Family Income and Its Association with Student Discipline in Public Boys' Boarding Senior Schools in Kakamega County, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

Student discipline remains a critical concern in senior schools because it influences academic achievement, school climate, and overall educational outcomes. This study investigated the relationship between family socioeconomic status and student discipline in public boys' boarding senior schools in Kakamega County, Kenya. The paper presents and discusses findings on family income and student discipline in public boys' boarding senior schools. The study targeted 32 public boys' boarding senior schools with a study population comprising 9664 Form 3 and Form 4 students, 192 class teachers and 32 Deputy Principals. It adopted an ex post facto research design, with data collected using questionnaires and interview schedules. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the family income and discipline characteristics, while one-way ANOVA was employed to examine differences in discipline scores across categories of family income. Qualitative data was analysed thematically and reported in narrative form. The study found that there was a predominantly middle-to-low socioeconomic status profile, with 93% of households falling into the low-to-middle income brackets and 74.9% of parents possessing a secondary school education or below. Inferential analysis showed that there was a statistically significant difference in student discipline scores among the various family income groups, $F(2, 360) = 3.081$, $p = 0.047$ at $\alpha = 0.05$. The study concluded that family income plays a significant role in shaping student discipline in boarding senior schools. The findings underscore the importance of targeted financial support programs support systems to mitigate the effects of economic disadvantage on student discipline and behaviour. Future researchers should undertake a comparative study across multiple counties to help determine whether the patterns observed in Kakamega County are generalizable to other regions of the country.

Key Words: Family Income, Student Discipline, Boys' Boarding Senior Schools

INTRODUCTION

World over, family socioeconomic status which includes family income, education level of parents, and structure of the family, has been acknowledged as a crucial determinant of children's discipline and academic performance. Bradley and Corwyn (2002) as well as Sirin (2016) demonstrated that students' behaviour, discipline, and academic rigor were closely associated to the economic conditions of their families. Inquiries carried out in North America and Europe indicated that students from low-income family backgrounds often experienced greater behavioural challenges due to challenges related to poverty, such as inadequate parental supervision, financial insecurity, and poor access to educational resources (Evans, 2004; Reiss, 2013). Economic adversity can expose young people to unstable environments, which may express itself through indiscipline, violence, school nonattendance, or disinterest in learning.

Empirical studies have also demonstrated that family income affects psychological development and learners' behaviour in school environments. For instance, structural equation modelling by Li et al (2022) showed that privileged family socioeconomic status tends to favour stronger academic performance and better discipline, as parents with more resources provide organized learning environments and support systems that boost compliance with school rules and regulations. In the same way, studies worldwide show that socioeconomic inequalities contribute to disproportions in student behaviour and educational engagement. Learners who come from economically underprivileged backgrounds often display lower participation in academic activities and low commitment to school compared to their peers from higher-income families (Saatcioglu & Rury, 2012).

Boarding school settings further complicate this relationship. Leng and Dayimu (2025) maintained that boarding school contexts may intensify social and behavioural dynamics among learners, since they spend extended periods away supervision of parents. This can impact character formation depending on students' emotional adjustment and family background. In general, literature consistently proves that family income plays a fundamental role in molding student behaviour and discipline through means such as parental involvement, access to resources, and psychosocial stability.

Across Africa, scholars have progressively looked into how socioeconomic disparities implicate student discipline in school environments with resource constraints and social inequality. In many African countries, economic disparities significantly affect students' educational experiences as families with limited income struggle to meet school-related expenses such as uniforms, fees, and boarding costs. Financial distress can cause frustration among learners, which may express itself through behavioural setbacks like absenteeism, breaking of school rules, and disconnection from school activities (Oketch & Somerset, 2010). In East Africa, the boarding school model is common, especially in secondary education. However, the cost of boarding education can place significant strain on families, particularly those from low-income backgrounds. Studies have shown that financial pressure linked to boarding school fees requirements may create psychological stress among students and parents, potentially influencing behavioural outcomes and discipline patterns within schools (JEPA, 2025). In Nigeria, Adeyemo (2010) indicated that family income indirectly influenced the discipline of adolescents through parental involvement and home-based supervision. Students from higher-income families typically benefited from stronger parental monitoring, better access to learning materials, and more supportive learning environments that promoted compliance to school rules and norms. Further, differences in socioeconomic status across African societies often translate into differences in students' behavioural expectations and adjustment to institutional discipline systems, especially in boarding schools where students have to adapt to rigid and structured routines and authority systems.

