

## **Influence of School Rules' Formulation on Students' Discipline in Public Secondary Schools in Makueni County**

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**ABSTRACT:** *Since independence, the Kenyan Government's desire has been to ensure quality education. However, learning institutions have been plagued with cases of students' unrest and indiscipline which mitigate against quality education. In spite of the existence of school rules, many secondary schools are reporting a wide range of potentially disruptive behaviors in the classrooms and around the schools. This study sought to investigate the influence of school rules' formulation on students' discipline in public secondary schools in Makueni County. It was guided by four research objectives which were: to determine the influence of students' involvement in the process of formulating school rules on their discipline, to find out whether students know all their school rules and the influence on their discipline, to establish whether students like their school rules and the influence on their discipline and to determine the influence of shared goals and plans on students' discipline in public secondary schools in Makueni County. The study targeted 324 principals, 3,865 teachers and 97,200 students in public secondary schools in Makueni County, and employed descriptive survey design. The sample size of the study, which was obtained by stratified and simple random sampling procedures, was 100 principals, 387 teachers and 398 students who participated in the study. Questionnaire, interview guide and observation schedule research instruments were utilized for the study. Test-retest technique of reliability was used to affirm the reliability of the instruments. The reliability coefficient of the instruments was 0.675 for questionnaire for students and 0.748 for questionnaire for the teachers. Data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics and presented in frequency tables. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to test the hypothesis. From the data analysis, it was found out that the processes of formulation of school rules and regulations had significant positive relationship at  $r=+0.612$ ,  $p=0.030$  with levels of students' discipline in public secondary schools in Makueni County. The researcher recommended that principals in public secondary school in Makueni County should actively involve students in the process of formulation of school rules and regulations, so as to enhance students' discipline.*

**Keywords:** *formulation of school rules, students' discipline, public secondary schools.*

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

Along with academic performance, school discipline ranks as one of the major concerns voiced by the public about schools and the school system. There is a perception and serious concern that behaviour problems are endemic in schools, that teachers are struggling to maintain order, and that school authorities are unable to guarantee the safety of students (Mutua, 2004). The world over, teachers and administrators are daily charged with the responsibility of creating and maintaining an environment conducive for teaching and learning.

According to Docking, J.W. (2006), the standards of students' discipline in the United Kingdom have been deteriorating. Students were involved in violence bordering on verbal and physical abuse to teachers. In the USA, school legislation has attempted to create policies that ensure schools have the safe and orderly environment necessary for high student achievement. School districts, in an attempt to address increasing concern with discipline and bullying adopted increasingly stringent policies to address student behavior (Skiba & Sprague, 2008). According to Matsoga (2003) students' indiscipline has for some time now plagued schools in Botswana. A report from a number of previous provincial schools pointed out that indiscipline had caused a steady decline in academic performance. According to Kabandize (2004) indiscipline in Ugandan schools manifests itself in drugs and substance abuse among students. Students have turned to drugs out of pressure to excel in academics. It was also noted that the methods of punishment used by teachers are degrading and crush students' self-esteem.

In the Kenyan context, Corporal punishment in Kenyan schools was banned through a Kenya Gazette notice on March 13, 2001. This ban has been blamed for the increase in school indiscipline, and naturally, there have been calls to rethink the decision. There have been proposals by parents that children should be caned to

enhance discipline in secondary schools (Kiprop, 2012). The issue of the cane as an effective means of controlling students' indiscipline, has generated a lot of controversy. Kiprop (2012) is also of the view that parents have a big role to play in instilling discipline in their children at home.

Cotton, (2005) in a cross sectional study on students' discipline in Public Schools in the United States of America found out that since most school rules and regulations were formulated without students' participation, students do not own them. The resultant effect is high levels of students' indiscipline evident in suspensions and dismissal of students from schools (Cotton, 2005). Harris (2010) established that, the collapse of discipline in the classroom order which later led to classroom hooliganism, was an indication of students disrespecting classroom rules and regulations. When students do not understand the rationale behind rules, they are bound to break them (Harris, 2010). Mukharjee (2005) corroborates these findings in his study on the standards of discipline in Mexican secondary schools. He further observes that certain changes that signal maturity in the course of growth and development of teenagers make students undisciplined for they fault school rules and regulations.

