

## FACTORS INFLUENCING SCHOOL PRINCIPALS' APPROACHES ON MANAGEMENT OF STUDENTS' DISCIPLINE IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN MIGORI COUNTY, KENYA

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### Abstract

*The objective of the study was to establish factors influencing effectiveness of school principal's approaches on students' discipline in public secondary schools in Migori County. This study was informed by behaviour modification by operant theory. The study adopted a cross-sectional survey design with a population consisting of 271 principals, 271 deputy principals, 271 student leaders, 1759 teachers and 10 Sub-county Directors of Education (SCD). The study sampled 74 principals, 74 deputy principals, 74 student leaders, 8 SCDs and 317 teachers from Krejcie and Morgan table respectively summing up to 547 respondents. Data was collected using 2 questionnaires; one for administrators, and the other for teachers while an Interview guide to gather information from SCDs and Focus Group Discussion (FGD) guide from student leaders. Piloting, involving 10% from each category of the respondents, was done to determine reliability and validity of the research tools. Test-retest method was used to establish reliability by employing Pearson's  $r$  with a reliability threshold of 0.70 and above. Face and content validity was determined by experts in Educational Management and Policy and determination of Content validity Index (CVI) at 0.85. Quantitative data was analysed using frequency counts, percentages, means, standard deviation and T-test while qualitative data was coded, transcribed and organized thematically. Factors influencing effectiveness of disciplinary approaches was influential mean rating of 3.35. Findings are important to educational administrators, policy makers and planners in understanding how different factors influence discipline. The study concludes that principal's attitude, parental involvement in discipline cases, and principal's experience are highly influential factors in managing student discipline in secondary schools. Principal's attitude was found to be the most influential, with both teachers and administrators rating it as highly influential. The study recommends that the Ministry of Education, through the Board of Management, should establish a clear policy on parental involvement for rewarding and giving motivational talks to students and teachers. This will promote schools to consistently recognize and encourage good behavior, leading to long-term improvement of school discipline.*

**Keywords:** Management, students, discipline, public, secondary schools, Migori County, Kenya

### Introduction

Management of discipline in schools is considered an essential element in educational practice. Discipline management has benefits which are both personal to the student and also bring wider societal benefits. Students' benefits include various aspects of personal development, such as increased wellbeing and resilience (Griffith, 2023). School discipline refers to the

rules and strategies employed by schools to manage student behaviors and support their developmental needs. It is thought of as a critical factor that effectively develops students' capacities for self-control, Li, J., BinBi, S. Willems, Y., Finkenaue, C( 2021), (Li et al., 2021). Available literature shows a sharp increase in incidences of indiscipline in schools globally, as manifested through destruction of school

property, drug abuse, sexual relations, stealing, lateness, and truancy, violence, and gang affiliations, among others. Even though the rise in cases of indiscipline in schools appears to be global, Africa bears the brunt of school indiscipline cases which are due to various factors, including the influence of the information and electronic revolution Mahuro and Hungi (2016). The apparent emergence of more permissive parenting and large scale banning of corporal punishment and adoption of alternative forms of punishment, which is seen as time consuming and ineffective with learners and teachers facing compliance challenges (Achiyo and Yambo, 2020).

Management of students' discipline often requires rigorous training, as well as proper planning, organizing, leading, controlling and organization of resources. Discipline management molds, corrects, strengthens or perfects behavior and it is achieved when sound leadership is applied using positive motivation. Discipline management has also been linked to sound management practices, Okumbe, (2008). There is general consensus on the need to re-examine the current thinking on school discipline management. Typically, the responsibility of managing learners discipline falls with school heads, who may delegate the function to a designate teacher, Basic Education Act (2015). The work of Ntuli (2022) confirmed that acceptability of physical punishment of children has dropped dramatically among Finnish adults from 47% in 2015 to 15% in 2018.

In South Africa, studies by Shava and Tlou (2018) shows a wide variety of learner misconduct which influence discipline in South African public schools, and there are numerous ways in which educators, principals and governing bodies attempt to cope with these. A number of coping strategies and proactive, successful methods have been identified to ensure a positive disciplinary climate, resulting in an enhanced culture of learning and teaching. There is a vast range in the levels of orderly behavior in South African schools, ranging from those schools where the principal and staff are totally in control, to those where

disruptive learner behavior causes completely dysfunctional schools.

According to Nene (2020), the management of parental involvement in the secondary schools was still a challenge in South Africa. Parental involvement was ineffectively managed at school level due to unclear policies on parental involvement. None of the schools included in the study had an official policy on parental involvement. While the work of Shava and Tlou (2018) used Snowball sampling techniques, the current study used simple random sampling to fill the research gap.

According to Usak, and Duran, (2022). who carried out a studies on the effects of science teachers' pedagogical content knowledge on students' attitudes toward science and their achievement examination of teachers' attitude towards open performance appraisal and corporal punishment as a means of curbing disciplinary problems in schools respectively established that despite the negative consequences associated with corporal punishment. This study explicitly concludes that corporal punishment has impacts in several ways including: fear, physical harm, psychological impact, dropout/absenteeism and hatred towards teachers who use corporal punishment in schools. In addition to that, the studies concluded that some students even quit schools for fear of corporal punishment.

