

Abstract

School principals are charged with a critical responsibility in the education sector. Their leadership and decision-making profoundly impact the school's culture and the well-being of students. Enforcing rules and regulations is a crucial aspect of their role. When principals take on this responsibility fairly and consistently, it yields a multitude of benefits for the entire school community. For instance, fairness and consistency in rule enforcement are foundational principles of effective school leadership. When students understand that rules will be applied consistently, they are more likely to perceive the school as a fair and just place. This perception of fairness reduces anxiety and helps create a positive emotional climate within the school. It assures students that their actions will be judged impartially, regardless of their background, circumstances, or personal attributes. However, there is limited empirical research that specifically explores the impact of these enforcement strategies on the psychological well-being of orphaned students in public secondary schools. This study sought to assess the influence of principals' enforcement of rules and regulations on the psychological well-being of orphaned students in public secondary schools in Makueni County Kenya. This study was guided by the Assertive Discipline Theory. The study employed a descriptive correlational research design and the target population was 1,979 participants, including principals, teacher-counselors, and orphaned students from 393 public secondary schools. Stratified sampling and purposive sampling were used to select 333 respondents. Data collection involved questionnaires for teacher-counselors and structured interviews for principals and students. A pilot study validated and assessed the reliability of research instruments, with a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.802 indicating high reliability. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics, particularly Pearson's Product Moment Correlation, facilitated by SPSS. Qualitative data underwent thematic analysis, providing narrative insights. Ethical considerations, including informed consent and data confidentiality, were rigorously followed. Logistical planning ensured efficient data collection, supported by a data assistant, and robust data management practices were implemented. As indicated in the hypothesis, a significant relationship was established between the extent to which principals enforce rules and regulations and the psychological well-being of orphaned students. Consequently, it is evident that higher enforcement of rules and regulations corresponds with improved psychological well-being among orphaned students, while a deficiency in enforcement coincides with lower psychological

well-being. The study recommended that principals should maintain consistent enforcement of school rules and regulations, especially those related to theft, vandalism, dress code, and attendance to create a safer and more structured school environment that can benefit the well-being of all students, including orphans.