

## Abstract

Students' discipline is a major concern to many stakeholders globally. However, despite commitment of the government of Kenya to uphold both international and local trends of recognizing the rights of the child, the management of students' discipline by use of alternative disciplinary methods in schools still remains largely unexplored. This study sought to investigate the effects of principals' alternative disciplinary methods on students' discipline in public secondary schools in Kitui County, Kenya. The study objectives sought to establish the effect of principals' use of peer counselling; suspension of indiscipline students; students' expulsion and use of class meetings with students for collaborative decision making on students' discipline. The study was based on the Systems theory. Ex post facto research design was adopted. The target population for the study was 333 public secondary schools consisting of 333 Principals, 333 Deputy principals, 1665 HoDs Guidance and Counselling, Board of Management (BoM) chairpersons, the County Director of Education and Kitui law courts Resident Magistrate. The sample size was obtained by stratified proportionate sampling procedure, purposive sampling and simple random sampling. The study sample size consisted of 101 public secondary schools consisting of Principals, Deputy Principals, HoDs Guidance and Counselling, 15 Board of Management members, Kitui County Director of Education and Kitui Law Courts Resident Magistrate. Purposive sampling was used to select some schools, HoDs guidance and Counselling, Kitui County Director of Education and Kitui Law Courts Resident Magistrate because of their number and because they had useful information in relation to this study. The total respondents for the study were 320. A test-retest technique was used to test reliability. Data collection tools included questionnaires and interview guides. Data was analysed using SPSS. Descriptive statistics was used to analyze, tabulate and present data. Results of data gathered from closed ended and open ended items were reported in frequency tables, cross tabulation tables and explanation of the findings were made based on themes. The Chisquare( $\chi^2$ ) test was used to determine the strength of association between alternative disciplinary methods and students' discipline and to test whether the observed relationship is significant or not. The significance level was set at  $\alpha = 0.05$ . The study established that peer counselling had the highest p-value 0.518. Students' expulsion was rated second with p-value 0.491. Holding class meetings with students for collaborative decision making was rated third with a p-value 0.373 while suspension of indiscipline students was rated fourth with a p-value 0.351. It was concluded that principals' use of alternative disciplinary methods had no significant effect on students' discipline.

However, the study has revealed that Peer counselling has the strongest association with students discipline with a p-value 0.518 whereas suspension has the weakest relationship with students' discipline with pvalue of 0.351. The study recommends: review of disciplinary methods in schools and provision of policy guidelines on the best alternative disciplinary methods; strengthening the use of alternative disciplinary methods in management of students' discipline. The study suggested a comparative study on perception of teachers and parents on corporal punishment and alternative disciplinary methods in the management of students' discipline. This study could be significant in that it could provide an insight on the best practices and choices of appropriate alternative disciplinary methods to be used on students' discipline in schools.