The Role of Teacher-Student Interpersonal Relationship in Determining Students' Discipline in Public Secondary Schools in Machakos County

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Abstract:- **Students' discipline is an important factor in the attainment of progressive outcomes in institutions of learning. Learning institutions have adversely been affected by cases of student's indiscipline. Management of students' discipline through creating a healthy teacher student inter relationship remains a significant panacea to this worrying trend which forms the focus of this study. This study sought to investigate the role of teacher- student interpersonal relationships in students' discipline in Machakos County, Kenya. The study used descriptive survey design. The sample size was 100 principals, 350 teachers and 380 students. The sample size was obtained by stratified sampling and simple random sampling procedures. The study used questionnaires and interview guide as the research instruments. Pilot study was done on the research instruments. Test-retest technique of reliability was used to test the reliability of the instruments. Data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics and presented in frequency tables. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient and Pearson Chi Test was used to test the hypothesis of the study. The study revealed that teacher student interpersonal relationships had a significant positive relationship with levels of students' discipline in public secondary schools in Machakos County at (r) value of 0.831 significant at (p) value of 0.003. From the findings, the study concluded that the role of teacher student interpersonal relationships was critical to students' discipline in public secondary schools in Machakos County. The study the recommends that educators and education administrators should strive to encourage cordial teacher student interpersonal relationship in their interaction in the school.**

Key words: **Discipline, Students discipline, Interrelations, Teacher -student interrelations. Interpersonal relationship.**

I. BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Discipline is a salient feature in institutions of learning that promotes establishment of safe environment for learner's, teachers and administrators. Discipline embraces all the activities instilled in individuals that develop self-control. Discipline in schools involve all activities embraced by stake holders to establish and manage individual behaviour for achievement of schools' goals. Fields (2011) describes school discipline as all the strategies that can be used to coordinate, regulate and organize individuals and their activities in the school and put in place the provision and procedures necessary to establish and maintain an environment in which teaching and learning can take place. Similarly, Squelch (2000) argues that discipline is about managing behaviour aimed at promoting and developing self-discipline and self-control in learners. Discipline must always be prospective and directed at the development of the individuals (Oosthuizen, Wolhuter & Du Toit, 2003).Discipline in schools implies that learners should take responsibility of their own behaviour and create safe environment that can support the learning process.

Indiscipline in schools is an issue of great concern. Mukharjee (2005) argues that there has been a growing concern regarding indiscipline in schools. Poor interaction of teachers with students has been blamed for deteriorating students' discipline. Parents have been anxious and frustrated as they complain that poor interaction of their children with teachers has led to the rising incidents of indiscipline and violence in schools. Gaustad (1992) asserts that schools should create an environment conducive for learning that can ensure the safety of learners and educators. Schools should be made safe and secure for learners, where learners can interact without fear of harassment and bullying. Stewart (2004) posits that schools should implement systems and strategies to protect learners from harm. When teachers are interacting with learner's extreme precaution should be taken to nurture and develop behaviour in the learners that exhibit good discipline. While the major goal of teachers is to cultivate good discipline among the learners, it has been reported that some teachers behave irresponsibly by engaging in indiscipline acts that create opportunity for learners to also engage in indiscipline issues.

While there are many factors that contribute to discipline, the role of teachers and student's interaction is of particular significance because teachers play an important role in the students'socialization. As families and parents continue to abandon their responsibilities on children's discipline, teachers increasingly must take up the role of protector and counsellor (Harris, 2010). The interaction between the teachers and the students has the potential to create powerful positive influence on students' discipline.

Statement of the Problem

Students' indiscipline in schools has been an issue of great concern globally. Indiscipline is prevalent in Kenyan schools. Teachers cannot teach effectively while learners cannot learn in unsafe environment. Indiscipline in schools create a violent and unsafe environment for learning. The prevailing trend of

indiscipline in many schools make learners feel unsafe at school. According to Machakos County Education Office, 80 secondary schools experienced students' unrest between 2017 and 2019 (CDE, 2019). To mitigate the escalating cases in the country the Government of Kenya's recommended the use of guidance and counselling units in secondary schools as a measure to curb indiscipline in schools. Machakos county also strengthened guidance and counselling units in secondary schools. Despite these efforts, an increasing number of secondary schools are reporting a wide range of potentially disruptive behaviors in the classrooms and around the schools. The indiscipline trends call for interrogative strategies to manage discipline in schools. The indiscipline challenges in schools prompt the need of an investigation on whether a holistic approach to school discipline with regard to teacher-student interpersonal could be remedy to students' discipline in Machakos County, Kenya.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the role of teacher- student interpersonal relationship in students' discipline in public secondary schools in Machakos County, Kenya.

