ABSTRACT
Most schools in Kenya have no capacity to handle emergencies like fire and are yet to even implement safety standards manual produced in 2008 by the Ministry of Education. Fires in schools are a public concern because of the increased incidences, injuries and deaths of students not to mention the destruction of property. Despite this, schools seem not well prepared for fire disasters. Without fire preparedness, schools will continue to lose lives, property and learning time. The purpose of this study was to investigate fire disaster preparedness in the secondary schools in Nyeri Central District. The study was guided by the following objectives: to establish the adequacy of fire fighting facilities for fire disasters within the school premises; to determine how school buildings are built in accordance with policy provisions pertaining fire disaster preparedness; to examine how secondary schools have put in place fire safety plans as a measure of fire disaster preparedness and to establish how secondary schools train teachers, workers and students on appropriate responses in case of fire. The research adopted a descriptive survey. The target population for this study consisted of all public secondary schools in Nyeri Central District. This study employed stratified sampling technique to obtain the sample population. Data was collected by means of questionnaires administered to the principals, teachers and learners of the sampled schools and an observation schedule. Data collected from respondents was analyzed through descriptive statistics. The results were presented using frequency tables.
Based on the findings of the study, the fire fighting equipment in most schools is inadequate and rarely inspected contributing to fire disaster unpreparedness. In relation to school buildings and fire safety, most schools have made effort to improve fire disaster preparedness but their preparedness in still poor and needs to be improved. On safety plans, most schools are not prepared in fire disaster management because emergency plans for fire disaster in schools are at most average. Most schools lack fire alert procedures. Most schools have only one assembly point while the majority have none. Most schools do not remind the immediate stakeholders of the emergency plans. Regarding training on fire safety, most school stakeholders are not trained on fire safety because there has never been a need to train on fire safety and there are no materials to teach with. Based on the findings of the study, the researcher recommended that school management should consider adding the fire fighting equipment to make them adequate and they should also be regularly inspected. It is also recommended that fire extinguishers should be easily accessible, windows should not be grilled, exits should be cleared of obstructions, fire extinguishers should be increased and doors should open outwards. In addition, head teachers, teachers, non teaching staff and students should be made aware of evacuation plans, all stakeholders should be reminded of evacuation plan, assembly points should be identified and stakeholders notified, schools should have fire alert procedures and schools should have many assembly points in case of a fire. Finally, all stakeholders should be trained on fire safety. The study suggested that a similar study should be done in other areas in Kenya to check on fire disaster preparedness in schools as cases of fire disasters are on the rise in Kenya.