

# INFLUENCE OF PRINCIPALS' INVOLVEMENT OF STAKEHOLDERS ON STUDENTS' DISCIPLINE IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN TANA NORTH SUB-COUNTY, TANA RIVER COUNTY, KENYA

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## ABSTRACT

**Purpose of the Study:** To determine the influence of principals' involvement of stakeholders on students' discipline in public secondary schools in tana north sub-county, Tana River County, Kenya.

**Statement of the Problem:** Cases of students' indiscipline have been on the rise since most secondary schools in Tana North Sub-county have been hit by a wave of indiscipline among students which is escalating rapidly.

**Purpose of the Study:** The purpose of this study was to assess the influence of school disciplinary strategies on students' discipline in public secondary schools in Tana North Sub-county, Tana River County, Kenya.

**Methodology:** The study applied mixed methodology and adopted concurrent triangulation design. The target population was 291 respondents comprising 10 deputy principals, 123 teachers and 158 student leaders from which a sample of 168 respondents were obtained using Yamane's Formula. This sample constituted six deputy principals, 92 teachers and 70 student

leaders. Qualitative data were analyzed thematically along the objectives and presented in narrative forms. Quantitative data were analyzed descriptively such as frequencies and percentages and inferentially using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Analysis in Statistical Packages for Social Science (SPSS 23) and presented using tables

**Findings:** The study established that cases of indiscipline among students in public secondary schools are on the rise. However, principals' strategy of involving stakeholders has not been effective.

**Recommendation:** The study recommends that secondary schools should enforce stricter adherence to set school rules and regulations. The Ministry of Education (MoE) to organize workshops to sensitize stakeholders on their role in the management of students' discipline.

**Keywords:** *Principals' involvement of stakeholders, students' discipline, secondary schools.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Principals play an important role in ensuring that students exhibit desirable discipline patterns. In keeping with this assertion, Leithwood and Jantzi (2015) assert that a large part of a principal's job is to handle student discipline by adopting a multiplicity of strategies aimed at ensuring that they perform better. To achieve this, principals adopt a multiplicity of strategies such as involvement of stakeholders. Stakeholders' engagement is considered vital to the success and improvement of a school. The involvement of the broader community of the school with it can improve communication and public understanding and allows for the incorporation of the perspectives, experiences and expertise of participating community members to improve reform proposals, strategies, or processes.

In the context of students' discipline, stakeholders such as parents, teachers and students share the responsibility of promoting value and standard discipline which help to establish sound disciplinary codes for life and successful running of the schools (Mtsweni, 2017). In keeping with these assertions, Castello, Gotzens, Badia and Genavard (2017) carried out a study in Spain which revealed that stakeholders are responsible to maintain discipline within the school. According to Castello et al. (2017), beyond their responsibility for school management and teaching, stakeholders are also responsible for the moral development of learners and to ensure that they become law-abiding citizens. This implies that, within the school community, stakeholders are expected to respond in a controlling fashion to violations of the institutional rules of the school and forms of discipline such as theft, bullying and vandalism that has a direct bearing on the moral domain.

In the same token, Kraft and Shaun (2018) report that, in the United States of America, cases of indiscipline among students are rife and parental involvement is lacking. Students feel more secure and perform and behave better if their parents and other caregivers are involved in school activities. Kraft and Shaun (2018) support this view by stating that if students with disciplinary problems realize that their parents and educators are collaborating to manage difficulties, they experience more consistency and feel more contained. This implies that the relationship among stakeholders has great benefits. Stakeholders such as parents can have a great impact on their children's discipline by ensuring that they arrive at school on time, behave correctly, wear relevant clothing, are in possession of required books and equipment and complete tasks on time. In other words, for teachers to maintain discipline in schools they need support from stakeholders to promote discipline.