Objective of the Study

The objective of the study was to investigate the the role of teacher student interpersonal relationships in students' discipline in public secondary schools in Machakos County.

Research Hypothesis

H_{01}: There is no statistically significant relationship between teacher student interpersonal relationships and students' discipline in public secondary schools in Machakos County.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Increased incidences of students' indiscipline in schools has been one of the challenges facing education sector all over the world. Harris (2010) see schools as the ultimate vehicle for nurturing children's behaviour. Students present unique problems and challenges and therefore the role of teachers as mentors go along way into determining the discipline of the children. The role of teachers' interpersonal relationship with students is therefore a critical way through which discipline can be enhanced. Teacher -student interpersonal relationship is defined in terms of the quality and frequency of interactions between the teacher and the students (Kuperminc, Leadbeater & Blatt 2001). The process of learning and teaching is fundamentally relational. The patterns of interactions in schools provide an essential foundation for students' discipline (Loukas, Suzuki, & Horton, 2006). Research suggests that teacher student connectedness is a powerful predictor of discipline and academic outcomes by the students. The interactions in the school take the form of teachers taking personal interest on students work and also correcting students politely when they err (Kuperminc et al, 2001). According to Loukas et al, (2006) one of the most

important aspects of relationships in school is how connected people feel to one another. Safe, caring, participatory and responsive relationship between the teacher and the student tend to foster a greater attachment to school and provide the optimal foundation for social, emotional and character learning for students (Wentzel, 2005). According to Skiba & Edl(2004), interpersonal relationships are the heart of the school culture that shapes the conduct and discipline of learners. Skiba & Edl (2004) further argue that interpersonal relationships between the teacher and the student are exhibited by teachers caring about student's performance in class. This builds and maintains trust and promote commitment that makes the student disciplined.

Effective relations between the teacher and the student maintain trust, spurs motivation, give empowerment, and enhance personal growth that limits desire to commit felony (Bradshaw, Koth, Thornton, Leaf, 2009).This in turn motivates teachers and learners, who dedicate and direct their efforts towards the attainment of the school vision thus enhancing discipline and academic performance. Brand (2008) says that students who interact with high levels of teacher support and positive peer interactions report high levels of discipline. The students are encouraged to express themselves without fear. On the contrally students who interact with teachers who have lower levels of support and negative peer interactions are timid and are reported have lower levels of discipline. Marks (2000) posits that there is a significant positive association between teacher-student interpersonal relationships and student discipline. Klem and Connell (2004) similarly sees teacher student interpersonal relationship as creating high levels of student engagement in school leading to higher discipline. Klem et al (2004) further argue that poor interpersonal relationships between teachers and students in the school lead to student's indiscipline for they feel neglected and left on their own. Similar views on the influence of teacher -students interpersonal relationship were posited by Adeogun and Olisaemeka (2011) who said that teacher student interpersonal relationships can directly influence discipline.

While teacher student relationship has been hailed to positively influence students 'discipline, Kindiki (2009) avers that schools with poor teacher- students relationships experienced high cases of student indiscipline while schools with good teacher-student interpersonal relationship had good student discipline. Cases of student indiscipline could be attributed to gaps found in unhealthy teacher -student relationship. The possibility that teacher-student relationship could be the panacea to managing students' discipline in schools informed this study.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study employed descriptive survey design. The targeted population was 320 principals, 3720 teachers and 90,200 students. The study sampled; 100 principals, 350 teachers, and 380 students from the target population. The study embraced

stratified proportionate sampling to get the sample size of the principals, teachers and students in each Sub-County of Machakos County. Equal allocation method was employed to choose the teachers and students in the sampled secondary schools. Data was collected using questionnaires for students and teachers while interview schedule was used for principals. Content validity of the research instruments was ascertained through piloting of research instruments and analysis by experts in the field of educational administrators. Test re-test technique was employed to enhance reliability of the instruments. Data analysis was done by use of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) programme. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze data which was presented in tables. Responses from interviews with principals were transcribed and organized into themes and reported in narratives. Coefficient of Correlation was used on hypotheses to determine the relationship between teacher-student interrelationship and students' discipline based on the research objective.