More studies from Uganda by Mahuro and Hungi (2016), concerning Student disciplinary management policies in selected private secondary schools in Entebbe Municipality, observed the use of school rules and regulations, student admission practices, criteria for leaving school, use of punitive measures like punishments by teachers and head teachers to curb indiscipline. In addition, the study concluded that student disciplinary management techniques used by the different school administrators affect the management of students' discipline since the conduct of teaching, staff, non-teaching staff, school prefects and the operation of other governing bodies contribute much in grooming the students into responsible citizens. In addition, Ndagire (2018)

in his study on parental participation in improving student academic achievement in Uganda, found out that despite the loud call for parental involvement in their children's education, the extent of parental involvement was very low due to myriad family responsibilities, work and other commitments in full-time employment.

Principals work hard to bring sanity in schools. And there has been several reported cases of challenges faced by principals in using disciplinary patterns as opposed to corporal punishment in schools. Achiyo and Yambo, (2020). Further the study, found that Secondary schools in Kenya have witnessed upsurge in discipline cases among students. For instance, a Task Force Report on Student Discipline working between June and July of 2017 observed that violent strikes affected more than 300 secondary schools in the country. Sound discipline approach is therefore seen as an essential ingredient in the creation of a happy and industrious school community (Basic Education Act, 2013). While the work of Li et al., (2021), used inferential statistics for data analysis, the current study used both qualitative and qualitative data analysis to fill the research gap.

It has been in the records that between 2018-2023, a total of 347 arson cases were reported by the Cabinet Secretary for Education (Republic of Kenya, 2023) 127 in 2018 and 164 cases in 2020 where 26 cases are from Nyanza region, currently forming Migori, Homa Bay, Nyamira, Kisii, Siaya and Kisumu counties (Republic of Kenya, 2023). Despite the Teachers Services Commission (TSC) circular no: 3/2010 and Code of Conduct and Ethics (2015) on child protection, between 2018-2023 there had been training of school administrators by Kenya Education Management Institute (KEMI) yet the country still witnessed cases of sexual harassment, drug abuse and rampage of students have been on the rise. Since 2018, over 134 schools have experienced arson and strikes. According to Achiyo and Yambo (2020) the government of Kenya through ministry of Education set official operating hours for all day, public or private secondary Institutions to be from Monday to Friday- as from 8.00 a.m. to 3.30 p.m. for class hours and 3.30

p.m. to 4.45 p.m. for co-curricular activities to help learners cope holistically in Education system,(MoE, 2015). In the whole country there were records for 144 indiscipline cases between June and July 2023; in coastal region of 14 schools, western 38, (Migori had 18 cases). Rift valley 17, Nairobi 16, North Eastern 12, Eastern 08, Central 21 (RoK, 2023). This indicated that schools all over the country had a challenge with regard to students' discipline despite various factors put in place. Migori County is one of the 47 counties in Kenya. It has ten sub counties with a total of 271 public secondary schools which are situated near sugar-belt, fishing and mining regions where there is easy access to illicit drinks and drugs, which make students vulnerable, increasing the need of students' discipline in schools (RoK, 2023). For instance, Migori County, where this study was done, recorded more incidences on indiscipline, compared to other counties in Kenya (MoE, 2015). Since 2018, Migori county has witnessed an increase trend in cases of strikes, arson, rape, exam cheating, molestation and destruction of property (TSC Migori County Education Office, 2018).

Discipline management is an important element of educational management, and has received widespread attention globally, in view of a rapid increase in cases of indiscipline, especially in Africa. Whereas there is extensive discourse on discipline management revolving around the various factors, there appears to be a lack of consensus on the best factor. To further complicate this, the policies and procedures that have been developed and put in place by the Ministry of Education in Kenya to guide discipline management in schools, appear to draw a delicate balance on broad factors. The policy framework therefore places the burden on school heads, to find a balance and adopt the best possible ways, depending on the circumstances. Evidently, school heads in Kenya are applying different methods, and meeting with varying success, going by the available statistics on cases of indiscipline in schools, which show some skewedness across the country, Kibandi (2023)

To establish factors influencing effectiveness of principals' approaches on management of student discipline in public secondary schools in Migori County.

H<sub>0</sub>: There is no statistically significant difference between views of teachers and administrators on factors influencing school principal's approaches and management of student's discipline in public secondary schools Migori County.

The effectiveness of school principals' approaches to managing student discipline varies significantly across different contexts. In Austria Chigeza, (2022). identified a growing crisis in school discipline, being a notable issue. Effective crisis management in schools relies heavily on the principal's communication skills. In South Africa's Disaster Management Act and subsequent communication plans have been integral to managing crises, highlighting the importance of communication in restoring order (Nene, 2020).

In Zimbabwe, Sibanda (2018) found that factors influencing positive discipline practices start from teachers, learners, parents, and the community. Achiyo and Yambo (2020) noted that the banning of corporal punishment in Kenya has led to deterioration in school discipline, highlighting the need for training programs to promote positive discipline practices. In addition, it emphasized that effective communication by school principals is crucial for managing crises and maintaining discipline, with identifying barriers to effective communication such as fear of administration and peer pressure. Adgoy (2019) further support the importance of communication, showing that ethical and attentive communication by principals promotes a positive school environment. However, Wriston and Duchesneau (2023) noted there are challenges such as misuse of communication channels and ineffective communication between schools and parents.

Parental involvement plays a significant role in managing student discipline but the lack of clear policies on parental involvement in South African schools poses a challenge Menamela, (2023), which also revealed that some parents engage in behaviors that undermine school discipline, such as use of drugs and alcohol abuse. However,

study by Kibande, (2023) showed that parental involvement positively influences student motivation, behaviour and demonstrates that students with highly involved parents perform better academically. In addition, it confirmed that parental involvement varies based on the child's age and gender, with a need for greater parental engagement in resolving discipline issues. It further highlighted the negative impact of parental interference in school discipline, often due to political or social influence.