To corroborate these assertions, Ojedapo (2018) carried out a study in the Netherlands which established that improved instruction, better learning and enhanced school effectiveness or organizational efficiency are the most commonly cited reasons for implementing collaborative school practices such as school councils, collegial instructional leadership and parental/community involvement. According to Ojedapo (2018), this is achieved because moving the school closer to the community and listening to the sentiments of concerned parties create a synergy and interdependence or connectedness that promote a learning organization towards better decisions concerning students' disciplinary challenges. This is indicative of the fact that allowing stakeholders such as teachers and parents to take part in decision-making yields salutary results.

In many countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, stakeholders play an important part in the management of students' discipline. For example, a study carried out in Botswana by Garagae (2015) established that secondary school management makes full use of the strengths available to it through partnerships with parents, with the local community and with the various supporting agencies. Such relationships are all used to enhance the quality of the school as community, and to help maintain high expectations. Schools should strive to network for ideas of good practice. According to Garagae (2015), for the smooth running of the school and for good discipline and effective discipline to be properly exercised, the school should enlist parents as partners. Parents must be helped to feel that they are important stakeholders in their children's education (Garagae, 2015). For this purpose, home-school links should be established through a variety of means such as frequent activities that involve parents in

educational matters. On their part, stakeholders such as parents need to regard the establishment of home-school collaboration as a responsibility.

Kenya is not an exception where students' indiscipline in secondary schools has been characterized as serious and pervasive, negatively affecting student learning (Njoroge & Nyabuto, 2018). Just as noted earlier, Njoroge and Nyabuto (2018) assert that students' indiscipline manifests itself in a variety of ways which include vandalism, truancy, smoking, disobedience, intimidation, delinquency, murder, assault, rape, theft and general violence. For example, a study conducted in Nyandarua and Laikipia Districts by Kiumi, Bosire and Sang (2018) established that level of students' discipline depends on whether the principal, as the chief executive of the school, enlists the support of teachers and parents in discipline management.

The study hypothesized that an inclusive discipline management approach is more likely to increase teachers and parental input on discipline management. In Tana North Sub-county, cases of students' indiscipline have become a commonplace in secondary schools. A report by Ministry of Education (2019) shows that public secondary schools in Tana North Sub-county have witnessed 19.7% increase in cases of indiscipline among students. An assessment by Bwana (2019) also echoes similar sentiments that instances of students' indiscipline in public secondary schools in Tana North Sub-county have been on the rise up to 45.1%. According to Bwana (2019), Tana North Sub-county has witnessed 34.9% cases of drug and substance abuse among students, 56.1% instances of teenage pregnancy, 44.3% cases of bullying and violence among students and 54.3% cases of students' strikes in secondary schools. This points to an increasing trend of students' indiscipline. However, much still needed to be done to interrogate the extent to which specific roles undertaken by different stakeholders promote students' discipline in public secondary schools; hence the need for this study.

## **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Principals play an important role in the socialization process of students from where they learn to regulate their own conduct, respect others, and manage their time responsibly and thus become responsible citizens. However, the current situation in Tana North Sub-county's education system has been hit by a wave of indiscipline among students which is escalating rapidly with notable strikes, bullying, arson cases in schools, vandalism of school property, general refusal to follow school rules and regulations as well as increasing alcoholism. As noted

in the background, Ministry of Education (2019) reports that public secondary schools in Tana North Sub-county have witnessed 19.7% increase in cases of indiscipline among students.

Further, instances of students' indiscipline in public secondary schools in Tana North Sub-county have been on the rise up to 45.1% (Bwana, 2019). Tana North Sub-county has witnessed 34.9% cases of drug and substance abuse among students, 56.1% instances of teenage pregnancy, 44.3% cases of bullying and violence among students and 54.3% cases of students' strikes in secondary schools (Bwana, 2019). Efforts to mitigate these challenges have not yielded much remarkable progress. Despite these statistics, few empirical studies have not interrogated the extent to which principals' stakeholders' involvement influence students' discipline in public secondary schools, hence the need for this study.

### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The study was guided by the following objectives:

- i. To assess the status of students' discipline in public secondary schools in Tana North Sub-county.
- ii. To determine how principals' involvement of stakeholders influence students' discipline in public secondary schools in Tana North Sub-county;

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This study was based on the systems theory which was postulated by Luhmann (2004). The systems theory is an approach to organizations which likens an organization to an organism with interdependent parts, each with its own specific function and interrelated responsibilities. The theory is applicable in a school set up as an organization in that the school as an open system receives inputs from the environment (Okumbe, 2017). Thus, the inputs include students from the external diverse environment. This implies that students from the larger societal environment go to school with a host of their own believes, goals and hopes but become changed individuals as a result of educational experiences in school which are acquired through interaction with the school administration, teachers and students which also include monitoring and correcting learner discipline issues.

The interaction between teachers' and students and other stakeholders also incorporates monitoring of students' discipline and appropriate correction of any discipline problems that may be noted among the students. This means that if the school as an organization is to be

effective in the management of school discipline, it must pay attention to changes in the external environment and take steps to adjust itself to accommodate the changes in order to remain relevant. To realize educational goals, the school transforms students' discipline through the use of alternative methods of instilling discipline on students which include peer counselling, suspension of indiscipline students and use of class meetings with students for collaborative decision making. This depends on the nature and quality of students' discipline produced as a result of use of school disciplinary strategies used in schools hence the suitability of the theory in the study.

This study was also guided by the Assertive Discipline Model which was proposed by Canter and Canter (2001) to address significant issues with discipline management which affects students' learning and achievement.

The theory asserts that, the teacher should create and teach a discipline plan with 4-5 rules and specific consequences by first identifying rules and expectations and presenting them to students, ensuring that they are understood. Further, this theory holds that the parent is required to use positive repetition to reinforce rules by focusing on positive disciplines rather than punishing negative ones. This theory suggests a five-step discipline hierarchy of escalating consequences when rules are broken. The first infraction involves giving warning to the student; the second infraction gives the student a ten-minute time out while in the third one, the student is given a fifteen-minute time out. In the fourth infraction, the students' parents are called. Finally, the fifth sanction requires that the student is sent to the deputy headteachers' office. This theory fits this study because schools have rules and regulations or ethos which must be adhered to by all students.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The study applied mixed methodology and adopted concurrent triangulation design. The target population was 291 respondents comprising 10 deputy principals, 123 teachers and 158 student leaders from which a sample of 168 respondents were obtained using Yamane's Formula. Stratified sampling was applied to create two strata based on the number of zones in Tana North Sub-county. From each zone, three deputy principals and 46 teachers were selected using purposive sampling considering schools which have had several cases of students' indiscipline. However, from each zone, 35 student leaders were selected using simple random sampling to avoid bias. This sampling procedure enable the researcher to sample six deputy principals, 92

teachers and 70 student leaders. Questionnaires were used to collect quantitative data from teachers, interviews were used to collect qualitative data from deputy principals and focus group discussion guide for student leaders. Qualitative data were analyzed thematically along the objectives and presented in narrative forms. Quantitative data were analyzed descriptively such as frequencies and percentages and inferentially using Pearson’s Product Moment Correlation Analysis in Statistical Packages for Social Science (SPSS 23) and presented using tables.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

This section presents the findings of the study based on the objective. It also outlines the methods of presentation of the study findings and discussions.

**RESPONSE RATES**

In this study, 92 questionnaires were administered to teachers and 88 questionnaires were filled and returned. The researcher also interviewed 5 Deputy Principals and conducted focus group discussions among 67 student leaders. This yielded response rates shown in Table 1.

**Table 1: Response Rates**

<b>Respondents</b>	<b>Sampled Respondents</b>	<b>Those Who Participated</b>	<b>Achieved Return Rate (%)</b>
Deputy Principals	6	5	83.3
Teachers	92	88	95.7
Student Leaders	70	67	95.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>168</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>95.2</b>

**Source: Field Data (2022)**

Table 1 shows that Deputy Principals registered a response rate of 83.3%, teachers registered 95.7% whereas student leaders registered a response rate of 95.6%. This yielded an average response rate of 95.2% which is consistent with the assertions of Creswell (2014) that a response rate above 75.0% is adequate. This information was important since it allowed the researcher to generalize the study outcomes to the target population.

