implement the policy may result in limited access to well-paying employment, healthcare, and other essential services, ultimately perpetuating poverty. Dougherty and Ecton (2021) also agree with the fact that lack of proper school transition policy can impact on the economic negatively especially in terms of lack of will paying employment opportunities. Additionally, other researchers also hold similar opinion regarding how transitional policy poor transition policy in schools can adversely affect the economy in terms of future employability (Mazzotti *et al.*, 2021). Through a longitudinal study targeting French schools, Herbaut (2021) highlight the social inequity resulting from students not transitioning from one level to the other leading to instances of social stigma and exclusion amongst the drop outs. Cahuc *et al.* (2021) also present a case of difficulties encountered by school dropouts especially in terms of securing employment, as a result of gaps in the existing framework related to school transaction; a clear indication of educational disparities and limited future prospects. Additionally, a recent survey in Sweden by Landgren *et al.* (2024) indicate that inability to start or complete upper secondary Education strongly predicts unemployment alongside other psychological and psychiatric adversities. In summary, the adverse effects of lack of implementation of transition policy provides a justification as to why there needs to be a stronger policy framework towards realizing improved school transition rates, justifying the current research's efforts to understand how such transition can impact on psychological adjustment in terms of self-esteem of the learners.

The concept that the 100% transition policy impacts learners' self-esteem serves as the foundation for the current research. As more student's transition, classrooms become overcrowded, facilities become inadequate, and resources become limited. These conditions can affect students' sense of belonging and comfort, ultimately influencing their self-esteem. Li *et al.* (2021) explored Chinese schools and found that an increased student population strains available resources, ultimately impacting learners' self-esteem.

## Literature Review

In Africa, several studies provide evidence on the significance of instituting a policy framework that aims to improve transition in schools. Zambia's inclusive education policy in secondary schools has been instrumental in driving up with the number of enrolments from primary to secondary schools (Ngulube *et al.*, 2020). In Nigeria, Jacob and Samuel (2020) acknowledge the challenge of policy design and implementation as the bottlenecks affecting transition in schools. Additionally, the enactment of the Re-Entry Policy has been instrumental in the reducing gender discrepancies in terms of equity in education and ultimately increasing transition rates across different regions in Zambia. In Zimbabwe, the need to address the social inequities that lead to increasing dropout rates is necessary towards realization of equitable school transition amongst learners (Gatsi *et al.*, 2020). In Nigeria, Jacob and Samuel (2020) acknowledge the challenge of policy design and implementation as the bottlenecks affecting transition in schools. Ghana's introduction of the *Free Senior High School Policy* was aimed at scaling-up the transitional levels from primary to secondary schools across the

country (Mohammed, & Kuyini, 2021; Adarkwah, 2022). While reflecting on the significance of transition policy towards competitiveness in the job market, Bennell (2021) uses a case of schools in sub-Saharan Africa to highlight the significant role played by robust transition policy towards realization of job competitiveness among others. Namibia's introduction of the *Towards Education For All (TEFA)* policy was a major boost towards improving school transitions across different levels by instituting changes in the existing curriculum (Josua, Auala, & Miranda, 2022). In Malawi, the enactment of the scholarship program in the education sector has been instrumental towards reducing the constraints of school access and progress (Hunsaker *et al.*, 2022). Moreover, diffusion of inclusive policy in education has been instrumental in improving transition rates in schools (Kawaguchi & Kuroda, 2023). In essence, these and other similar studies across Africa provide consistent evidence regarding the policy framework aimed at scaling up transition rates across different levels of education. Evidence from East African schools also point to the fact that school transition policy has been significant towards achieving educational aspirations. Uganda's implementation of the Universal Secondary Education policy has been significant boost towards achieving high transitions across different levels of education (Kakuba *et al.*, 2021). Kan and Klasen (2021) also reflects on the successes of universal primary education in Uganda, particularly on the aspect of abolition of school fees as an impetus towards realization of high transition rates in schools. Additionally, Uganda's enactment of the universal primary education has seen significant expansion of school enrolment from primary, through secondary and tertiary levels (Ekimwere & Adipala, 2023). Tanzania fee free education policy in a junior secondary schools has stimulated high transition rates from primary to junior secondary schools across the country (Lyanga, & Chen, 2020). Additionally, Tanzania realization of inclusive education aspirations should be preceded by efforts to tackle barriers related to transition of learners from one level to the other (Braun, 2022). Rwanda's introduction of the 9 year basic education policy dubbed "9YBE policy", has been instrumental towards promoting inclusive education and scaling up transition rates across different levels of education (Dufitumukiza *et al.*, 2020). In Ethiopia, Iyer *et al.* (2020) reflects on the government's effort to achieve equitable learning that guarantees higher transition rates for all learners by the year 2030. Still in Ethiopia, introduction of a programs aimed at improving adolescent decision-making power has been instrumental towards lowering dropout rates, ultimately improving transition rates amongst adolescent learners (Woldehanna *et al.*, 2021). These studies therefore indicated that regionally, there have in effort towards building a policy framework that encourages higher levels of transition across different levels of education in institutions of learning.

