



## Effectiveness of Counselors in Managing Discipline in Public Secondary Schools in Kenya: Case of Mt. Kenya East Selected Counties

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### ABSTRACT

*Various innovative approaches to shaping of students' discipline have been introduced in schools since the banning of corporal punishment; one such strategy is the involvement of school counselors as an alternative to corporal punishments, unfortunately the effectiveness of such strategies have not been clearly documented. This study sought to analyze the effectiveness of school counselors in promoting learners' discipline in public secondary schools in three Mt. Kenya East counties. The study was guided by the following research objectives, to analyze the prevalence of students' indiscipline and evaluate the effectiveness of involvement of counselors in shaping discipline in public secondary schools. The hypothesis was that there was no relationship between the involvement of counselors and level of discipline. The target population comprised of 421 heads of counseling from all the 421 secondary schools from which a sample of 42 counselors were selected using the stratified random sampling. Questionnaires were used in data collection. Analysis of data was conducted using descriptive and inferential statistics. Results of the study indicated that counseling was minimally used to promote student discipline in secondary schools. The findings from the test of hypothesis revealed that there was no statistically significant difference in the involvement of counselors shaping students' discipline in public secondary schools. In order to establish whether a significant statistical relationship existed between prevalence of indiscipline and use of counseling in controlling misbehavior among learners in secondary schools, Pearson r correlation was computed which yielded  $r = +.097$ ,  $n = 42$ ,  $p < .0005$ . The null hypothesis was thus accepted and it was concluded on the need to strengthen counseling to enhance discipline. The study recommends enhancement of counseling with a view to integrating counselors in school management and decision-making organs such as Boards of Management.*

**Keywords:** Effectiveness, school counselors, students' discipline, behaviour

### INTRODUCTION

Discipline is essential for smooth functioning of schools and society. Discipline is central to adaptive human behaviour particularly with respect to regulating interpersonal relationships among an individual and other people as well as modifying the way people react to situations they encounter in their daily living (Redempta, 2010). According to Sharma (2016) discipline is orderliness in life which results from observance of codes of conduct. Discipline hence implies respect to physical and moral laws of the society. Being disciplined hence requires a person to be honest, hardworking, strict adherence to established rules and regulations and internalization of social norms and values that govern a particular society. Kelly (2017) argues that teachers and school administrators must maintain student discipline in order to provide students with an educational foundation necessary to build a successful, independent live and careers. Gwirayi, (2011) avers that in schools, discipline ought to be more than just an intervention measure to remedy incidents of misbehaviour; rather, it



should be an in-built predisposition that fortifies students' assenting, self-directing and conforming behaviour that supports them adopt affirmative values to cultivate enduring discipline for the individuals' entire life. Schools need to contextualize disciplinary procedures suitable to specific student population so as to mould learner engagements and thus create a conducive environment necessary for teaching and learning.

Kelly (2017) states that education goals can only be attainment in situations that uphold high ideals of discipline. Porteus, Valley and Ruth (2001) also agree with this view and add that education institutions have traditionally upheld discipline among learners by use of punitive measures such as corporal punishment. Use of corporal punishment has however been widely condemned in schools worldwide as an aggressive measure that creates hostility among the involved participants in schools. With the change of attitudes toward use of punitive discipline techniques, schools have been left with no option but to look for substitute models of addressing indiscipline among students. Exclusionary and punitive school discipline policies, such as corporal punishment, suspensions and expulsions, permit teachers to remove learners from the classroom for unacceptable behaviour or misconduct. However, despite the promptness of these interventions, Maphosa and Shumba (2010) points this approach has weaknesses because these practices increase the likelihood of learners to miss tuition time, fuel absenteeism from school and thus compromise learners' levels of academic achievement. In extreme cases, the student may drop out entirely and/or get involved in delinquent behaviors (Education Commission of the United States, 2018).