**Status of Discipline among Students in Public Secondary Schools**

The study sought to assess the status of discipline among students in public secondary schools in Tana North Sub-county. Results are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2: Status of Students’ Discipline in Public Secondary Schools**

<b>Indicators of Indiscipline in Schools</b>	<b>SA</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>U</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>SD</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
There are many cases of violence against colleagues	55.8	11.1	5.5	22.1	5.5
Students are involved in many cases strikes and school riots	53.4	10.1	4.0	24.6	7.9
Students steal from each other regularly	59.3	9.1	3.1	24.1	4.5
Cases of teenage pregnancies are high	52.3	14.1	5.5	19.6	8.5
Truancy and absenteeism are very common among students in secondary schools	57.3	9.0	6.5	20.1	7.1
Students’ register low academic performance	64.8	7.5	6.0	13.6	8.1
Students break school rules and regulations very often	54.8	9.5	6.5	23.1	6.1

Table 2 shows that more than half (55.8%) of the teachers strongly agreed with the view that there are many cases of violence which students mete out against their colleagues whereas 11.1% who agreed. However, 5.5% were undecided, 22.1% disagreed whereas 5.5% strongly disagreed. From the study findings, most (53.4%) of teachers strongly agreed with the view that students are involved in many cases strikes and school riots while 10.1% agreed. However, 4.0% were undecided, 24.6% disagreed whereas 7.9% strongly disagreed. More than half, 118(59.3%), of the teachers strongly agreed with the view that students steal from each other regularly whereas 9.1% were in agreement. However, 3.1% were undecided, 24.1% disagreed whereas 4.5% strongly disagreed.

Table 2 further shows that 52.3% of the teachers strongly agreed with the view that cases of teenage pregnancies are high whereas 14.1% agreed. However, 5.5% were undecided, 19.6% disagreed whereas 8.5% strongly disagreed. More than half (57.3%) of the teachers strongly agreed with the view that truancy and absenteeism are very common among students in secondary schools while 9.0% agreed. However, 6.5% were undecided, 20.1% disagreed whereas 7.1% strongly disagreed. Majority (64.8%) of the teachers strongly agreed with the view that students’ register low academic performance while 7.5% agreed. However, 6.0% were undecided, 13.6% disagreed whereas 8.1% strongly disagreed. Majority (54.8%) of the teachers strongly agreed with the view that students break school rules and regulations very often as did 9.5% who agreed. However, 6.5% were undecided, 23.1% disagreed whereas 6.1% strongly disagreed.



During the interviews, the study also sought the opinions of the Deputy Principals and student leaders with majority echoing similar sentiments. They indicated that students have manifested several cases of indiscipline. When probed further, Deputy Principal, DP1, admitted,

*In my secondary school, we have had to handle disciplinary cases about students' violence against each other. In most cases, students engage in fights among themselves or sometimes bully their junior colleagues. They also miss school, steal from each other and even register low performance in their academic studies*

During the focus group discussions, student leaders admitted that there have been numerous instances of indiscipline among students. Student leaders observed;

*In our secondary school, there have been many cases of theft and violence among students, strikes, arson and vandalism caused by students.*

However, some of the Deputy Principals discounted the view that indiscipline is very high in public secondary schools. On further probing, DP2, stated,

*There are cases of students' indiscipline in public secondary schools, but not in the magnitude being projected by teachers and other stakeholders. There are mechanisms of ensuring that students attend school regularly and without fail.*

These findings corroborate the assertions of the Ministry of Education (2011) that, in Tana North Sub-county, cases of students' indiscipline have become a commonplace in secondary schools. The Ministry of Education (2011) noted that public secondary schools in Tana North Sub-county have witnessed 19.7% increase in cases of indiscipline among students. These findings support the findings of a study undertaken by Bwana (2015) which also revealed that instances of students' indiscipline in public secondary schools in Tana North Sub-county have been on the rise up to 45.1%. Bwana (2015) further revealed that public secondary schools in Tana North Sub-county have witnessed 34.9% cases of drug and substance abuse among students, 56.1% instances of teenage pregnancy, 44.3% cases of bullying and violence among students and 54.3% cases of students' strikes in secondary schools.