Research studies focusing on Kenyan schools emphasize the importance of achieving the 100% transition policy. This policy aims to ensure that all students successfully move from primary to secondary education, promoting educational continuity and access. Otieno and Ochieng' (2020) argue from the perspective that incorporating coping strategies can be useful towards implementation of 100% transition policy in public secondary schools. Imana (2020) reflects on the significance of Kenyan education reforms since 1963 to 2020 with emphasis on the importance of realization of high transition rates across different levels of education. Felix, Abdi and Machyo (2021) in a study targeting schools in Garissa Township Sub County acknowledge the challenge of transitioning to new learning environment, particularly the learners transitioning to junior secondary school. Mackatiani *et al.* (2022) explore girls' dropout rates in secondary schools in Kenya and attributes the growing trend to the parent's economic status. Apparently, most of the local studies fail to address the question of how psychological adjustment of the learners can be impacted in their work of implementation of 100% transition policy, thus providing justification for the current research.

In view of the evidence presented in the foregoing empirical research, this article undertook to answer the overachieving research question — *What is the influence of 100% transition policy on self-esteem of learners from Butula Sub County in Busia County?*. A mixed-method research design was employed to address the research question. Qualitative data were collected through interview guides, while quantitative data were gathered using semi-structured questionnaires. The findings from the current study have wider implications. Firstly, the policy, when effectively implemented, can enhance learners' self-esteem by providing equal opportunities for all students to progress to higher levels of education. When learners perceive that their educational journey is valued and supported, it positively influences their self-worth. Additionally, the study's findings can inform policy adjustments and interventions. By addressing self-esteem issues early, educators can promote long-term psychological well-being and academic success.

## **Methodology**

### **Setting**

The overall research was undertaken among some selected schools from Butula Sub County, Busia County. This Sub County is situated in the southern part of Busia County and shares borders with Siaya and Kakamega counties. Within the Sub

County, there are six administrative wards: Marachi West, Marachi North, Marachi Central, Kingandole, and Elugulu. The study area was chosen considering that most of the schools have been affected by 100% transition policy implemented by the Ministry of education and its consequence on the learner's self-esteem has widely been experienced, thus justifying the choice of this location.

**Study design and sample**

The research employed a descriptive survey design. The target population comprised students affected by 100% transition policy in Butula Sub County, in Busia County. The head teachers also formed part of the target population. Stratified random sampling was used. Within each stratum, participants were randomly selected. The strata comprised of students from boys boarding, girls boarding and mixed schools. The sample size ( $n = 311$ ) respondents were drawn from the target population ( $N = 3235$ ) consisting of students, principals and Sub County director of education and was deemed sufficient to draw meaningful conclusions. Students were purposively selected based on their experience of transition policy; as well as head teachers who have insights into the implementation of the policy. This approach was useful as it helped to focus on relevant participants of the study.

**Data collection tools and procedures**

The initial step in the data collection process involved clearly defining the study's objective: to investigate how the 100% transition policy influenced learners' self-esteem. Qualitative data were collected through interview guides, while quantitative data were gathered using semi-structured questionnaires. Specifically, tailor-made questionnaires were designed for students, covering topics related to psychological well-being, experiences, and perceptions. These questionnaires were self-administered by the researcher. Additionally, interview guides were prepared for school head teachers, featuring open-ended questions about policy transitions and their impact on learners. Both the questionnaires and interview guides were administered face-to-face. During questionnaire sessions, the researcher explained the study's purpose and ensured privacy and confidentiality for participants. Simultaneously, interviews were conducted with head teachers within the school premises. These interviews allowed the researcher to delve deeper into the head teachers' experiences and insights regarding the 100% transition policy's effects on learners. Consent was obtained from the interviewees, and the interviews were recorded for analysis.