In Kenya, there have been concerns on student discipline in schools, particularly following several incidences of unrest, strikes, and property destruction in boarding schools. Some of this misconduct has been attributed to students' family backgrounds, including socioeconomic conditions. Studies on parental socioeconomic status in Kenya show that family income affects diverse aspects of students' learning experiences, including academic performance, psychological well-being, and behavioural conduct (Ngware et al., 2013). Economic distress may hamper maximal parental involvement in education due to demanding work schedules or limited financial capacity to provide educational support. Results of a study undertaken in Nairobi to investigate parental socioeconomic status and pupils' outcomes showed that family economic characteristics influenced children's learning conditions and overall educational experience (Kiome et al., 2023).

In Kenyan senior schools, family income may affect learners' discipline through several pathways: (a) Provision of personal needs – Students from economically challenged families may lack basic necessities required in boarding schools, leading to stress and behavioural complications; (b) Parental supervision – Economic hardship often reduces parental involvement in students' education; (c) Psychological stress – Students who know that their families are suffering financial struggles may experience frustration or anxiety that affects how they behave. In addition, sociological studies in Kenya indicate that family socialization plays a pivotal role in shaping students' attitudes toward authority and discipline (Keter et al., 2025). Students who grow up in environments with unswerving parental monitoring and organized family systems are more likely to be disciplined in school (Obonyo, et al., 2024).

Locally, limited but growing research has examined the influence of family background factors on student discipline in boarding secondary schools in Western Kenya. Mabunde et al (2024) found that the family environment shapes students' values, attitudes toward authority, and behavioural expectations before they are admitted to senior school. Research on parenting behaviour and student discipline in boarding secondary schools further emphasized that the family plays a fundamental role in modelling behavioural patterns and norms. Learners who hail from supportive and economically stable families are more likely to internalize discipline values that align with school expectations (Mabunde et al., 2024). In Kakamega, boys' boarding senior schools are more common than day schools. These institutions often emphasize strict disciplinary structures, including prefect systems, regulated routines, and institutional rules. However, differences in family income can affect how students adapt to these environments. Students from low-income households may experience: (a) difficulty raising boarding school fees; (b) segregation for not matching the lifestyles of others, (c) psychological tension related to family financial challenges. These factors can contribute to behaviour maladjustments such as absenteeism, rule violations, and defying to school authority. On the other hand, students coming from economically stable families may benefit from better preparation for boarding school life through adequate provision of necessities and stronger parental engagement. Despite these insights, there remains a significant research gap concerning how family income specifically relates to student discipline in boys' boarding senior schools in Kakamega County, highlighting the need for localized research to inform education policy and practice.

Several studies have examined family income and learner behaviour. Kanyi et al (2026) looked into family social stratification among secondary school students in Trans-Nzoia County and found that about 59% of the students came from middle-class families, indicating that the middle socioeconomic group formed the majority in the participating schools. This implies that middle-income households often have sufficient financial capacity to support senior school education while still relying on public schooling systems. Such families benefit from government interventions like Free Day Secondary Education (FDSE), but may still prioritize education as a pathway to upward social mobility. In Homabay County, Kobane et al (2025) demonstrated that many students come from low-income backgrounds and that financial constraints often affect their schooling. Similarly, studies investigating family socioeconomic status and student behaviour have revealed that poverty in households can contribute to deviant behaviour among students due to of economic stress and limited parental supervision (Aute et al., 2020).