School factors also significantly impact the management of student discipline. Adgoy (2019) highlighted that smaller schools foster a stronger sense of personal responsibility and better discipline, hence argued that larger schools face more significant challenges in maintaining order and emphasized the role of teachers in maintaining discipline, while Zukovic, and Stojadinovic (2021), noted that effective discipline should produce obedience and self-control. Further the study found that principals' experience and gender is a factor in effectiveness in managing discipline highlighted the importance of training principals on positive behavior support systems and the impact of principals' beliefs on discipline practices. Overall, effective management of student discipline requires a combination of good communication, parental involvement, and appropriate school policies and practices.

Learner's discipline management involves a number of steps and commitment of the students, parents and the teachers. The school administration plays a very instrumental function in ensuring that discipline of the students is achieved and retained, Nzabonimpa, (2019)

Many theories address administrative roles within the learning institutions advanced by several authorities as a basis to improving students' discipline in secondary schools. This study was informed by behavior modification by Skinner's (2005) operant conditioning theory which addresses human behavior through the law of effect. According to this theory, learning depends on the events that occur after certain behavior and that learning what to do is gradual, not insightful. There is interconnectedness and



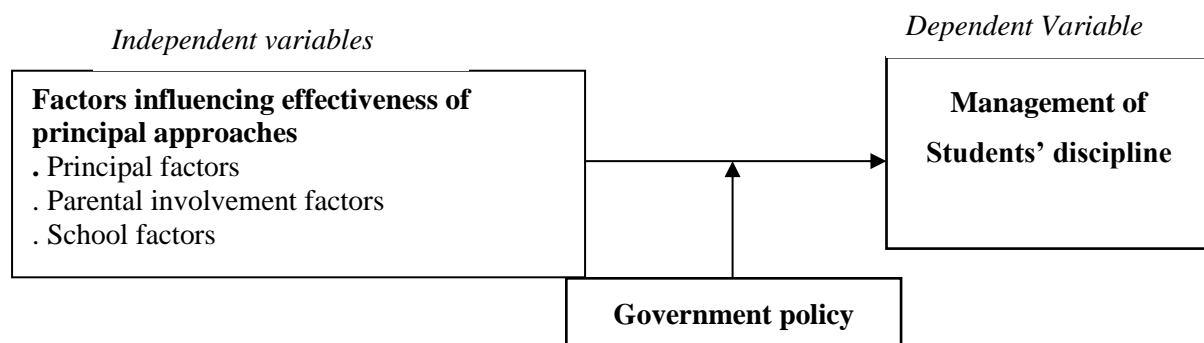
people in the organization are clear as to who is to do what, how, why, when, and to what extent this approach has the potential to promote collective responsibility and accountability. In school situation teachers, parents and students would know the framework within which their responsibilities reside and the school principals would know overall accountability on school discipline. It was on this fact that different factors were attached to this theory. The theoretical framework of this study was also based on Erikson's theory on psychosocial stages of development which was developed by Ericson (1968). He argued that at adolescence stage, life gets more complex as one attempts to find his own identity, struggles with social interactions

and grapples with moral issues. Most secondary school students are at this stage which is a volatile stage of human development and this may cause indiscipline (Nene 2020)., This theory is applicable in this study because students in public secondary schools are very much exposed to all sorts of behaviors' in the society. Therefore, in an environment where leadership and guidance is not effectively offered, the discipline of the students becomes greatly jeopardized leading to lack of conducive working and learning environment.

This study was guided by conceptual framework (Figure 1) which helps to give a clearer understanding of relationships of the variables indicated.

**Figure 1**

*Factors Influencing School Principals' Approaches on Management of Students' Discipline*



### Research Methodology

This study adopted a cross-sectional survey research design, which was appropriate for gathering data from principals, deputy principals, SCDs, teachers, and student leaders. This design, commonly used in social and psychological research, facilitated the collection of both qualitative and quantitative data. The research used mixed methods approach, which enable easy of data collection through questionnaires, interview guides, and focus group discussions (FGDs), integrating the findings in the presentation of results (Creswell, 2013). The study was conducted in public secondary schools in Migori County, Kenya, a cosmopolitan area with diverse cultural practices influencing student discipline. The population consisted of 2,582 respondents, including 271 principals, 271 deputy principals, 271 student leaders, 10 Sub County Directors (SCDs), and 1,759 teachers. A

sample size of 547 respondents was selected using simple random sampling: 148 administrators, 74 student leaders, 317 teachers, and 8 SCDs. According to the Basic Education Act (2015), the attendance of the Sub-county Education Officer is mandatory in disciplinary proceedings, making SCDs suitable for this study. Piloting, involving 10% from each category of the respondents, was done to determine reliability and validity of the research tools, Bryman, (2012). Test-retest method was used to establish reliability by employing Pearson's  $r$  with a reliability threshold of 0.70 and above. Face and content validity was determined by experts in Educational Management and Policy and determination of CVI at 0.85. Questionnaires were administered to principals, deputy principals, and teachers over one month, with prior arrangement for their time. After one week, completed questionnaires were collected, with