**Data management and analysis**

After collection of questionnaires from the learners, the first step was to focus on data entry. This involved transferring responses from paper or digital forms into a structured data set. At this stage, the researcher ensured data accuracy by double checking entries and handling of missing values appropriately. This involved exclusion of incomplete responses. From here, data was organized with appropriate variable names and labels followed by storing data securely to maintain confidentiality. The recorded data from the interviews was transcribed reviewed and cleaned to remove irrelevant content or errors. Subsequently, a structured data set with relevant information from the interviews was created. Data analysis was conducted using both descriptive statistics to summarize the questionnaire data. This involved the use of frequencies to count how often specific responses occur (e.g., the number of students who "strongly agree", "agree", etc.), Percentages to express frequencies as percent of the total sample, means to compute with the average scores for different psychological well-being dimensions as well as standard deviation to measure variability around the mean. Data visualization was done using bar charts and tabulation. On the other hand, linear regression analysis was conducted to assess the impact of 100% transition policy on learners' self-esteem. This was followed by a hypothesis testing to check if there was a statistically significant relationship. The interpretation of the coefficients was in terms of the strength and direction of the effect. The possible confounding effect of socio-economic status and school environment was controlled for. The findings were reported clearly and concisely.

**Results:**

**Demographic characteristics of the respondents**

Table 1 shows demographic characteristics of the respondents in terms of gender and age.

**Table 1.** *Sociodemographic characteristics of the Respondents*

Variable	<i>n</i>	%
Gender		

Male	126	42.40
Female	171	57.60
Age category		
12-15	40	13.5
15-19	249	83.8
20-25	8	2.7

From Table 1, female students demonstrated greater openness regarding psychological adjustment compared to their male counterparts. The girls' percentage (57.6%) exceeded that of boys (42.4%) by slightly over 15%.

With regard to the age category of the respondents, a significant majority of the respondents (83.8%) fell within the age range of 15 to 19 years. Collectively, over 97% of the sampled students were teenagers aged between 12 and 19 years. This suggests that most participating schools enrolled students at a relatively young age. Qualitative analysis highlights the pivotal role of a well-defined policy framework in achieving high student enrolment through the 100% transition policy. Asamba (2022) emphasizes clear policy guidelines and effective leadership skills while Chebet and Ishenyi (2023) underscore the policy's impact on completion rates.

In Table 2, the regression coefficient table reveals how learners' self-esteem is influenced by the implementation of the 100% transition policy in the sampled schools. The coefficients indicate the strength and direction of this relationship.

**Table 2.** Regression coefficients for predicting learner's self-esteem

Variable	$\beta$	95% CI	SE	Beta	t	p
Constant	23.706	[-0.123, 47.535]	1.427	-	16.699	.000
Implementation of 100% transition policy	-.694	[-1.388, 0.000]	.555	-.073	-1.250	.212

Note:  $R^2 = .005$  (n = 297,  $p = .212$ );  $F(1,295) = 1.561$ ,  $p > 0.05$ .

Table 2 indicates that there is a relatively a weak negative relationship between self-esteem and implementation of 100% transition policy and self-esteem of the learners of esteem of the learners. In particular, at the results suggest that implementation of 100% transition policy did not statistically significantly influence anxiety of the learners,  $\beta = -0.694$ ,  $t = -0.1250$ ,  $p > 0.05$ . The negative regression coefficient implies that as the policy is implemented, self-esteem of the learners tends to decrease slightly. This implies the relationship was not statistically significant at 5% level. In other words comma the impact of the policy on learner's self-esteem is not strong enough to be considered significant at 5% level. These findings therefore lead to the acceptance of  $H_{01}$ . After checking the model fitness using analysis of variance, (ANOVA); the results suggest that the model did not significantly predict the outcome variable,  $F(1,295) = 1.561$ ,  $p > 0.05$ .

In addition to the quantitative analysis, we collected qualitative data from the Sub County Director of Education (SCDE). The SCDE provided the following insights for the years 2019 and 2020.