Globally, many countries have enacted a ban in use of corporal punishment in schools. For instance, countries like United States of America, Britain, Finland, Australia, New Zealand, Israel, and South Africa among others, have advocated for the use of guidance and counseling in place of more punitive methods in controlling students' discipline (Gershoff, 2017). In Kenya, the government's commitment in the use of counseling in the administration and management of student discipline has been entrenched in various policy documents. The policy documents include the Ominde Report of 1964, Gachathi Report of 1976, the Presidential Working Party on Education and Manpower Training for the next decade and beyond of 1988, Kamunge Report of 1986, and Koech Report, Children's Act 2001 and the KESSP 2005-2010, which recommend the need for counseling of learners. Despite the robust legal framework outlawing use of corporal punishments and emphasizing on counseling as a viable alternative, indiscipline continues to ravage schools in Kenya. Dufresne, Hillman, Carson and Krame (2010) observe that in an attempt to mitigate the negative infractions of student indiscipline, schools are encouraged to improve the overall school climate, by exploring alternatives to punitive interventions, in particular guidance and counseling and positive behavioral supports have been variously advocated as credible and viable interventions to punitive intrusions. In general, these practices aim to address the root causes of student misbehavior by building strong and healthy relationships with students and improving their engagement in the learning environment.

Kiprop (2012) and Oyaro (2005) acknowledge that different secondary schools in Kenya have formulated their own unique ways of upholding discipline among students in an attempt to cater for different contextual variables in schools. In addition, schools have embraced emerging discipline strategies such as pastoral counseling, use of resource persons as motivational speakers on discipline, peer counseling and guidance and counseling. Ndirangu (2000) observes that most schools in Kenya have poorly implemented guidance and counseling policies characterized by absence of guidance and counseling departments



that lack scheduled time allocation, poor infrastructure and overburdened teacher counselors.

Consultation, collaboration and teamwork are widely championed as processes that provide school counselors openings to involve in supportive relations with other educational stakeholders. Ojo (2005) stressed that counseling should handle sensitively and discretely the diversity of learner needs. Ajowi and Simatwa (2010) argues that despite the fact that school counsellors frequently take the role of behaviour management advisers, there is need to take an additional role of educating all players in a school environment on discipline models and their possible influence on students' behaviour, and impact on school-wide decisions pertaining implementation of such programmes. Arguing in the same vein, Glosoff and Koprowicz (1990) underpinned the significance of teamwork in school counseling programmes and the centrality of teacher counsellors as professional to give expert guidance to members of the team. In this regard, school counsellors ought to join hands with teachers, non-teaching staff, parents and school in order to create an enabling environment that can stimulate growth and learning (Glosoff & Koprowicz, 1990).

Consequently, the role of teacher counsellors in schools goes beyond provision of guidance and counseling services, to support the creation of a growth-enhancing environments by sensitizing parents, teachers, school managers, and public on how to incorporate elements of modern discipline models that are most situated to meet the needs of the learners. Nakipondia (2010) recommends that all stakeholders should be enlightened on the important role of school counseling programmes. Thus, the school counselors are critical to facilitating creation of behaviour modification in schools (ASCA, 2003). Cheruiyot and Orodho (2015) also agree with this view and argue that the decision to suspend or expel a student from school as a disciplinary procedure is too weighty to be left at the discretion of the principal alone. Such a decision should be in consultation with the various stakeholders including the parents, Boards of Management (BoMs), discipline master and the teacher counselor.

Another advantage of team work in schools is that the teacher counsellor can scientifically appraise the helpfulness of various approaches to discipline modification and use the findings as an added resource for schools. Despite the existence of guidance and counseling services in public secondary schools in Kirinyaga, Embu and Tharaka-Nithi Counties, incidents of indiscipline among learners such as bullying, assault, arson attacks, fighting, theft, vandalism, destruction of school property, rape and loss of lives, among others continue to ravage schools. This development has been suspected to be occasioned by lack of an effective alternative approach that is efficient in addressing the concerns and needs, real or imagined of learners while at school. Hence, there was a critical need to evaluate the effectiveness of involvement of counseling in shaping learners' discipline in secondary schools in Kenya whose documentation is obscure.

### **Statement of the Problem**

After the outlawing of the corporal punishment, counseling was recommended as a viable alternative method of shaping learners' discipline in secondary school. Implementation of guidance and counseling programmes in schools was expected to equip learners with competencies to enable them make responsible and realistic choices in behaviour, careers and relationships. To realize this noble goal, the school counselors were expected to work closely in consultation, collaboration, teamwork and engage in cooperative relationships with other educational stakeholders. However, the escalating trends in discipline problems in



public secondary schools in Kirinyaga, Embu and Tharaka-Nithi counties raised concerns pertaining to the effectiveness of counseling as an alternative to the punitive methods of behaviour control. In addition, the involvement of counselors in shaping learners' discipline in schools has largely evaded scholarly attention and as a consequence there exists limited literature that can inform policy on this important dimension of schooling. This presents a gap in knowledge that this study addressed.