Despite government efforts to subsidize senior school education in Kenya through policies such as FDSE, families still need to cover a number of indirect costs such as uniforms, books, and expenses related to boarding. These financial responsibilities may limit access for students from very low-income households while favoring those from moderately stable economic backgrounds (Oketch & Rolleston, 2019). According to Reardon (2018), middle-income families most of the time dominate the enrolment in public schooling systems because extremely poor families may struggle with associated costs, while wealthier households may opt for private institutions. World Bank (2020) similarly found that students in boarding senior schools frequently originated from households with moderate economic capacity that could sustain the recurrent costs of boarding education. Those from underprivileged families often face financial stress related to fee payments and other schooling costs, which can hinder their participation in school activities and their behavioural adjustment in school (OECD, 2019).

Income consistency or stability is another important aspect of family income. Many households in sub-Saharan Africa experience income unpredictability, particularly those who depend on informal employment or small-scale agriculture. Filmer and Schady (2019) observed that inconsistent family income often constrains families' capacity to sustain educational support, thereby influencing students' school experiences and conduct. Likewise, Miller and Johnson (2017) indicated that income variations can create stress within households, which may indirectly affect children's behaviour in school environments. When families have difficulties maintaining consistent income, children may face uncertainty regarding school fees, pocket money, and other necessities, conditions which can sometimes contribute to disciplinary challenges. According to Abuya and Oketch (2016), many Kenyan households supporting secondary school students experienced unstable income due to reliance on informal sector employment and seasonal agricultural earnings. Such instability may limit their ability to consistently provide school requirements, potentially affecting students' psychological well-being and adjustment to the structured environment of boarding schools. Oruko and Muthaa (2020) showed that financial unpredictability in households often contributed to stress among learners. In more economically stable contexts, however, a larger proportion of families report stable income sources. For example, Reardon (2018) observed in studies of developed countries that while income disparities exist, households often have relatively predictable income streams through formal employment, which minimize the prevalence of income instability among students. This difference highlights the role of broader socio-economic structures in shaping household financial stability and, consequently, students' educational experiences.

Family expenditure on education also reflects the ability of households to invest in their children's education. Research has shown that families with greater financial capacity are better able to provide learning resources like textbooks, supplementary materials, and adequate school fees. For instance, Reardon, (2018) argued that disparities in family spending on education contributed significantly to inequalities in students' learning environments and behaviour. Equally, Hanushek and Woessmann (2020) noted that household investment in education influenced quality of learning resources available to students and shaped their academic motivation and behaviour in school. Abuya and Oketch (2016) reported that despite policies aimed at expanding access to secondary education in Kenya, households still carried a reasonable portion of education-related expenses, including uniforms, books, and boarding costs. Such financial demands can strain low- and middle-income families, leading to variations in the level of support that students receive for their schooling. Generally, family income significantly influences children's behavioural and socio-emotional development, as higher-income households can invest more in supportive learning environments and parental monitoring (Duncan & Brooks-Gunn, 2018). Similarly, Reardon (2018) argued that economic discrepancies among families were strongly associated with differences in students' academic performance and behaviour in school. Financial instability may lead to parental stress, reduced supervision, and limited involvement in children's schooling, which may in turn contribute to behavioural challenges among students (OECD, 2019).

Some studies have, however, reported findings that differ from or disqualify the relationship between family income and student behaviour. Some researchers argue that the association between economic resources and student discipline is not always direct because other family processes (such as parenting style, parental involvement, and family cohesion) may mediate the relationship. Amato (2017) suggests that family parenting practices often play a stronger role in shaping children's behaviour, than economic resources alone. In such cases, it implies that students from lower income families may still show good discipline if parents uphold consistent supervision and supportive relationships. Likewise, some international studies have found either weak or inconsistent links between family income and child behaviour once other socio-economic variables are controlled. According to Sirin (2016), factors such as parental education, family stability, and school climate may reduce or moderate the influence of income differences on student behaviour. This suggests that while economic resources contribute to students' behavioural development, they interact with manifold family and school factors.

