

## **Abstract**

Students' discipline is a matter of global concern. However, the effectiveness of use suspension as an alternative disciplinary method in schools still remains largely unexplored and a matter of conjecture in Kenya. This study sought to investigate Principals' challenges associated with use of suspension as an alternative disciplinary method on students' discipline in public secondary schools in Kitui County, Kenya. The study objective sought to establish the challenges faced by principals in using suspension as an alternative disciplinary method on students' discipline. The study adopted the *ex-post-facto* research design and was guided by the systems theory. The study targeted 333 public secondary schools which included 333 principals, 333 Deputy Principals, 333 Guidance and Counselling Heads of Departments (HoDS), and Kitui County Director of Education. The sample size was obtained by a stratified proportionate sampling procedure and purposive sampling to obtain a sample of 101 schools which included 101 principals, 101 Deputy Principals, 101 HoDs guidance and counselling and the County Director of Education. The data collection tools included questionnaires for Principals, Deputy Principals, HoDs guidance and counselling and interview guide for the County Director of Education. Instrument reliability was determined by a test-re-test technique. Descriptive statistics was used to analyse data which was presented using Frequency distribution tables. Qualitative data was organised in themes and presented in a narrative form. From the findings, students were suspended upon recommendation by the school discipline committee. The major challenge of using suspension in management of school discipline included uncooperative parents (reported by 60.4 % of the principals). The parents requested for reduction of suspension period, they also sided with their children (students) and the parents also failed to report back to school on the given date. Suspension was time consuming and this was said by 37.6 % of the principals, with 7.9 % of the principals saying that suspension had a challenge of refusal of students to tell their parents the truth, while 6.9% of the principals said that some students did not change at all after suspension. The study concluded that the challenges associated with principals' use of suspension as an alternative disciplinary method are many. However, effectiveness in use of suspension as an alternative disciplinary method could be realised if schools could design and utilize disciplinary approaches that could directly address students' discipline problems. Hence, such approaches could assist students who have signs of misconduct in schools.