follow-up collections in the second week for any pending responses. Interviews and FGDs were conducted over three weeks, with taped data transcribed and analyzed thematically. The researcher inspected filled questionnaires, separating those with missing data from fully completed ones. A random selection of 20 questionnaires was used to verify SPSS program entries, correcting any errors. Data were analyzed using SPSS Version 26, with a significance level set at  $p < .05$ . Qualitative data were analyzed thematically, organizing responses into themes aligned with the study's objectives. Quantitative data analysis included descriptive statistics (frequency tables and figures) and inferential statistics, utilizing T-test analysis. The effectiveness of discipline approaches was assessed using mean ratings, interpreted according to Nzabonimpa, (2019). classification: 1.00-1.44 = not effective; 1.45-2.44 = lowly effective; 2.45-3.44 = effective; 3.45-4.44 = highly effective; 4.45-5.00 = very highly effective. The T-test was employed to determine significant

differences between group means. The study aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding of discipline management in secondary schools in Migori County, considering both the qualitative and quantitative aspects of the data collected.

This study collected both Qualitative and Quantitative data. Where Qualitative data were analyzed thematically, organizing responses into themes aligned with the study's objectives. Quantitative data analysis included descriptive statistics (frequency tables and figures) and inferential statistics, utilizing T-test analysis.

## Results and Discussion

The results and discussions were presented in sections. The ratings of teachers and administrators on the level of effectiveness of factors influencing effectiveness of school principals' approaches on management of students' discipline were done and presented in table 1 and table 2 using mean rating in a Likert scale of between 1-5.

**Table 1**

*Teachers Views on factors influencing Principal's choice of approach*

Factor		Effectiveness level					Total
		Very Low	Low	Moderate	High	Very High	
Principal's Attitude	Frequency	18	12	32	89	50	201
	Percent	(9.0)	(6.0)	(15.9)	(44.3)	(24.9)	(100)
Parental Involvement in Discipline	Frequency	8	17	48	75	53	201
	Percent	(4.0)	(8.4)	(23.9)	(37.3)	(26.4)	(100)
School size	Frequency	18	23	63	76	21	201
	Percent	(9.0)	(11.4)	(31.3)	(37.8)	(10.4)	(100)
Principal's Disciplinary Experience	Frequency	11	26	66	63	35	201
	Percent	(5.4)	(12.9)	(32.8)	(31.4)	(11.4)	(100)
Principal communication channel	Frequency	24	26	47	74	30	201
	Percent	(11.9)	(12.9)	(23.4)	(36.8)	(14.9)	(100)
Policy Guidelines from MoE	Frequency	17	22	46	71	45	201
	Percent	(8.5)	(10.9)	(22.9)	(35.3)	(22.4)	(100)
Teacher involvement	Frequency	16	26	51	64	44	201
	Percent	(8.0)	(12.9)	(25.4)	(31.8)	(22.0)	(100)

Majority of teachers as respondents rated the following factors as being highly influential in the management of students' discipline in secondary schools: principal's attitude 44.3% school size 37.8% parental involvement in indiscipline cases 37.3%, principal communication channels 36.8%.

Parental involvement in indiscipline cases 35.4% policy guidelines 35.3%, and teacher involvement 31.8%. The mean rating of factors influencing effectiveness of management approaches on students' discipline in secondary schools as influential by teachers as respondents

as in: principal experience at 32.8%. This means that the factor is effective if enacted in

management of students' discipline in secondary schools as presented in table 2.

**Table 2**

*Administrators' Views on Level of Effectiveness of Factors influencing effectiveness of disciplinary approach*

Factor		Effectiveness level					Total
		Very Low	Low	Moderate	High	Very High	
Principal's Attitude	Frequency	3	5	24	65	24	121
	Percent	(2.5)	(4.1)	(19.8)	(53.7)	(19.8)	(100)
Parental Involvement in Discipline	Frequency	5	17	44	42	13	121
	Percent	(5.2)	(14.0)	(36.4)	(34.7)	(10.7)	(100)
School size	Frequency	8	10	51	41	11	121
	Percent	(6.6)	(8.3)	(42.1)	(33.9)	(9.1)	(100)
Principal's Disciplinary Experience	Frequency	3	11	50	40	17	121
	Percent	(2.5)	(9.1)	(41.3)	(33.1)	(14.0)	(100)
Principal communication channel	Frequency	5	13	36	48	16	118
	Percent	(4.2)	(11.7)	(30.5)	(40.7)	(13.6)	(97.5)
Policy Guidelines from MoE	Frequency	6	14	47	39	15	121
	Percent	(5.0)	(11.6)	(32.2)	(38.8)	(12.4)	(100)
Teacher involvement	Frequency	4	8	42	45	22	121
	Percent	(3.3)	(6.6)	(34.7)	(37.2)	(18.2)	(100)

The administrators noted that most of the variables rated as highly influential, were principal attitude 53.7% principal communication channels 40.7% policy guidelines 38.8%, teacher involvement, 37.2% and school size at 34.8%. The factors are seen as highly influential particularly when integrated into the school's administrative systems, this was also seen from teachers' views. The parental

involvement in students' discipline at 41.3% is rated influential. Both respondents' agreed that the factors are influential and highly influential. An analysis of the specific factors influencing the effectiveness of principals' approaches on management of student discipline on comparative ratings of teachers and administrators is presented in table 3.