METHODS

This study employed an ex post facto design, which had the merit of enhancing validity because variables were investigated in natural settings after they had occurred, without researcher interference (Cohen et al., 2017). The study targeted 32 public boys' secondary schools, with a study population comprising 9664 students, 192 class teachers and 32 Deputy Principals. Through a multi-stage sampling approach, 13 deputy principals, 52 class teachers and 390 students were sampled for participation. It was underpinned by Travis Hirschi's Social Control Theory (1969), which posits that the strength of social bonds within the family influences conformity to social norms and behavioural regulation among adolescents. Questionnaires and interview schedules were used to collect quantitative and qualitative data. The data collected were analyzed descriptively using frequencies and percentages, while the hypothesis was tested using ANOVA at $\alpha = 0.05$. Ethical considerations for the study included research authorization by Kibabii University, licensing by the National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation (NACOSTI), and authority from the County Education Office. Since participation in the research was voluntary, the researcher sought the participants' consent, with assurance of anonymity and confidentiality in the handling of the information gathered.

RESULTS

The students were asked to select the option that most **A) Student Discipline in Public Boys' Boarding Senior Schools**

appropriately corresponded to their perception on diverse aspects of their discipline. The results were as summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Students' Perceptions on Discipline in Boys' Boarding Senior Schools

	Strongly Disagree (1)	**Disagree** (2)	**Not Sure** (3)	**Agree** (4)	**Strongly Agree** (5)	**Mean** ($\bar{X}$)
a. I relate well with the authority.	30.8%	92.5%	205.4%	14238.7%	19352.6%	4.40
b. I am obedient to school rules.	00.0%	82.2%	82.2%	12032.7%	23162.9%	4.59
c. I am cooperative and loyal.	51.4%	61.6%	236.3%	12734.6%	20656.1%	4.43
d. I have positive influence to peers.	226.0%	205.4%	5715.5%	13236.0%	13637.1%	3.93
e. I have clear personal goals.	30.8%	82.2%	184.9%	11631.6%	22260.5%	4.49
f. I am academically focused.	10.3%	51.4%	215.7%	11230.5%	22862.1%	4.53

Similarly, class teachers' feedback was also sought on the same constructs about student discipline of learners in their classes. The results were as summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Teachers' Perceptions on Discipline in Boys' Boarding Senior Schools

	Strongly Disagree (1)	**Disagree** (2)	**Not Sure** (3)	**Agree** (4)	**Strongly Agree** (5)	**Mean** ($\bar{X}$)
a. Students in my class relate well with the authority	00.0%	00.0%	47.7%	3261.5%	1630.8%	4.23
b. Students in my class are obedient to school rules.	00.0%	11.9%	00.0%	4382.7%	815.4%	4.12
c. Students in my class are cooperative and loyal.	00.0%	11.9%	11.9%	3669.2%	1426.9%	4.12
d. Students in my class have positive influence to peers.	35.8%	47.8%	815.3%	1834.6%	19 36.5%	3.88
e. Students in my class have clear personal goals.	35.8%	815.3%	1834.6%	1121.2%	1223.1%	3.40
f. Students in my class are academically focused.	11.9%	1732.7%	2140.4%	1019.2%	2242.3%	4.77