IV. ANALYSIS ON THE ROLE OF TEACHER STUDENT INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIP IN SCHOOLS IN STUDENTS' DISCIPLINE

4.1 Analysis of independent variable; Teacher student interpersonal relationship

In order to determine the role of teacher- student interpersonal relationship in public secondary schools in Machakos County the students and teachers were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed with some statements on teacher student interpersonal relationship in schools on a Likert scale of SA-strongly Agree; A-Agree; U-D-Disagree and SD-Strongly Disagree. The responses were presented in Table 1.1

Table 1.1

N teachers =350   Students N= 380

Interpersonal relationships	Teachers								Students							
	SA		A		D		SD		SA		A		D		SD	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Teachers take a personal interest in students	210	60	105	30	35	10	0	0	247	65	114	30	19	5	0	0
Teachers politely correct students from mistakes	175	50	158	45	17	5	0	0	171	45	171	45	38	10	0	0
Students ask questions to teachers without fear	140	40	151	43	35	10	24	7	190	50	144	38	30	8	16	4
Teachers care about students' performance in class	210	60	140	40	0	0	0	0	266	70	114	30	0	0	0	0

The information shown in Table 1.1 indicates that 60 % and 30% of teachers strongly agreed and also agreed respectively that teachers take personal interest in students while only 10 % of teachers disagreed with the position. None of the teachers strongly disagreed that teachers take a personal interest in students in Public Secondary Schools in Machakos County. On the same statement 65% and 30% of the students strongly agreed and also agreed respectively that teachers take a personal interest in students. Only 5% of the students disagreed with the statement while none of the students strongly disagreed that teachers take a personal interest in students in public secondary schools in Machakos County.

The interview with principals further revealed that most teachers keenly take personal interest in students. One principal observed:

I have always instructed the teachers in my school to ensure that when dealing with students, they should consider student personal interest as important in management of discipline. The principal further remarked that Interpersonal relationships greatly influence students' discipline.

This implies that most school administrators and teachers in public secondary schools in Machakos County have realized that in order to promote good student discipline in their schools, they must promote teacher student interpersonal relationships. This view confirms argument posited by Kuperminc, Leadbeater & Blatt (2001) who agree that the interactions in the school take the form of teachers taking personal interest in students work.

Teachers politely correct students from mistakes was a statement confirmed by 50% and 45% of teachers who strongly agreed and agreed respectively. On the same note 5% of teachers disagreed with the view while none of the teachers strongly disagreed with the statement. On the same statement, 45% of the students both strongly agreed and agreed that teachers politely correct students from mistakes while 10% of the student disagreed to the statement. None of the students negated the statement by strongly disagreeing.

The interview with principals further confirmed that most teachers politely correct students from mistakes. One principal from a national school said:

I have always advised my teachers to be very cautious when correcting students from their mistakes for this may adversely affect students' esteem and create hard spirit in the student that may result to indiscipline. Students who are handled with caution become friends with teachers which creates calm environment for learning thus strengthening their discipline.

These revelations indicate that most principal value teacher student relationship for they believe it is a panacea to discipline in schools the same view expressed by Kuperminc, Leadbeater & Blatt 2001) who argue that teachers should correct students politely when they err.

Students ask questions to teachers without fear statement was strongly agreed and also agreed to by 40% and 43% of teachers while 10% and 7% of the teachers disagreed and strongly disagreed with the view. On the same statement, 50% and 38% of students respectively strongly agreed and also agreed that students ask questions to teachers without fear while 8% and 4% of the students disagreed and strongly disagreed to the statement respectively.

The interview with principals further established that most teachers allow students to ask questions to teachers without fear.