*"There has been a tremendous improvement over that period of time and I think the government had put in place important policy measures in the education sector to weren't improving the enrolment especially through the implementation of 100% transition policy across the schools in the Sub County."*

This excerpt provides evidence of success stories related to the implementation of the 100% transition policy across various schools in the Sub County.

When asked about the measures put in place to ensure that all pupils who completed class 8 joined form one, the SCDE made the following comments.

*"One of the priority areas has been building of sufficient classrooms in order to accommodate high and enrolment rates in secondary schools. We have also been able to engage with local leadership especially members of parliament to mobilize NGCDF funds in order to help putting up new classrooms in the schools."*

When asked about the challenges encountered by secondary schools during the implementation of the 100% transition policy, the SCDE provided the following insights:

*"Well, from where I sit I have had so many complaints about the inadequacy of resources whenever they are high enrolment of students in high schools, and therefore I believe that much can be done by the government in order to provide adequate resources in order to streamline the implementation of 100% transition policy in the schools under my jurisdiction."*

The responses above offer important insights with regard to the criticality of implementing 100% transition policy in the sampled schools as a means to guarantee equality in access to education.

## Discussion

From demographic information, previous research by Sánchez-Teruel, Robles-Bello, and Valencia-Naranjo (2021) highlights gender differences in student psychological adjustments, with women showing higher resilience levels, possibly due to greater self-efficacy. However, since the study objectives did not specifically analyse self-adjustment divergence between boys and girls, the 15% difference may not significantly impact the overall findings and generalization. Besides, study by Bender *et al.* (2019) emphasize the importance of consideration of students' age in analysing psychological adjustment. Ellis, Dumas, and Forbes (2020) also focused on age in their study of adolescents and their psychological well-being, aligning with the predominant age category in the current research.

The regression coefficient ( $\beta = -0.694$ ,  $t = -0.1250$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ) implied that the policy did not significantly affect self-esteem. The findings were consistent with Creamer's (2021) research that increased college enrolment negatively affected mental health and self-esteem. Muchemi (2023) also observed a similar trend in Nyandarua County, where increased student population affected self-esteem. While Li *et al.*'s (2021) findings differed, our context may be influenced by varying resource allocation practices. Understanding this intricate interplay between enrolment, resource allocation, and self-esteem is crucial for informed educational policies. As educators and policymakers, we must consider these factors holistically to foster a supportive and empowering learning environment.

Overall, strategic implementation of this policy is crucial for enhancing student success. Furthermore, the success of the 100% transition policy relies on resource adequacy, particularly in terms of teaching staff and physical infrastructure such as classrooms. This aligns with Kenyan studies emphasizing the policy's significance (Asamba, 2022). Garner and Bagnall (2024) assert that adequate resources are crucial for successful policy implementation, consistent with our findings. The combined quantitative and qualitative analyses underscore the effects of the Ministry of Education's 100% transition policy on students' psychological well-being. Descriptive analysis confirms that learners maintain self-respect and respect for others, taking pride in their student identity. However, simple linear regression indicates a detrimental impact of the policy on learners' self-esteem. Notably, students typically do not delay schoolwork due to stress, nor do they experience illness when confronted with significant class assignments.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

The analysis of the findings highlights the significant impact of the school environment on students' psychological adjustment. Descriptive analysis revealed that schools need cultivate an environment that nurtures students' psychological well-being. A substantial proportion of sampled students exhibited strong self-respect, emphasizing the importance of an affirming school atmosphere.

Contrary to our expectations, as researchers, the policy did not consistently correlate with increased self-esteem. Instead, self-esteem declined as student populations grew. In conclusion, the 100% transition policy did not significantly impact learners' self-esteem in Butula Sub County. It is recommended that class sizes should be appropriate to foster a positive learning environment and therefore improving their self-esteem. In addition, professional counselling, schools should be offered to help students navigate emotional hurdles affecting their self-esteem.

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#### **Ethical Pledge**

All data collected were handled responsibly, and any findings have been presented accurately, without manipulation or bias.

#### **Competing Interests**

There were no competing interests that could have influenced the outcomes of this research. The research was conducted impartially, with no financial, professional, or personal interests that may have biased the results or interpretation.

#### **Author Contributions**

The researchers are the sole authors of this research article.

#### **Disclaimer**

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#### **Ethical Consideration Statement**

This article adhered to all ethical guidelines for research involving human or animal subjects. Approval was given by Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology (MMUST).