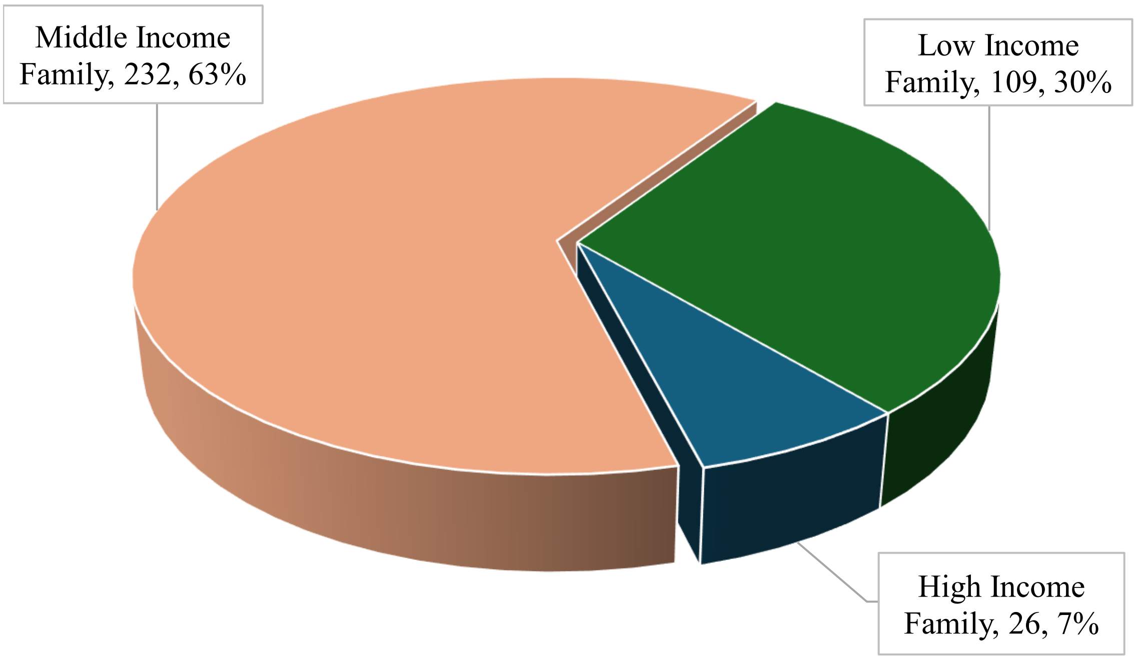
When asked whether they related well with those in authority, 0.8% of the students strongly disagreed, 2.5% disagreed, 5.4% were not sure, 38.7% agreed and 52.6% strongly agreed. The findings indicated an overwhelmingly positive perception of student-authority relationships within the schools sampled. This was corroborated by responses of class teachers of whom 61.5% agreed and 30.8% strongly agreed that students related well with authority. With a combined 91.3% of students either agreeing or strongly agreeing, the data suggests a high level of relational synchronization between the student body and school leadership. Gregory and Ripski (2008) found that students were significantly more likely to cooperate with teachers they perceive as "authoritative" (high warmth, high expectations) rather than "authoritarian" (low warmth, high control). The 91.3% positive response suggests the staff has successfully cultivated this trust.

Considering the concept of *Social Desirability Bias*, some early scholars, such as Nederhof (1985), cautioned that in highly disciplined environments, students may provide "strongly agree" responses because they feel it is the correct or safest answer, rather than their internal reality. While the majority is positive, the 8.7% who are "not sure" or disagree represent a critical minority that often requires the most administrative attention. Way (2011) notes that even in schools with generally positive climates, students from lower Socioeconomic Status (SES) backgrounds sometimes feel invisible or unfairly targeted by authority. While this negative percentage is small, research by Skiba et al. (2014) warns that disciplinary actions are often disproportionately concentrated within this small, disengaged group.

B) Family Income Status

Students' perception of their overall family income status was sought. The findings were as summarized in Figure 1.

Figure 1 Students' Perceptions of their Overall Family Income Status Category



The findings indicated that 30% of students came from low-income families, 63% from middle-income families, and 7% from high-income families, suggesting that the majority of students in boys' boarding senior schools originate from middle-income households. This pattern reflects the socioeconomic composition typical of many public secondary schools in developing contexts, where middle-income families constitute the largest group able to sustain boarding education. Similar trends have been reported in Kenya. For instance, a study in Trans-Nzoia County found that 59% of secondary school students came from middle-class families, confirming the dominance of this socioeconomic group in public schools (Kanyi et al., 2026). The 30% representation of students from low-income households is also consistent with findings that many learners in Kenyan public senior schools originate from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, where financial constraints influence educational experiences and access to learning resources (Kobane et al., 2025).