Sithole (2008) found out that student involvement in decision making especially in as far as formulation of school rules is concerned was debatable. The most popular approach was that students must remain passive and receive instructions from parents and teachers and this led to students' protests (Sithole, 2008). Kiggudu (2009) corroborates these findings by observing that although schools had written rules and regulations, students did not participate in their formulation. Some rules and regulations required modifications and others lacked consistency in their implementation which raised students' anger leading to strikes. The researcher found out that despite rules and regulations specifying dos and don'ts, students still broke the rules and regulations. Jeruto and Kiprop (2011) posit that although there were attempts to include students' views in decision making, such attempts were only tokenistic and did not extend to core issues of school rules and regulations. Students were only allowed to participate in student welfare issues but were deemed to be immature and therefore unable to participate in administrative issues such as formulation of rules and regulations (Jeruto et al, 2011).

## **II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The study was guided by the following objectives:

- i. To determine the influence of school rules' formulation on students' discipline in public secondary schools in Makueni County.
- ii. To find out whether students know all their school rules and the influence on their discipline in public secondary schools in Makueni County.
- iii. To establish whether students like their school rules and the influence on their discipline in public secondary schools in Makueni County.
- iv. To determine the influence of shared goals and plans on students' discipline in public secondary schools in Makueni County.

### **Research Hypothesis**

H<sub>0</sub> There is no significant relationship between students' involvement in school rules' formulation process and students' discipline in public secondary schools in Makueni County.

## **III. RESEARCH DESIGN**

The study employed descriptive survey design and the target population was 324 principals, 3,865 teachers and 97,200 students. The sample size comprised of 100 principals, 387 teachers and 398 students. Questionnaires, interview guide and observation guide were the instruments of data collection. Instrument validity was also established by pre-testing of data collection tools by a pilot study. In this study, test-retest technique of reliability was used to affirm reliability of instruments. The reliability coefficient of the instruments was 0.675 for questionnaire for students and 0.748 for questionnaire for teachers. 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.

## **IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The study's response rate was an average of 74.8% for three categories of respondents: principals, teachers and students.

### **Influence of the process of formulation of school rules on students' discipline**

In order to determine the influence of the process of formulation of school rules on students' discipline in public secondary schools in Makueni County, the participants (students and teachers) were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed with the following statements on influence of the process of formulation of school rules on students' discipline on the Likert scale; Strongly Agree (SA) = 2; Agree (A) = 1; Undecided (U)

= 0; Disagree (D) = -1 and Strongly Disagree (SD) = -2. These statements included the following; students are involved in the formulation of school rules, students know all the school rules and regulations, students do not like their school rules and regulations and there are shared goals and plans. The responses of the participants were summarized and presented in Table 1.

**Table 1:** Students' and teachers' responses on: students are involved in the formulation of school rules and students know all the school rules and regulations

Statements	SD		D		U		A		SA	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
<b>Students are involved in the formulation of school rules</b>										
Students	98	25.8	67	17.6	32	8.4	86	22.6	97	25.5
Teachers	40	11.4	68	19.4	56	16.0	102	29.1	84	24.0
<b>Students know all the school rules</b>										
Students	12	3.1	26	6.8	28	7.4	123	32.3	196	51.6
Teachers	12	3.4	41	11.7	28	8.0	125	35.7	144	41.1

### Students are involved in the formulation of school rules and regulations

Data in Table 1 shows that less than a half of the students 173 (48.1. %) agreed that they are involved in the formulation of school rules in their schools. Most of these students were from National and large County boarding schools. However, 166 (43.2%) mainly from Sub County mixed day and boarding schools, disagreed that they are involved in the formulation of school rules. Slightly more than half of teachers on the other hand, 186 (53.1%) agreed that students in their schools were involved in the formulation of school rules.

The interview with principals revealed that almost all the principals agreed that involving students in the process of formulating school rules, results in high levels of students' discipline. They concur that when students are involved in the process of formulating school rules, they own the process and will obey them. Majority of principals reported that, in most schools, students are involved in the formulation of school rules and regulations. The principals' views contrasted with those of the students.

A female principal from a County school said:

*My students are involved in the formulation of the school rules which are then passed to the staff and gradually to the board of management for scrutiny and approval before they are implemented. This helps reduces students' disobedience.*

The study findings show that to some extent, participatory approach is used in some schools in the formulation of school rules and regulations. In such schools, it is likely to bring about democratic environment in learning institutions. Students are likely to cooperate with the administration. Since they are consulted, they own the process, obey the rules, resulting to high levels of student's discipline in schools. However, from the findings, many schools do not involve students in the process of formulation of school rules in public secondary schools in Makueni County. The contrasting report by principals could be a public relations exercise so as to be seen to comply with the ministry of education (MOE) directive on involvement of students in decision making. This perhaps explains why some 277 schools in the County witnessed students' unrest in the last five years.