**Table 3**

*Effectiveness of factors influencing Principals' approaches on management of student Discipline teachers and principals' views combined*

Factors	Respondent	MR	Overall MR	t-test	Sig (2 tailed)
Principal's attitude	Teachers	3.74	3.78	t(302)=-29.771, p=.000	
	Administrators	3.86			
Parental involvement in students' performance	Teachers	3.79	3.67	t(305)=-31.629, p=.000	
	Administrators	3.40			
School size	Teachers	3.38	3.34	t(303)=-24.253, p=.000	
	Administrators	3.30			
Principal's Disciplinary Experience	Teachers	3.50	3.52	t(304)=-26.743, p=.000	
	Administrators	3.53			
Principal communication channel	Teachers	3.35	3.44	t(300)=-22.788, p=.000	
	Administrators	3.56			
Policy Guidelines from MoE	Teachers	3.54	3.51	T(306)=-26.298, p=.000	
	Administrators	3.49			
Teacher involvement	Teachers	3.48	3.53	T(306)=-25.556, p=.000	
	Administrators	3.65			

Table 3 presents the average mean ratings of respondents regarding factors influencing the effectiveness of principals' approaches to managing student discipline in secondary schools. The data reveals that the principal's attitude is the most highly influential factor, with teachers rating it at 3.74 and administrators at 3.86 ( $t(302) = 29.771, p < .001$ ). Based on the rating scale provided (1.00-1.44 = Not influential, 1.45-2.44 = Lowly Influential, 2.45-3.44 = Influential, 3.45-4.44 = highly influential, 4.45-5.00 = Very Highly influential), all factors with mean ratings above 3.28 are considered influential to highly influential in managing student discipline. This indicates that respondents generally agree on the effectiveness of these factors in influencing discipline management in secondary schools. The results underscore the critical importance of school administrators utilizing these factors to effectively manage their institutions. The principal's attitude, being the most highly rated factor, suggests that the leader's approach and mindset play a crucial role in shaping discipline management strategies and their implementation. Hypothesis testing further confirmed these findings, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis and acceptance of the alternative hypothesis. This statistical evidence strengthens the conclusion that these identified factors significantly influence the effectiveness of principals' approaches to managing student discipline in secondary schools.

The hypothesis tested on factors influencing effectiveness of disciplinary approaches as shown on table 3 confirmed that:

$H_0$ : There is no statistically significant difference between views of teachers and administrators on factors influencing school principal's approaches and management of student's discipline in public secondary schools Migori County.

It was observed that difference between the mean ratings of teachers and Administrators views is statistically significant, on factors influencing school principal's approaches and management of student's discipline since  $p = .000$ , The resulting or observed  $p$  values are .000 for all the variable groups. Since this is below the critical  $p$

value (.05), there is enough statistical evidence to reject the null hypothesis and hence accept the alternative hypothesis. Therefore, there is statistically significant relationship between factors influencing school principal's approaches and management of student's discipline in public secondary schools in Migori County. The higher the mean rating given by the respondents for each of the investigated, the higher factors influencing school principal's approaches and management of student's discipline in secondary schools.

Principals' attitude as a factor showed that teachers mean rating at 3.74 and administrators mean rating at 3.86 both agreed that principal's attitude is highly influential factor influencing effectiveness of disciplinary approaches. On the influence of Principal's attitude, majority who were interviewed agreed that, like SC2 said; This is very true and may impact positively on correction of indiscipline. Some principals' loath students before they even talk to them. Some of them have formed opinion on students.

S31 also noted that; the principals' attitude matters a lot in dealing with indiscipline cases. A principal with negative attitude will find it difficult to curb indiscipline cases since the students or student leaders won't be free with him and tell him what is going on in school.

On the other hand, SC6 said that; Principals with positive attitude towards the students have it easy to deal with students' behavior since they will be free to share with him all their challenges in life hence effective management of their behavior.

Study by Sidgi, (2022) argues that, discipline in school is a system of guiding the students to make measurable decisions. This can be possible depending on the principals' attitude. It is important for principals to understand the connection between student performance and their behavior. According to Blomberge, N. (2020), principals' attitudes cannot be assumed, since to understand all student behaviors and their needs it is important to have positive attitude to cope with all situations the students undergo. In order to manage students' discipline, principals' like students need to be explicitly taught these behavioral principles. However,



schools must also consider environmental variables that might impede principals' attitude to engage in practices, study by Blomberge, (2020) , results showed a strong positive relationship between principals' attitude and students disciplinary approaches practices and their sense of efficacy. The more the principal develop positive attitude towards students' behavior the more the effectiveness of the disciplinary approach hence effective students' behavior and higher students' self- efficacy. Findings on Principals' experience as a factor, teachers mean rating at 3.50 and administrators mean rating at 3.53 which revealed that they agreed that the factor was very influential to disciplinary approaches.

The demographic factors further showed that most teachers and administrators had teaching experience of over 10 years, they were therefore assumed to possess the information needed for this research as supported by Negrada-Verona et al., (2017) who studied leadership, psychology and organizational behavior in New York and found that principals with longer teaching experience perform better than their colleagues when it comes to disciplinary approaches within the school. In addition, the demographic on age found that more than 60% of the teachers and administrators serving within the county were aged below 51 years, and could possibly have different perspectives to discipline approaches. This is consistent with Strang (2014) who found out that age brings with it greater competence, self-confidence, self-esteem and high level of responsibility in which a person feels a greater sense of accomplishment. These attributes are crucial in the management of students' discipline in secondary schools.

Findings from interviews and FGD for example; S20 noted; The principals' experience matters a lot in dealing with indiscipline cases. A principal with experience will be able to curb indiscipline by reading the signs before it gets out of hands.