Studies further indicate that economic hardship within households may contribute to behavioural challenges among students due to financial stress and limited parental supervision (Aute et al., 2020). The small proportion of students from high-income families (7%) corresponds with evidence that affluent households often enroll their children in private or elite institutions perceived to provide better academic opportunities (Simiyu & Likoko, 2024). However, some studies report slightly different patterns; for example, research on family socioeconomic background and girls' senior education found a higher proportion of high-income families among students (Wechuli, 2020). These differences may be attributed to variations in school type, regional economic conditions, and gender-based investment in education. Overall, the findings reaffirm the importance of family socioeconomic status in shaping educational participation and potentially influencing student discipline.

C) Other Perceptions on Aspects of Family Income

The students were asked to select an option that corresponded to their perception on the rating of aspects of their family income. These included estimated average family income, income stability/ consistency, as well as expenditure on education. Results were as summarized in Table 4.6.

Table 3. Students Perceptions on Aspects of Family Income

	Far Below Average	Below average	Average	Above Average	Far Above Average	Mean ($\overline{X}$)
a. Estimated average income.	4512.3%	9425.6%	18951.5%	287.6%	113.0%	2.63
b. Income stability/ consistency.	5113.9%	15141.1%	12935.1%	256.8%	113.0%	2.44
c. Expenditure on education (e.g. fees, books).	4311.7%	9626.2%	14138.4%	5214.2%	359.5%	2.84

Similarly, class teachers were asked to select the option that corresponded to their perception on the rating of family income among parents of students in their class. Findings were as summarized in Table 4

Table 4. Class Teachers' Perception on Family Income Among Parents

	Far Below Average	Below average	Average	Above Average	Far Above Average	Mean ($\overline{X}$)
a. Estimated average income	23.8%	1223.1%	3669.2%	23.8%	00.0%	2.73
b. Income stability/ consistency	23.8%	2446.2%	2242.3%	47.7%	00.0%	2.54
c. Expenditure on education (e.g. fees, books)	59.6%	2038.5%	2344.2%	47.7%	00.0%	2.50

D) Estimated Average Family Income

The findings on estimated average family income showed that 12.3% of students rated their family income as far below average, 25.6% as below average, 51.5% as average, 7.6% as above average, and 3.0% as far above average. In comparison, class teachers rated students' family income as 3.8% far below average, 23.1% below average, 69.2% average, and 3.8% above average. Both perspectives therefore indicate that the majority of learners originate from middle-income households, although students were more likely than teachers to perceive their families as being in the lower income categories.

The predominance of the average income category suggests that public boys' boarding secondary schools in Kakamega County largely attract students from households with moderate socio-economic capacity, a pattern widely observed in developing contexts where middle-income families are better able to meet schooling costs (UNESCO, 2021). In Kenya, despite policies such as Free Day Secondary Education, families still bear indirect costs including uniforms, books, and boarding expenses, which may limit participation among very low-income households (Oketch & Rolleston, 2019).

The discrepancy between student and teacher perceptions may arise because students possess direct knowledge of their household finances, whereas teachers rely on observable indicators such as fee payment patterns or access to learning materials (Sirin, 2016). Similar studies indicate that enrolment in public senior schools tends to cluster around middle-income families, while wealthier households often choose private schools (Reardon, 2018; World Bank, 2020). Nevertheless, the 37.9% of students reporting below-average income highlights the continued presence of economically disadvantaged learners, whose financial constraints may affect their engagement and behavioural adjustment in school (OECD, 2019).

E) Income Stability/ Consistency

The results showed that 55% of students rated the stability of their family income as being below average or far below average, 35.1% as average, and only 9.8% as being above average. Similarly, the class teachers' responses indicated that 50% of students came from households with below-average income stability, 42.3% being average, and 7.7% being above average. The findings suggest that a considerable proportion of learners in public boys' boarding senior schools in Kakamega County come from families with irregular or unstable income streams, which may affect the ability of families to meet educational expenses and support students' academics and behavioural development consistently.