The findings of the study are in agreement with Sithole (2008) who conducted a study on the extent of student involvement in decision making in South African secondary schools. The study found out that students' involvement in decision making especially in as far as formulation of school rules was concerned was debatable. The most popular approach was that students must remain passive and receive instructions from parents and teachers and this led to students' protests. The study findings also concur with Jeruto and Kiprop (2011) who conducted a research on the extent of student participation in policy formulation in secondary schools in Kenya. The findings were that in a number of schools, there were attempts to include views of students in decision making. However, students were only allowed to participate in student welfare issues but were deemed to be immature to have any meaningful input in core administrative issues such as formulation of rules (Jeruto et al, 2011). It was thus concluded that many secondary school heads did not involve students in the process of formulating school rules.

### Students know all the school rules

Data in Table 1 shows that majority of students who took part in the study, 319 (83.9%) agreed that they know all the school rules. Majority of teachers, 269 (76.8%) agreed that students in their schools know all the school rules. The interview with principals revealed that, in most schools, students know all the school rules.

One principal from a Sub County boy's school had this to say:

*On reporting date, all new students are taken through the school rule to ensure that they have mastered them before signing to abide by them. In addition, every student in my school is given a copy of the school rules and copies of the same are displayed in the students' notice board. This facilitates conformity and greatly enhances students' discipline.*

This then implies that majority of the students in public secondary schools in Makueni County were fully aware of school rules in their institutions. However, they still disobeyed them, sometimes going on the rampage, destroying school property. There seems to be, therefore, a disparity between theory and practice, perhaps resulting from issues related to adolescence. Youth, in their adolescence often fault all rules meant to guide them grow up appropriately. Mukharjee (2005) corroborates these findings in his study on the standards of discipline in secondary schools in Mexico. He observes that certain changes signaling maturity in the course of growth and development of students in secondary schools tend to make students misbehave by faulting school rules. This could be the reason for the high indiscipline cases in secondary schools in Makueni County.

**Table 2:** Students' and teachers' responses on: students do not like their school rules and in the school, there are shared goals and plans

Statements	SD		D		U		A		SA	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
<b>Students do not like their school rules</b>										
Students	32	8.4	56	14.7	52	13.7	134	35.3	106	27.9
Teachers	23	6.6	62	17.7	54	15.4	121	34.6	90	25.7
<b>In the school, there are shared goals and plans</b>										
Students	21	5.5	34	8.9	41	10.8	142	37.4	142	37.4
Teachers	11	3.1	25	7.1	37	10.6	136	38.9	141	40.3

#### **Students do not like their school rules**

Data in Table 2 shows that majority of students who took part in the study, 240 (63.2%) agreed that they do not like their school rules. The students views on the item were affirmed by a good number of the teachers 211(60.3%) who agreed that students in their schools did not like their school rules and regulation. Interviews with principals clearly demonstrated that a good number of students in secondary schools in the county do not like the schools rules.

One principal from a County mixed boarding school said:

*Many students in my school do not like their school rules and regulations and this explains the many cases of students' indiscipline. There is a general feeling that compliance to school rules is punitive and this makes many defiant hence low levels of discipline.*

This unusual agreement by all respondents could be used to imply that although students are aware of school rules, majority of the students in public secondary schools in Makueni County do not like their school rules resulting to indiscipline. When students do not like the rules that govern them, they are bound to break them. This could be attributed to the fact that many students do not understand the rationale behind school rules, because they were never involved in their formulation. These findings are in agreement with Harris (2010), who carried out a longitudinal analysis to examine the causes of indiscipline among young learners in state funded secondary schools in Oxford, United Kingdom. The study established that, the collapse of discipline in the classroom order which later led to classroom hooliganism, was an indication that students did not like classroom rules and regulations. This was because the rules were formulated without students' involvement.

#### **In the school, there are shared goals and plans**

Data in Table 2 shows that majority of students who took part in the study, 284 (74.8%) agreed that in the school, there are shared goals and plans. Majority of the teachers who took part in the study, 277(79.2%) also agreed that in their school, there are shared goals and plans. The interviews with principals affirmed that in a good number of schools, there were shared goals and plans.

One principal from a Sub County school observed:

*The school has a mission statement, the vision and the school motto which are a creation of all the stakeholders. Therefore, in my school there are shared goals and plans by students, teachers and parents.*

The study findings concur with Cotton, (2005) who conducted a cross sectional study on students' discipline in Public Schools in the United States of America. Key among the study recommendations was that school administrators should develop a vision for the school that is shared by all stakeholders. The study further recommended that the school vision should be reflected in school rules and regulations so as to enhance a sense of ownership and identity. This sense of ownership results in high levels of students' discipline.