### **Purpose of the study**

The purpose of the study was to analyze the role of counseling in shaping learners' discipline in secondary schools in Kenya.

### **Objectives**

The study was based on the following objectives which were to;

- i. Analyze the prevalence of discipline issues experienced by learners in schools within the Mt. Kenya East counties
- ii. Evaluate the effectiveness of involvement of counselors in shaping learners' discipline in public secondary schools in Mt. Kenya East counties.

### **Hypothesis**

The study tested the following null hypothesis;

Ho1: There is no statistically significant relationship between the involvement of counselors in shaping learners' discipline and level of students' discipline in public secondary schools within Mt. Kenya East counties.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The study adopted the descriptive survey research design. According to Kothari (2014) descriptive research design is appropriate for a study that involves describing, recording, analyzing and reporting conditions that exist without manipulating the variables. This design enabled the researcher to collect, analyze and report data in regard to involvement of counselors in shaping learners' discipline in public secondary schools. The target population for study comprised of teacher counselors in 421 public secondary schools distributed in three counties as follows, Kirinyaga County had 124 schools, Embu County 162 schools and Tharaka-Nithi County had 135 schools. Thus, there were 421 heads of counseling departments in public secondary schools in the three counties (MoEST, 2004). In order to ensure proportionate representation of schools in the study, stratified random sampling was used to select 10% of schools from each county. Gays sampling formula of 10% was used which yielded, 14 schools in Tharaka-Nithi County, 16 in Embu County and 12 schools in Kirinyaga County. From each of the selected schools, the HoD guidance and counseling was purposively selected and included in the study. Table 1 represents a summary of the target sample size.

**Table1: Sample Size**

County	Total No. of Schools	Schools Sampled	Teacher Counselors Sampled
Tharaka-Nithi	135	14	14
Embu	162	16	16
Kirinyaga	124	12	12
Total	421	42	42



Data for the study was collected using questionnaires which had items in a likert scale. Questionnaires were administered to the sampled heads of school counseling departments. The scores obtained were used to compute mean scores which rated the respondents' opinion on involvement of counseling shaping learners' discipline in a scale of 1-5. A mean score below 3.0 was interpreted to indicate a low level of involvement, 3.0-3.9 indicated moderate/average level and scores of 4.0 and above was considered an indication of high level of involvement of counselors in managing discipline issues in schools.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings and discussions of the study in accordance with the stated objectives and hypothesis.

a) The first objective sought to find out the prevalence of discipline issues among learners within public secondary schools in Mt. Kenya East counties. Respondents were provided with 10 items in a likert scale ranging from; Great extent (5), some extent (4), not sure (3), lesser extent (2), and not at all (1). The responses obtained were used to compute a mean score for each item which was used to rate the prevalence of discipline issues. The mean scores ranged from 1 to 5 which were divided into high, moderate and low. The maximum score was 5 while the minimum was one. The mean scores below 3.0 were interpreted to indicate a low prevalence of the behavioural attribute being measured, 3.0 - 3.9 indicated moderate prevalence and scores of 4.0 and above were considered an indication of high level of prevalence of the behaviour. Results of data analysis are presented in table 2.

**Table 2. Prevalence of Discipline Issues in Public Secondary Schools**

Nature of Indiscipline Behaviour	Not at all	To a lesser extent	Not sure	To some extent	To a great extent	n	$\bar{x}$	s
1. Drug abuse in school	0	18	0	18	6	42	3.29	1.25
2. Boy-girl r/ship practiced in school	6	12	0	12	6	42	3.00	1.55
3. Student fail to complete homework	0	0	0	30	12	42	4.29	.49
4. Homosexuality is practiced in school	12	6	6	18	0	42	2.71	1.38
5. Fighting among students in school	6	6	12	12	6	42	3.14	1.35
6. Students are rude to teachers	18	12	6	0	6	42	2.14	1.46
7. Cheating in exam	6	12	6	18	0	42	2.86	1.21
8. Smuggling phones to school	0	0	6	24	12	42	4.14	.69
9. Strikes in the school	18	12	6	6	0	42	2.00	1.15
10. Truancy in the school	6	6	0	18	12	42	3.57	1.51
<b>Aggregate = 3.0206, s = .786</b>								