This finding is consistent with studies indicating that sundry households in Sub-Saharan Africa experience income unpredictability, particularly those who depend on informal employment or peasant farming (Filmer & Schady, 2019). Income instability can minimize the capacity of families to continuously support educational endeavors of their children, and may escalate to household stress that influences adolescents' behaviour in school settings (Miller & Johnson, 2017). According to Abuya and Oketch (2016), many families in Kenya rely on informal sector employment and seasonal earnings, which often leads to unpredictable financial resources for supporting high school education. Such can negatively impact students' psychological health and coping with the structured environment of the boarding schools, often leading to behavioural aberrations (Oruko & Muthaa, 2020). This pattern, however, differs from findings in more economically stable contexts, where households typically have predictable income through formal employment (Reardon, 2018).

F) Expenditure on Education

Self-reports by students indicated that while a majority perceived their family's expenditure on education as "average" (38.4%), a substantial 37.9% identified it as "below" or "far below average". This assessment is corroborated by responses from teachers, with 48.1% rating household spending as below the mean. These findings highlight the financial constraints predominant in developing contexts where households retain an uneven burden for auxiliary costs like school uniforms and boarding expenses (Abuya & Oketch, 2016). Such discrepancies are critical, since expenditure on education is an indicator for a family's capacity to invest in the requisite resources that facilitate academic progress and school adjustment. Reardon (2018) s well as Hanushek and Woessmann (2020) contended that families' educational expenditure directly determines the quality of school environments, motivation of learners, and student discipline.

The data further highlighted economic diversity in Kakamega County's public boys' boarding senior schools, with 23.7% of the students reporting family's spending on education, such as books and fees as being "above average". This internal variance aligns with observations by Glewwe and Kremer (2017) regarding the heterogeneity of household inputs within the same schooling systems. Ultimately, when families struggle to meet these costs, the resulting resource scarcity may manifest as student stress or limited adherence to institutional regulations. Subsequently, these financial differences serve as a fundamental lens for analyzing student discipline, as limited financial support often correlates with diminished access to the materials necessary for consistent behavioral and academic compliance.

G) Relationship between Family Income and Student Discipline

The perception of class teachers on the relationship between family income and student discipline was first sought. Findings were as summarized in Table 5.

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Table 5. Class Teachers' Perceptions on Relationship between Family Income and Student Discipline

	High-income family	Middle income family	Low-income family
a. Relate well with authority (e.g., teachers)	23.8%	3567.3%	1528.8%
b. Obedient to school rules	23.8%	1936.5%	3159.6%
c. Cooperative and loyal	47.7%	2344.2%	2548.1%
d. Have positive influence to peers	713.5%	3159.6%	1426.9%

Teachers' attribution of each discipline behavior to a single income category showed 59.6% of teachers associating "obedient to school rules" most strongly with low-income families, versus only 36.5% for middle-income and 3.8% for high-income which is in contradiction of the assertion that economically stable families typically provide superior emotional support, educational resources, and structured supervision, which facilitate better student behavioural adjustment (Duncan & Brooks-Gunn, 2018).

Secondly, from the student responses, a one-way ANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of family income on student discipline across the three categories: low income, middle income and high income under the null hypothesis that:

H_0: There is no statistically significant difference in the mean student discipline scores across family income categories among students in public boys' boarding senior schools in Kakamega County, Kenya.

Prior to conducting the one-way ANOVA, Levene's test for homogeneity of variances was performed to assess whether the assumption of equal variances across family income groups was satisfied. The test was not statistically significant, $F(2, 360) = 1.44$, $p = .238$, indicating that the assumption of homogeneity of variances was met. Therefore, the standard one-way ANOVA was considered appropriate for analysing differences in student discipline scores across the income groups. The ANOVA results of the test were presented in Table 6.

Table 6. One-Way ANOVA Results for Family Income and Student Discipline

Descriptives

AvgDiscpLevel

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
High income family	23	4.4152	.68886	.14364	3.8543	4.4501	2.17	4.67
Middle income family	232	4.3966	.45399	.02981	4.3565	4.4740	3.17	5.00
Low-income family	108	4.1522	.49907	.04802	4.3014	4.4918	3.17	5.00
Total	363	4.3930	.48784	.02560	4.3427	4.4434	2.17	5.00

ANOVA

AvgDiscpLevel

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1.450	2	.725	3.081	.047
Within Groups	84.701	360	.235		
Total	86.151	362			

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Inferential analysis using a One-Way ANOVA revealed a statistically significant difference in discipline scores across family income categories, $F(2,360) = 3.081$, $p = .047$. Consequently, the null hypothesis was rejected, suggesting that family economic resources significantly influence the discipline of boys in public boarding senior schools in Kakamega County.