**Teachers' responses on influence of the process of formulation of school rules and regulation on students' discipline**

In order to determine the influence of the process of formulation of school rules on students' discipline in public secondary schools in Makueni County, teachers were asked to indicate the overall extent to which they agreed with influence of the process of formulation of school rules on students' discipline in their school on the Likert scale; Strongly Agree (SA) = 2; Agree (A) = 1; Undecided (U) = 0; Disagree (D) = -1 and Strongly Disagree (SD) = -2. The responses were summarized and presented in table 3.

**Table 3:** Teachers' responses on influence of the process of formulation of school rules and regulation on students' discipline

Statements	SD		D		U		A		SA	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
<b>Influence of the process of formulating school rules on students discipline in my school</b>										
Teachers	12	3.4	57	16.3	46	13.1	131	37.4	104	29.7

Data in Table 3 shows that majority of the teachers in public secondary schools Makueni county 235 (67.1%) agreed that involvement of students in the process of formulating school rules and regulations influence their discipline in schools. This implies that schools where students were actively involved in the process of formulating school rules were likely to have high students' discipline while, on the other hand, schools with less students' involvement in the process of formulating school rules were likely to have low levels of students' discipline. These findings are in agreement with Matsoga (2003), who carried out a cross sectional study on discipline in schools in Botswana. The findings were that many secondary schools witnessed students' indiscipline. Indiscipline in schools which manifested itself in various ways, greatly interfered with the teaching and learning processes. Violence and theft were identified as common acts of indiscipline among secondary school students. This was as a result of students disrespecting school rules which had been formulated without their involvement (Matsoga, 2003). The same could be the case in Makueni County where students' indiscipline is rampant.

**Hypothesis testing**

**H<sub>0</sub> There is no significant relationship between students' involvement in school rules' formulation process and students' discipline in public secondary schools in Makueni County.**

**Table 4:** Correlations between the process of formulation of school rules and students' discipline

Processes of formulation of school rules and regulations	students' discipline
Pearson Correlation	+0.612
	0.030
Sig. (2-tailed)	
N	96

The study findings indicate that the processes of formulation of school rules had a significant and positive relationship with students' discipline in public secondary schools in Makueni County. The findings show that there was a strong positive correlation  $r=+0.612$  which was significant at  $p=0.030$ . The Null hypothesis is thus rejected. From this test, it is concluded that the processes of formulation of school rules has a significant positive relationship with levels of students' discipline in public secondary schools in Makueni County. This means that schools where students were actively involved in the process of formulation of school rules in the County created a sense of ownership of the process. Consequently, a conducive school climate is created and this is likely to nurture disciplined students. Conversely, in schools where administrators make rules

for students to follow, a negative school climate is created. Students in such schools defy school rules leading to mass disobedience.

In a similar vein, Kiggudu (2009) conducted a study on how management of school rules influences students' discipline and academic performance in selected private secondary schools of Busiro County in Wakiso District, Uganda. The major findings of the study were that all schools had written rules. However, students did not participate in their formulation. Some rules and regulations required modifications and others lacked consistency in their implementation which raised students' anger leading to strikes. The researcher found out that despite rules and regulations specifying dos and don'ts, students still broke the rules and regulations because they were not involved in their formulation.

## V. CONCLUSION

From the findings, the processes of formulation of school rules has a significant positive relationship with levels of students' discipline in public secondary schools in Makueni County. However, many schools did not involve students in the process of formulation of school rules and regulations in public secondary schools in Makueni County. This perhaps explains why some 277 schools in the county witnessed students' unrest in the last five years. Based on the study findings, majority of the public secondary schools in Makueni County where students are actively involved in the process of formulating school rules are likely to have a healthy school climate which promotes high levels of students' discipline. On the other hand, schools with limited or no student involvement in the process of formulating school rules are likely to have negative school climate that might lead to low levels of students' discipline. Therefore, the study concluded that the processes of formulation of school rules has a significant positive relationship ( $r=+0.612$ ,  $p=0.030$ ) with levels of students' discipline in public secondary schools in Makueni County (Table 4).

## VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

From the findings of the study, involving students in the process of formulating rules is critical to the creation of a healthy school climate and that this promotes high levels of student discipline. The study therefore recommends that principals should actively involve students in the process of formulation of school rules so that school rules could gain a sense of ownership.

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