Study by Wriston, and Duchesneau, (2023)., confirms that principals experience generally has a stronger sense of personal efficacy in schools' discipline this is in agreement with S61 that a principal with experience will be able to curb

indiscipline by reading the signs before it gets out of hands. This enhances the orderliness of a school environment.

According to Mbwesa, (2016), schools' principals' experience would be more effectively managed by administrators with more than 10-year experience and higher academic qualifications. Furthermore, Zukovic, and Stojadinovic, (2021), avers that the administrative experience of principals to a large extent may help in overcoming some of these challenges as observations had shown that the number of years a principal spends in administration is symbolic with the ability to handle stress and challenges. The ultimate responsibility for all school discipline lies with the school head. The enhancement and the smooth running of the disciplinary approach system depend on well-defined basic policies established by principals. Principals' experience is dependent upon the period that he/she has. Longer service exposes principals to different student behavior and challenges overtime. Out of this exposure, they develop interpersonal communication skills that are relevant and important to their relationship with their students. This enables them to handle issues that emerge from students' population. Such an amicable relationship improves discipline of students. Findings on Principals' communication channel as a factor revealed that, teachers mean rating at 3.35 and administrators mean rating at 3.58, some schools did not keep parents informed about positive discipline issues through newsletters, majority respondent interviewed noted that; for example SC2 suggested;

Lack of principal communication between the school and home contributes to prevalence of cases of untoward behavior in secondary schools. Principals communicate school rules and regulations to all stakeholders. Communication as a strategy adopted by head teachers and teachers in managing students discipline in schools is very important because communication is very necessary in every activity in school and it supports the requirement in involving all stakeholders in students' discipline hence impact on secondary school students discipline.

Similarly, Sidgi, (2022) study also established that principals' communication impact on secondary school students discipline. Well spelt written communication through official letters, circulars, memos, notices, suggestion boxes, reports, printouts, school magazines and handbooks in the schools. This is indicative of the fact that written communication conveys a lot of information not only from one person to another but also from generation to generation. In a school, official letters, circulars, memos, notices, suggestion boxes, printouts, school magazines and hand books are means of communication. The findings affirm the fact that the written work is more permanent and less liable to misinterpretation. In other words, open communication means between principals and students which is clear, unambiguous and continuous that is, use of dialogue makes disciplinary approaches effective. Further Adgoy (2019) argued that communication involves the two-way information sharing between the school and the parents regarding school programs and students' progress. Schools are encouraged to device various modes of relaying information between the schoolteachers and the family of students as majority in qualitative response like;

S16 noted; In our school written communication is through official letters, circulars, memos, notices, suggestion boxes, minutes, reports, printouts, school magazines and handbooks in the schools. This is indicative of the fact that written communication conveys a lot of information not only from one person to another but also from generation to generation. In my school, official letters, circulars, memos, notices, suggestion boxes, reports, printouts, school magazines and hand books are means of communication.

The current study further agreed that Principal Communication has been identified as fundamental to both pre-empting crisis in the management of organizations as well ascertaining prompt return to normalcy as found out by Li, et. al. (2021). This also confirmed in the current study as noted by Communication is associated with unitizing information to identify risk and in prompting mitigation measures that can check risk, harmonize support and recovery in cases

where a crisis occurs. Coombs, (2012). emphasizes that crisis communication seals gaps created by crisis by arresting rumors, speculation and misinformation that may prove detrimental to organization and its image. As a result, organizations have prioritized communication as integral to effective management . Crisis are inevitable and can happen to any individual or organizations such as schools, factories, shopping malls, hotels, media houses and private business at any place in time. Effectiveness of crisis management can therefore be said to rely on well laid down communication plan.

However, Clement and Rencewigg, (2020) also notes that despite the rising interested parties demand that communication have hardly been handled professionally. Schools have in particular faced crisis in which traumatic experiences such as fires, bullying, harassment of teachers and student rioting, often linked to student discipline have been reported across the globe. Communication is particularly important in the management of student discipline as it keeps students abreast of school rules and regulation, updates students on the status of their concerns and controls behavior of students with regard to events that are taking place in the school. Moreover, schools have very critical interested parties such as parents, students and local communities who need to be kept abreast of what is happening in the schools. Further finding on Parents' Attitude as a factor indicated teachers mean rating at 3.58 and administrators mean rating at 3.97 which implies parents attitude was very influential factor and they agreed that the factor influences effectiveness of disciplinary approaches in managing students discipline. Most of the respondent interviewed agreed with this factor as very effective for instance;

SC3 noted; As much as it is proper to involve parents/guardians in disciplinary issues, they should have the right attitude for their children to be corrected. Their attitude should not be negative since this might spoil the student even more.

S2 further noted; This is a major contributing factor especially when the parent gives too much

love to the child either because he or she is 1<sup>st</sup> born in a family, the parent might be having a feeling that his/her child can never go wrong. Again too much praises to the child, “like my child had never stolen any one’s property”.

This was confirmed by Adgoy (2019) in his study Influence of principal leadership skills on teacher motivation in public secondary schools in Zoba Anseba Eritrea established that many parents have attitude towards principals’ discipline, especially politicians or those who have link with notable politicians often meddle in the affairs of the school administration. Some parents are known for issuing threats to principals who take out some disciplinary actions against their children especially those who hold positions in the society. As a result of some of them being influential, they use their position to intimidate and threaten the principals and therefore preventing them from taking appropriate disciplinary measures against their children and this erodes the authority of the school principals. It was equally observed in a secondary school that, another principal was beaten up by the parents of a student that was punished by a teacher.