These findings thus point to the fact that indiscipline has become a serious issue in public secondary schools. Many students have manifested incidences of indiscipline in one way or another and have thus become a national concern to education stakeholders. This further implies that depression issues include childhood or adult abuse or trauma, repressed memories, family patterns or a combination of many things. Among students in high or secondary schools,

drug-related depression frequently manifests itself in feelings of sadness, low energy and hopelessness. In other words, many students manifest instances of low psychological well-being, lack of sense of direction in life and low self-esteem besides low self-efficacy skills. This leads to involvement of riots, strikes and other forms of infractions while at school.

### Stakeholders’ Involvement and Students’ Discipline in Secondary Schools

The study sought to examine how stakeholders’ involvement influences students’ discipline in public secondary schools. Results are shown in Table 3.

**Table 3: Teachers’ Views on Stakeholders’ Involvement and Students’ Discipline**

Test Items	Ratings				
	SA %	A %	U %	D %	SD %
Public secondary schools involve teachers in modeling discipline which has reduced students’ strikes	59.3	13.1	7.5	9.5	10.6
Students adhere to rules and regulations since public secondary schools involve parents in modeling their discipline	39.2	8.0	5.5	9.5	37.7
Public secondary schools involve education officers as a way of improving students’ discipline	33.2	7.5	6.5	14.8	38.2

Table 3 shows that 59.3% of the teachers strongly agreed with the view that public secondary schools involve teachers in modeling discipline which has reduced students’ strikes while 13.1% agreed. However, 7.5% were undecided, 9.5% disagreed whereas 19.6% strongly disagreed. The study also found out that 39.2% of the teachers strongly agreed with the view that students adhere to rules and regulations since public secondary schools involve parents in modeling their discipline while 8.0% agreed. However, 5.5% were undecided, 9.5% disagreed whereas 37.7% strongly disagreed. The study also revealed that 33.2% of the teachers strongly agreed with the view that public secondary schools involve education officers as a way of improving students’ discipline. On the same breath, 7.5% of the teachers agreed. However, 6.5%) of the teachers were undecided, 14.8% of the teachers disagreed whereas 38.2% of the teachers strongly disagreed.

These findings corroborate the assertions of Mtsweni (2017) that, to improve students’ discipline, share the responsibility of promoting value and standard discipline which help to establish sound behavioural codes for life and successful running of the schools. These findings further lend credence to the findings of a study carried out in Spain in which Castello et al (2010) revealed that parents are responsible for maintenance of discipline within the school.

According to Castello et al (2010), beyond their responsibility for school management and teaching, parents are also responsible for the moral development of learners and to ensure that they become law-abiding citizens. This implies that parents are expected to respond in a controlling fashion to violations of the institutional rules of the school and forms of behaviour such as theft, bullying and vandalism that has a direct bearing on the moral domain. These findings were further supported by the findings of a study conducted in the United States of America in which Kraft and Shaun (2011) found that cases of indiscipline among students are rife and parents’ involvement is lacking.

Students feel more secure and perform and behave better if their parents and other stakeholders are involved in school activities. Kraft and Shaun (2011) support this view by stating that, if students with behavioural problems realize that their parents and educators are collaborating to manage difficulties, they experience more consistency and feel more contained. Stakeholders such as parents have a great impact on their children’s behaviour by ensuring that they arrive at school on time, behave correctly, wear relevant clothing, are in possession of required books and equipment and complete tasks on time. In other words, for teachers to maintain discipline in schools they need support from parents to promote discipline.

**Inferential Analysis**

To verify the influence of stakeholders’ involvement on students’ discipline in public secondary schools, data were collected on how often principals involve stakeholders in students’ discipline management in the sampled public secondary schools (Very Often = 5, Often = 4, Sometimes = 3, Rarely = 2 and Never = 1) and the cumulative number of indiscipline cases in public secondary schools for the last five years (2017-2021). The results are shown in Table 4.