Analyzed data presented in Table 2 shows that the most prevalent discipline issue among learners was failure to complete homework ( $\bar{x}$  = 4.29, s = .49), this was followed by smuggling phones to school ( $\bar{x}$  = 4.14, s = .69), truancy ( $\bar{x}$  = 3.57, s = 1.51), drug abuse in school ( $\bar{x}$  = 3.29, s = 1.25), boy-girl relationship in school ( $\bar{x}$  = 3.00, s = 1.55), cheating in examinations ( $\bar{x}$  = 2.86, s = 1.21). Other discipline issues included, homosexuality ( $\bar{x}$  = 2.71, s = 1.38), fighting among student ( $\bar{x}$  = 3.14, s = 1.35), rudeness to teachers



( $\bar{x}$  =2.14, s=1.46) and strikes ( $\bar{x}$  =2.00, s =1.15). The overall computed mean on prevalence of discipline issues exhibited by learners was 3.0206 with a standard deviation of .786. These findings indicate that on a general scale the prevalence of incidents of indiscipline in public secondary schools in the region was moderate. However, high level of prevalence was observed in regard to students' failure to complete homework, smuggling of phones to school, boy-girl relationships, truancy and drug abuse.

These observations concur with the findings of Udom (2010) in secondary schools in Nigeria which established that there was high prevalence of indiscipline cases among secondary school students. The nature of indiscipline included; absenteeism from classes without reason or permission, persistent lateness, riots, destruction of property, fighting among students, examination malpractices, illicit relationships between male and female students, cultism, and rape among students both within and outside the school was observed to be moderate. Additionally, students' openly defying teachers' authority and bullying junior students was rated moderate while students' use of drugs in or outside school was high. Zubaida (2009) hypothesized that the pronounced occurrences of indiscipline among learners in secondary schools can be attributed to human developmental changes indicating adulthood which predispose learners to behave by disobeying rules and regulations in a school.

b) The second research objective sought to assess the involvement of counselors shaping learners' discipline in public secondary schools in Mt. Kenya East counties. Respondents were presented with 10 items in a likert scale that sought their opinion regarding the effectiveness of involvement of counselors in shaping discipline within the three Mt. Kenya East counties. The results are presented in table 3.

The data revealed that counselors were involved in educating teachers and school administrators about discipline models. The computed mean score obtained were 1.38 with a standard deviation of 1.50. The influence on school-wide decisions on discipline procedures yielded a mean of  $\bar{x} = 1.86$ , with a standard deviation of  $s = .35$ . The results further revealed as follows. Use of team approach to school counseling programs ( $\bar{x} = 1.43$ ,  $s = 1.08$ ). Serves as a consultant on aspects of managing student behavior to school stakeholders ( $\bar{x} = 2.00$ ,  $s = .54$ ). Involvement in making of discipline programs and policies through consulting with school administrators and teachers ( $\bar{x} = 1.95$ ,  $s = .50$ ). Provide training about effective approaches to school discipline ( $\bar{x} = 2.43$ ,  $s = 1.37$ ). Examines the effectiveness of various discipline approaches ( $\bar{x} = 2.29$ ,  $s = 1.33$ ). Undertake guidance in classrooms and in small group, and also offer individual counselling ( $\bar{x} = 2.57$ ,  $s = .74$ ). Conduct research on effectiveness of discipline programmes ( $\bar{x} = 2.14$ ,  $s = .50$ ). Encourage education stakeholders to involve students in making decisions pertaining to upholding discipline in schools ( $\bar{x} = 2.29$ ,  $s = .50$ ). The overall computed mean score for rating of involvement of guidance and counseling heads of departments in resolving discipline problems was  $\bar{x} = 2.01$  and a standard deviation of  $s = .96$ . These findings indicate that guidance and counseling personnel were involved in resolving students discipline problems to a very small extent.