Even some parents end up getting principals arrested and arraigned before judges. Such embarrassing situations have made it difficult for principals and teachers in public and private secondary schools to enforce suspend taking disciplinary measures like suspension for the fear that such parents may have their appointments terminated and the student readmitted unconditionally. Such an occurrence could send a wrong signal to other students since the principal is handicapped in the application of disciplinary action, Zukovic, .and Stojadinovic,, (2021). It is therefore important for parents and principals to read from the same script and develop mutual understanding to enhance student discipline. Findings on Parental involvement in Students’ Discipline, teachers mean rating at 3.79 and administrators mean rating at 3.40 which implies that they agreed that the factor influences effectiveness of disciplinary approaches. Further findings from qualitative data showed that involving parents in discipline of their children could influence the effectiveness

of a discipline approach as shared mostly by SC 1 said; provision of basic needs by parents or caregivers is key to discipline. Apart from that parents follow up or monitor what their children are doing. That will help the students to avoid indiscipline because they know that if they go to places where parents are not happy of, they are punished in one way or the other. The parents should also supervise their students whenever they are given work by the teachers. Parents or caretakers should monitor or ensure the type of friends their children walk around with.

On the other hand, involving parents seemed to be showing mixed results as indicated by SC3 that; in my opinion the fact that is about parenting in the school, in some instances you will find that parents don’t want to admit that their children have committed certain mistakes and thus refuses. For example let’s say like your child has been sent home due to abuse of drug and the parent is not ready to accept that his/ her child has committed an offence, therefore you will find that the child will find a place to lie on and the next time you will just she/ he will repeat the same mistake in that the parent is not seeing the mistake in him/her. When a parent is told that the child has a mistake, he/she should accept that and take a corrective measure.

SC 1 also said; I think discipline can also be improved through child-parent relationship. In some cases, you will find that there is something may seem to be wrong to you, but to the student, its right being that , that’s what he has always developed to know when back at home. So by also telling a parent advising them, and also improving the relationship will also enhance the effective means of corrective measures.

As indicated in the findings above, there are contradictions about whether parental involvement affects discipline outcome, a study by Sibanda (2018) revealed that some parents did not model good behavior to their children. The findings showed that some parents or members of the family who were involved in drug and alcohol abuse would give their children marijuana to sell to other learners at school and those sold beer at home would ask their children to sell beer to the customers. Further, it also

noted that some parents received stolen properties from children while others sent children to buy cigarettes and alcoholic drinks exposing them to temptation to consume them. The findings of the study further revealed that some members of the community were bribed by learners to go to school and pose as their parents/guardians if learners had disciplinary cases. Some overprotective parents would lead to communication breakdown in the school because the school administration would feel annoyed by such parents while the learners in question would think they have been given permission to misbehave at school. So this means that however much the Principal tried to improve the behavior of the learners, some parents were still a stumbling block to that process, hence failure by Principals.

On the contrary, Kibandi, (2023). revealed that close parental monitoring had an effect on the child's positive behavior. The results also revealed that parents' prior beliefs of their children's ability had a positive effect on performance. Similarly, Đurišić and Bunijevac (2017) concluded that great schools have effective partnerships with parents therefore, school, family, and community partnerships are critical component in educating students. In such a friendly school climate, students tended to be of good behavior because they had little challenges and were happier with their academic progress. What emerges is that the behavior that parents model to their children at home can influence how their children respond to certain rules and regulations at school. Where the parents condone unacceptable behavior, their children tend to have disruptive behavior leading to indiscipline. Furthermore, it is apparent that schools have developed proper guidelines by which they relate to parents about discipline issues as they remain key influencers of their children's behavior. Findings on School size as a factor showed that teachers mean rating at 3.38 and administrators mean rating at 3.30 which revealed that school size influences effectiveness of disciplinary approaches as used by Principals. This was further confirmed by most respondents that had qualitative responses like S13 who said; School size highly influences the approach; the

larger the number of students the higher the challenge as understanding the behavior of the students might be a challenge to the principal. The students might also escape due to the big number.

Like in the current study Sidgi, (2022), had similar findings on influence of school size. He discovered that school size and students' discipline asserts that the larger the school, the more complex the task to be accomplished, and the more complex the task of maintaining the students' discipline. Further, Zukovic, and Stojadinovic, (2021), argued that behavior problems are so much in large schools that any possible virtue of larger size is cancelled out by the difficulties of maintaining an orderly learning environment, the current study also conform this as majority who were interviewed agreed that like SC1 noted; The school size determines discipline in a school. A very large school may be a threat to discipline because some offenders may get away with their crime. In a small school, all the students will be monitored and corrective measures taken appropriately.