**Table 4: Frequency of Stakeholders’ Involvement and Students’ Discipline**

<b>Frequency of Stakeholders’ Involvement</b>	<b>Number of Strikes</b>	<b>Number of Bullying Cases</b>	<b>Number of Theft Cases</b>
2	3	29	11
1	2	30	32
2	4	22	24
3	1	18	14
4	0	5	7

**Source: Field Data (2022)**

Table 4 shows that, in public secondary schools, where stakeholders are often involved in discipline management, cases of indiscipline have gone down. This further indicates that the frequency with which secondary school management involve stakeholders such as parents play an important role in mitigating rising cases of students’ indiscipline. These results were further subjected to Pearson’s Product Moment Correlation Analysis and results are shown in Table 5.

**Table 5: Pearson’s Product Moment Correlation Matrix**

		Frequency of Stakeholders’ involvement	No. of Strikes	No. of Bullying Cases	No. of Theft Cases
Frequency of Stakeholders’ involvement	Pearson Correlation	1	-.565*	-.610*	-.670*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.044	.027	.012
	N	5	5	5	5
Number of Strikes	Pearson Correlation	-.565*	1	.213	.320
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.044		.484	.286
	N	5	5	5	5
No. of Bullying Cases	Pearson Correlation	-.610*	.213	1	.574*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.027	.484		.040
	N	5	5	5	5
No. of Theft Cases	Pearson Correlation	-.670*	.320	.574*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.012	.286	.040	
	N	5	5	5	5

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

Table 5 shows that there is a strong correlation between involving stakeholders in discipline management and different cases of indiscipline among students in public secondary schools. That is, the higher the frequency of stakeholders’ involvement in management of students’ discipline in secondary schools, the lower the number of cases of indiscipline among students ( $r(5) = -0.565, -0.610, -0.670, p = 0.044, 0.027, 0.012$  at  $\alpha = 0.05$ ). These findings thus attest to the fact that, to lower the number of cases of students’ indiscipline, stakeholders’ involvement in students’ discipline management cannot be overlooked as a mitigant to rising cases of indiscipline in secondary schools.

### **Thematic Analysis**

On their part, the Deputy Principals acknowledge the role stakeholders such as parents play in the management of students' discipline in secondary schools. They stated that they often involve stakeholders like parents when handling cases of indiscipline in schools. Deputy Principal, DP3, noted;

*In our secondary school, we usually ensure that parents of the students engaged in cases of indiscipline are available making any decision is taken on the mode of punishment. This has made it easy to lower instances of indiscipline in our school since collective decisions are made on the best way forward to mitigate any challenges which may lead to indiscipline in school.*

During the focus group discussions, the student leaders concurred with the assertions of the teachers and Deputy Principals that stakeholders such as parents are often involved while serious cases of students' indiscipline are discussed. Student leaders observed;

*In our secondary school, stakeholders are frequently called upon to be part of any decision involving discipline to help decide the best approaches of punishment to administered, especially on cases that may lead to suspension of the concerned students. this has reduced cases of complaints from parents about the decision taken on their students.*

Just like quantitative findings, these views further support the views expressed by Mtsweni (2017) that, to improve students' discipline, share the responsibility of promoting value and standard discipline which help to establish sound behavioural codes for life and successful running of the schools. Castello et al (2010) also stated that parents are responsible for maintenance of discipline within the school and, beyond their responsibility for school management and teaching, parents are also responsible for the moral development of learners and to ensure that they become law-abiding citizens. These mixed findings point to the fact that, though not exhaustively involved, stakeholders constitute a critical component in management of students' discipline in schools.

### **SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS**

From the study findings, it is evident that cases of indiscipline among students in public secondary schools are on the rise. There are many cases of violence which students mete out against their colleagues, students are involved in many cases strikes and school riots, theft, teenage pregnancies, truancy and absenteeism, low academic performance and disobedience of

school rules and regulations. Public secondary schools do not fully involve stakeholders such as parents in the management of students' discipline.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends that the Ministry of Education (MoE) should organize workshops to sensitize stakeholders on their role in the management of students' discipline in secondary schools.

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