**Table 3. Counselors in Shaping Discipline in Schools**

S. No.	Extent of Involvement of Guidance and Counseling	Not at all	To a lesser extent	Not sure	To some extent	To a great extent	n	$\bar{x}$	s
1.	Educates teachers and school administrators about discipline models	12	24	6	0	0	42	1.38	1.50
2.	Influences school to formulate wide decisions about discipline procedures	6	36	0	0	0	42	1.86	.35
3.	Uses team approach to school counseling programs	18	12	6	6	0	42	1.43	1.08
4.	Serves as a consultant on aspects of managing student behavior to school stakeholders	6	30	6	0	0	42	2.00	.54
5.	Involved in formulating discipline policies and programmes by collaborating with administrators and teachers.	10	24	8	0	0	42	1.95	.50
6.	Provide training about effective approaches to school discipline	6	12	24	0	0	42	2.43	1.37
7.	Examines the effectiveness of various discipline approaches.	12	6	24	0	0	42	2.29	1.33
8.	Undertake guidance in classrooms and in small group, and also offer individual counselling.	6	6	30	0	0	42	2.57	.74
9.	Conduct research on effectiveness of discipline programmes.	12	12	18	0	0	42	2.14	.50
10.	Encourage education stakeholders to involve students in making decisions pertaining to upholding discipline in schools.	6	18	18	0	0	42	2.29	.50
		$\bar{x}=2.01$		s=.96					

These findings are in agreement with Ajowi and Simatwa (2010) who argued that school counselors should take a central role in educating all players in a school setting on appropriate procedures that can impact on student discipline procedures and thus create a therapeutic environment in schools. Consequently, teacher counsellors should expand their role beyond provision of counseling and guidance services, to support the creation of a therapeutic environment in school, through sensitizing parents, teachers, administrators, and public on discipline models. Teacher counsellors should help education stakeholders to incorporate elements of modern discipline models to the best needs of learners. Nakipondia (2010) recommends the need to enlighten stakeholders on the important role of school counseling programmes. In general, the practices to address the root causes of student misbehaviour by building strong and healthy relationships with students and improving their engagement in the learning environment are lacking.

### Hypothesis

The Pearson r moment product correlation was computed to establish whether a statistically significant relationship existed between the prevalence of discipline issues and the



involvement of counselors in shaping learners' discipline in secondary schools. The results are presented in table 4.

**Table 4: Relationship between Prevalence of Discipline Issues and Involvement of Counselors**

		Prevalence of disciplined issues	Involvement of counselors in shaping discipline
Prevalence of discipline issues	Pearson Correlation	1	.097
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.540
	N	42	42

Analyzed data presented in Table 4 indicates that there was no correlation between the two variables ( $r = +.097$ ,  $n = 42$ ,  $p < .0005$ ). Shirley, Stanley and Daniel (2005) indicates that for a weak correlation,  $r$  ranges from  $\pm 0.10$  to  $\pm 0.29$ ; in a moderate correlation,  $r$  ranges between  $\pm 0.30$  and  $\pm 0.49$ ; while in a strong correlation,  $r$  ranges from  $\pm 0.5$  and  $\pm 1.0$ . Consequently, this study established that there was no relationship between the prevalence of discipline issues and the involvement of counselors in shaping learners' discipline. The null hypothesis was thus accepted and it was concluded that there was no relationship between the prevalence of discipline issues and involvement of school counselors in controlling students' discipline. This concurs with Ajowi and Simatwa (2010) who argued that despite the fact that school counsellors frequently take the role of behaviour management advisers, there is need to take an additional role of educating all players in a school environment on discipline models and their possible influence on students' behaviour, and impact on school-wide decisions pertaining implementation of such programmes. Failure of teacher counselors to act as discipline consultants meant that the counseling programmes had no relationship with students' discipline.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the findings from this study, it was observed that the prevalence of incidents of indiscipline in public secondary school in the study locale was moderate. However, high levels of prevalence were observed in failure to complete homework, smuggling phones to school, boy-girl relationships, truancy and drug abuse in school. Lastly, the study established that school counselors were minimally involved in managing students' discipline. Hypothesis testing indicated that there was no statistically significant relationship between the prevalence of discipline issues and the involvement of counselors in shaping learners' discipline.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends for the need to strengthen the capacity of school counselors in shaping learners' discipline in secondary schools in Kenya. School counselors need to be integrated in the whole process of school governance system including parent associations, Boards of Management with a view to strengthen their involvement in shaping behaviour of learners.





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