In a smaller school, it is possible for an administrator to know all the students by name as well as have a face-to-face contact with all the teachers and support staff regularly. This personal contact creates an opportunity to have a strong grip of the personnel and the whole school at large. This yields obedience which is a strong virtue of discipline. Small schools have lower incidences of negative social behavior than do large schools. This is because students in small schools are involved in a greater variety of activities and that they derive more satisfaction from their participation than students in large schools. Therefore they are less likely to participate in anti-social activities leading to a more learning conducive environment,( Adgoy 2019). Principal in a large school must exercise better planning and delegation in order to ensure that no area is neglected. Further, there is a much greater sense of belonging among students in small schools than in large ones. Alienation affects confidence, self-esteem and responsibility for self-direction. This means that smaller schools can be more relatively stable than big ones. One key feature of small schools and units is that



everyone's participation is needed for clubs, teams and student government to have an adequate number of members. To enhance management of students' discipline the schools should be reasonably large for effective control of students' behavior. Further findings on Policy guidelines by Ministry Of Education as a factor showed, teachers mean rating at 3.54 and administrators mean rating at 3.49 implying that this approach is very influential and they agreed that the factor influences effectiveness of disciplinary approach. From the interview majority noted for example;

S15 said; It influences the principals enhancement on a student's discipline because the principal has boundary on how to discipline a student in which case he is guided, he could be having away beyond the guidelines but his/her hands are tied.

A study by, Li, et.al, (2021), found that restriction by law, after the outlawing of corporal punishment in school made teachers/principals to become very cautious to avoid being accused of assaulting their students for some teachers have been ridiculed, humiliated and fined in the court of law for disciplining students. For the fact that teachers and principals are taken to court in the process of taking disciplinary action on rude students are restricted to few alternative disciplinary measures and this often result to ineffective measures like ignoring a student's misconduct altogether. Furthermore, school principals lose their respect and honor when they are found guilty or when cases are judged in favor of students and their parents or when principals are made to pay fines as damages done to students. It is therefore important that policy guidelines should be free and fair to enhance student behavior. Lastly findings on teacher involvement as a factor shown teachers mean rating at 3.48 and administrators mean rating at 3.65 which implies teacher involvement is highly effective factor and they agreed that the factor influences effectiveness of disciplinary approaches in managing students' discipline.

SC2 noted; Teachers must be involved at all levels. They spend three quarters of their time

with the students hence they know the students well.

Teachers' involvement on students discipline is a critical factor. Teachers play a greater role in inculcating values and instilling discipline in their students, Clement, and Rencewigg, (2020), states that head teacher is the overall organizer, co-coordinator and supervisor of all the activities in the school and being responsible for improving and maintaining high standards training of students in terms of discipline and learning is vital. In case of indiscipline in their school, the bulk stops at their door. The deputy head teachers are responsible to the head teachers for guidance and counseling of students as well as ensuring that proper discipline is maintained in the school. During interview and FGD majority noted that like S17 who said; It had been realized that major strikes that happen in our schools also involves teachers, so if the teachers aren't part of the solutions to the challenges of discipline of the students then it becomes difficult for the principal to successfully carry out disciplinary cases.

Study by Sidgi, (2022), found that discipline in school is a system of guiding the students to make measurable decisions. At the classroom level it means the control of a class to achieve desirable behaviors. Thus good management of discipline saves substantial resources and time for stakeholders. Therefore there is a general consensus that the class and subject teachers are bestowed with the responsibility of maintaining proper discipline in classes and the whole school in general and instill the appropriate moral values to the learners. The teacher(s) on duty oversees the students' activities in the course of the time allocated while the dormitory masters/mistresses where applicable sees to it that there is order in their areas of jurisdiction. Further, Raichena (2020) observed that, good discipline should produce obedience and self-control. A student should be able to control himself/herself and do the right thing at the right time, place and in the right manner. Effective teachers should know that students need fair discipline. It is important that teachers should begin each day with a positive attitude, have a good class control, let the school activities be

learners-centered and keep a record of major issues that arise in their areas of jurisdiction. To enhance the effectiveness of the teachers in their supervisory role, the head teacher and his/her deputy need to lead from the front. Chigeza, (2022). Noted that teachers interact very frequently with students in various areas daily therefore, their interaction with them can in many ways change their perception and help them express their concerns about life. They can also take the opportunity to guide the learners about their school life. This is why teachers' involvement as a factor could be influential as shown in the findings of this study.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study, the study makes the following conclusions. The study concludes that principal's attitude, parental involvement in discipline cases, and principal's experience are highly influential factors in managing student discipline in secondary schools. Principal's attitude was found to be the most impactful, with both teachers and administrators rating it as highly influential. The study also determined that communication channels, policy guidelines, and teacher involvement are significant factors affecting the effectiveness of disciplinary approaches. School size was found to be an influential factor, though to a lesser extent than the others. These findings suggest that clear communication strategies, supported by appropriate school policies and parental involvement, can significantly enhance discipline management in secondary schools.

It recommends that the Ministry of Education, through the Board of Management, should establish a clear policy on parental involvement by rewarding and giving motivational talks to students, teachers. This will promote schools to consistently recognize and encourage good behavior, potentially leading to long-term improvements in overall school discipline and academic performance.

### **Declaration of Generative AI and AI-Assisted Technologies in the Writing Process**

The author confirms that no generative AI tools, including ChatGPT or similar technologies, were used in any part of this manuscript's

development. The entire content, from conception to final edits, represents the authors' original thinking, critical insight, and independent scholarly work. No section was created, altered, or assisted by automated systems. This manuscript is fully human-written and grounded in genuine academic research and intellectual effort.

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Lynnette A. Rakiro: Conceptualization, Methodology, Writing, Data Analysis, and Visualization – Original Draft.

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The author declares no conflict of interest regarding the content, analysis, or outcomes of this research. No commercial product, entity, or brand was promoted, evaluated, or supported. Data were independently gathered and analyzed. Participation was voluntary and uncompensated, with confidentiality upheld and informed consent obtained. The author affirms full professional independence, ensuring that all findings are original, unbiased, and uninfluenced by any external or financial interests.

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