 One principal affirmed:

Through student meetings the students are encouraged to ask questions to teachers freely without any fear. They also ask questions to the school administration during the meetings without fear. This enables them take courage to express their inner feelings which minimizes incidents of bursting their anger through acts of indiscipline like riots.

This confirmation shows that principals are well aware of the role of dialogue in ensuring that a conducive environment is created in schools which lead to good students' discipline. The findings concur with sentiments expressed by Brand (2008) who says that students who interact with highlevels of teacher support and positive peer interactions report high levels of discipline. The students are encouraged to express themselves without fear.

On whether teachers care about students' performance in class,60% and 40% of the teachers respectively strongly agreed and agreed to the statement while none of them either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the view. That statement was also strongly agreed and agreed to by 70% and 30% of the students respectively while none of the students either disagreed or strongly disagreed with that view.

One principal from a county school said:

Teachers in my school have adopted teaching strategies which are interactive with students which have enabled learners to improve their performance in class. This way the students feel appreciated and valued which improves their perception about their teachers. In few instances where learners who are appreciated by their teachers will be engaged in indiscipline acts.

This confirmation is likely to bring about a healthy school environment where learners feel loved by their teachers which ensure high standards of discipline. This position reflects sentiments advanced by Marks (2000) who says that interpersonal relationships between the teacher and the student are exhibited by teachers caring about students' performance in class which build, maintain trust and promote commitment that makes the student disciplined.

4.2 Analysis of dependent variable; Measurement of students' discipline

In to analyze the dependent variable both the teachers and the students were requested to indicate the extent to which they agreed with some factors about students' discipline in their schools on a Likert scale of SA-Strongly Agree; A-Agree; D-Disagree; SD-Strongly Disagree. The responses are presented in table 1.2.

Table 1.2. Teachers and students' responses on measurement of discipline in schools

N teachers =350   Students N= 380

Interpersonal relationships	Teachers								Students							
	SA		A		D		SD		SA		A		D		SD	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Students are smartly dressed	228	65.1	105	30	17	4.9	0	0	274	72.1	76	20	30	7.9	0	0
Students respond to bells promptly	280	80	70	20	0	0	0	0	285	75	95	25	0	0	0	0
Students bully each other	0	0	0	0	70	20	280	80	0	0	0	0	114	30	266	70
Students sneak out of school	0	0	0	0	87	25	263	75	0	0	0	0	133	35	247	65

The analysis shown in Table 1.2 indicate that 65.1% and 30% of teachers strongly agreed and also agreed respectively that students are smartly dresses in Public secondary schools in Machakos County while only 4.9% disagreed with the statement. None of the teachers strongly disagreed with the statement. On the same statement, 72.1% and 20% of the students respectively strongly agreed and also agreed that students are smartly dresses in secondary schools while only 7.9% disagreed. No student strongly disagreed with that view.

The principals interviewed confirmed the position. A principal from a county school said;

Students in my school exhibit high standards of discipline, they come to school well and smartly dressed. Dressing is part of student etiquettes which shows the level of discipline among the students

On whether students respond to bells promptly, 80% and 20% of the teachers respectively said they strongly agreed and also agreed to the statement. Neither of the teachers negated the statement by disagreeing nor strongly disagreeing. On their part, 75% and 25% of the students strongly agreed and also agreed respectively that students respond to bells promptly in schools. No student either strongly agreed or disagreed with that view.

The principals view concurred with the sentiments expressed by teachers and students. One principal confirmed this by saying;

Students in this school adhere to bells. Change over in programs shows how disciplined the students are. This view indicated that students in Machakos county are well disciplined.

The teachers strongly disagreed by 80% and similarly disagreed by 20% that Students bully each other in schools. No teacher strongly agreed or agreed with that statement. On the other hand, 70% and 30% of the students respectively strongly disagreed and also disagreed that Students bully each other in schools. None of them agreed or strongly agreed with that statement.

This view was also expressed by the principals. A principal in one of extra county boys school said;

Bullying in this school does not exit. My students are disciplined and take care of each other. They guide each other. Bullying is a serious form of indiscipline that cannot be tolerated in this school

On the issue of students sneaking from school, 75% and 25% of teachers respectively strongly disagreed and also disagreed that students sneak out of school. No teacher agreed or strongly agreed that students sneak out of school. The students similarly strongly disagreed and also disagreed by 65% and 35% respectively that they sneak out of school. However, they strongly agreed and also agreed that they do not sneak out school.