This finding aligns with established literature asserting that household income is a critical dimension of socioeconomic status that shapes behavioral outcomes. Reardon (2018) notes that economic disparities are strongly associated with variations in academic engagement and behavioral conduct of learners. In the Kenyan context, financial instability often manifests as parental stress or limited school involvement, potentially leading to behavioral challenges as students navigate the additional costs of boarding life (OECD, 2019; Oketch & Rolleston, 2019).

However, the relationship is nuanced. Some scholars argue that family processes, such as parenting styles and cohesion, may mediate the impact of income; thus, students from lower-income households can maintain high discipline if supported by consistent supervision (Amato, 2017). Additionally, Sirin (2016) suggests that when controlling for parental education and school climate, the direct association between income and behavior may weaken. Ultimately, while this study confirms that income variations significantly differentiate student discipline levels, it acknowledges that economic resources operate within a complex web of familial and institutional factors.

Finally, qualitative data gathered through the interviews conducted with the Deputy Principals of the participating schools provided insights into how family income influences student discipline was sought. The responses were analyzed thematically as presented in Table 7.

Table 7. Thematic Analysis of Deputy Principals' Responses on Family Income and Student Discipline

Interview Question	Responses from Deputy Principals	Emerging Theme
1. In your experience, how does family income influence student discipline in your school?	*"Students from financially unstable families often report late to school due to fee balances. Some become frustrated and violate school rules."* -KII_DP_7 *"Learners from well-off families occasionally display a sense of entitlement and resist school authority."* - KII_DP_3	Financial constraints contribute to indiscipline; affluence may encourage entitlement and non-compliance.
2. What disciplinary behaviours are commonly associated with students from low-income households?	*"Absenteeism is common because students are sent home for school fees."* - KII_DP_8 *"Some students engage in theft or bullying to obtain basic necessities."* - KII_DP_2	Economic hardship increases absenteeism, theft, and other maladaptive behaviours.
3. How do students from economically stable families generally compare with those from disadvantaged families regarding discipline?	*"Most are well provided for and are emotionally stable, although a few become arrogant because parents overprotect them."* - KII_DP_11	Economic stability generally supports discipline but may also foster indiscipline through excessive privilege.

The thematic analysis revealed that family income significantly influences student discipline in public boys' secondary schools in Kakamega County. Deputy Principals consistently observed that financial hardship contributed to absenteeism, fee-related disruptions, and, in some cases, theft and other misconduct. Conversely, while students from financially stable families generally exhibited better discipline, some displayed entitlement and resistance to authority due to excessive parental indulgence.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the above results, this study concluded that: (a) Majority of students in public boys' senior schools come from middle-income families; (b) stability of family income is for majority of households is below average or far below average; (c) Family expenditure on education is in majority of households is average or below average (e) There is a statistically significant difference in discipline scores across family income categories, F (2,360) =3.081, p=0.047, implying that family income significantly influences the discipline of boys in public boarding senior schools.

Based on these findings, the study recommends that: (a) the Ministry of Education should expand targeted bursary and financial assistance programs for students from low-income families; (b) the Planning Directorate of the Ministry of Education and Kakamega County Education Office to incorporate socio-economic background indicators into educational planning and student support systems; (c) School administrators to strengthen school-based guidance and counselling programs to support students experiencing socio-economic and family-related challenges that may affect discipline; (d) School administrations, Boards of Management, and community organizations should establish structured mentorship programs for students from vulnerable family backgrounds. Future studies should undertake a comparative inquiry across various counties to help determine whether the patterns observed in Kakamega County are generalizable to other parts of the country.

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