The principals interviewed also concurred with the views of the students and teachers. A principal from a girls' school said;

We normally do not have cases of sneaking and truancy in this school. The students are well contained in the school. Sneaking is a serious indiscipline issue which is not allowed in this school.

These findings indicated that students in public secondary schools in Machakos county were disciplined. Since the predictor variable was teacher student interrelationship, the study reveals that teacher -student relationship influenced student discipline a view confirmed by Adeogun and Olisaemeka (2011) who said that teacher student interpersonal relationships can directly influence students' discipline.

4.3 Role of teacher student interpersonal relationship in students' discipline

In order to determine the role of teacher student interpersonal relationship in students' discipline in public secondary schools in Machakos County, teachers and students were asked to indicate the overall extent to which they agreed with influence of teacher student interpersonal relationship on students' discipline in their school on a Likert scale SA-Strongly Agree A-Agree; D-Disagree; SD-Strongly Disagree). The responses were summarized and presented in table 1.3.

Table 1.3: Teacher's responses on the role of teacher student interpersonal relationship on student discipline

N = Teachers 350   Students =380

	Teachers								Students							
	SA		A		D		SD		SA		A		D		SD	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Influence of Teacher student interpersonal relationship on students' discipline in my school	210	60	140	40	0	0	0	0	304	80	76	20	0	0	0	0

Data in Table 1.3 shows that majority of the teachers in public secondary schools Machakos county represented by 60% and 40 % respectively strongly agreed and also agreed that teacher student interpersonal relationship have influence on students' discipline. None of the teachers negated the statement by disagreeing or strongly disagreeing. Similarly, 80% and 20% of the students respectively strongly agreed and also agreed that teacher student interpersonal relationship has influence on students' discipline. None of them strongly disagreed and disagreed with that view. This implies that in schools where teachers have a positive interpersonal relationship with their students, good student discipline is evident while, on the other hand, schools with poor interpersonal relationships are likely to be characterized by rampant students' indiscipline. These findings are in agreement with Kindiki (2009) who posited that schools with poor teacher- students relationships experienced high cases of student indiscipline while schools with good teacher-student interpersonal relationship had good student discipline.

4.3 Hypothesis testing

H$_{03}$ ***There is no statistically significant relationship between teacher student interpersonal relationships***

in schools and students' discipline in public secondary schools in Machakos County.

The mean values of teacher-student interpersonal relationship (Independent variables) were correlated with the mean values of measurement of discipline (dependent Variables). The regression model is presented in table 1.4

Table 1.4: Correlations between teacher student interpersonal relationship and students' discipline

Independent variable (Constant predictor	Dependent variable		(r)	Sig. (b)
Teacher student interpersonal relationship	Students' Discipline		0.831	
		Pearson Chi Test		0.003

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

The findings in table 1.4 indicate that teacher student interpersonal relationship had a significant and positive relationship with students' discipline in public secondary schools in Machakos County. There was a strong positive correlation of (*r*) 0.831 which was significant at (*p*) 0.003. This shows that there was high statistically significant influence between teacher-student interpersonal relationship and students' discipline. This finding led to rejection of the study's Null hypothesis that there is no statistically significant relationship between teacher-student relationship and students' discipline in public secondary schools in Machakos county. Therefore, the alternative hypothesis that there is statistically significant relationship between teacher-student relationship and students' discipline in public secondary schools in Machakos county was taken. The study findings are in agreement with the views of Marks(2000) who found a significant positive association between teacher-student interpersonal relationships and students' discipline in school.

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study concluded that teachers in public secondary schools in Machakos county had interpersonal relationship with students which enhanced students' discipline in the schools. The study also concluded that students in Public secondary schools in Machakos County were well disciplined. The study further concluded that teacher-student interpersonal relationship enhanced discipline of students in the schools. The role of teacher-student interpersonal relationship is critical in maintenance and improvement of students' discipline in schools. The study recommends that educators and education administrators should strive to encourage

cordial teacher student interpersonal relationship in their interaction in the school.

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