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Parents' Education Level and Parental Engagement in Management of Students Discipline in Public Day Secondary Schools in Kitui County, Kenya

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Abstract

Student discipline is a global issue. Parental engagement in management of learner discipline has remained low. This study examined the effect of parents' education level on their participation in management of learners' discipline in public day secondary schools in Kitui County, Kenya. The hypothesis was: there is no relationship between parents' level of education and their engagement in management of student discipline. Descriptive survey design was adopted. The sample included 70 public day secondary schools, 70 Principals, 70 Parents' Teachers' Association (PTA) chairpersons, 86 Form three class teachers and 354 Form three students obtained by purposive sampling, simple random sampling and stratified proportionate sampling. The instruments were questionnaires, interview guide and focus group discussions. Data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The significance level was set at $\alpha = 0.05$. Pearson's correlation coefficient test results indicated a strong positive correlation ($r=0.714$, $P < 0.05$) hence the hypothesis was rejected and conclusion was made that parental education level affects management of students' discipline since parents with low level of educational attainment were less engaged. Recommendations were made that: The school board of management could organize workshops to equip parents with skills on parental engagement, the Ministry of Education could establish a policy on parental home supervision. The Teachers Service Commission could organize in-service training programs to equip teachers with skills for sensitizing parents on parental engagement. Principals could use annual general meetings to sensitize parents about the educational policy on parental involvement in relation to student discipline.

Keywords: *Effect, Education level, Parental engagement, Student discipline, Management, Schools, Kenya.*

1. Introduction

Retgression of student discipline in schools is a concern to education stakeholders in many nations of the world. Effective parental involvement in management of students' discipline is required for students' success in schooling. According to Esther and Cheng (1999), student indiscipline in Singapore is caused by lack of parental supervision which make it difficult for school administrators to maintain discipline. Stewart (2004) asserts that the tension caused by indiscipline in Australian schools cause some teachers to resign from the teaching profession. Student indiscipline in America has been linked to lack of parental involvement in activities such as supervising homework and ensuring regular school attendance (Haack, 2007).

Radu (2011) in a study which sought to explore issues of parental involvement in their children's school activities in South Eastern Europe found that the feeling of competence which is attributed to a certain level of education has a great influence. Desforges and Abouchaar (2003) argue that the parents with higher level of educational attainment participate more in regulation of the learners' behaviour. This view is in conformity with Davis-Kean (2005) who asserts that the parents' educational attainment in America determines how they get involved in school matters and how they relate with teachers to enhance students' discipline. Crosswhite and Kerpelman (2009) concurs by noting that unskilled parents do not discipline their children consistently. Radu (2011) noted that more parental involvement without a clear understanding of what parents can do through their involvement may lead to uninformed decisions and

frustration. However, Yahaya et al., (2009) disagreed that parental educational level has a significant impact on student indiscipline.

Previous studies have shown that parental involvement in school activities has not improved school discipline in Nigeria and Uganda (Ajayi, Ekundayo & Arogundade, 2009; Nyamusana, 2010). This implies that parental engagement in school-based management practices has not effectively addressed students' disciplinary issues. Despite the crucial role played by parental entanglement in shaping students' discipline, a study by Chindanya (2011) revealed that there was low parental involvement in Zimbabwe since the parents were unaware of what it entails. Studies in Kenya by Ngari (2014) and Indiatsi (2015) show that parental level of education significantly influences the management of student's discipline in schools. However, a study by Kimu (2012) revealed that many parents in Kenya are not aware of the benefits of their participation beyond school-based parental activities such as attending occasional annual general meetings and fundraising.

Kitui County which is located in Southeastern Kenya was chosen as the locale for this study due to deterioration of discipline among students in public day secondary schools. According to the Kitui County Director of Education (CDE, 2016) report, the County schools were among those on strike during the second term of the year 2016 when the students went on rampage in all the counties across the country destroying property worth millions of shillings. The report indicates that discipline problems could be attributed to lack of parenting skills. Although students are expected to have self-regulated behaviour, school discipline has been declining in spite of the efforts made by the Ministry of Education to enhance management of learner discipline by requiring schools to establish parents' associations and involve more parents in the school boards of management.

The Purpose of this study was to investigate the influence of parents' education level on their participation in management of students' discipline in public day secondary schools in Kitui County. The study was guided by the null hypothesis that there is no relationship between parents' education level and parental involvement in management of students' discipline.

The objectives were to:

- 1) Determine the extent to which the level of parents' education influence their involvement in management of students' discipline.
- 2) Examine the effect of parents' education level on students' discipline
- 3) Establish strategies that could be used to enhance parental level of education.

2. Materials and methods

Descriptive survey research design was employed. The design is suitable in social, educational and psychological contexts where the researchers can only report what is happening without manipulating the variables (Best & Kahn, 2006). It was appropriate in this study since it was used to investigate the relationship between the level of parents' education and parental involvement in regulation of learners' conduct. The sample was obtained by purposive sampling, simple random sampling and stratified proportionate sampling. There were 70 public day secondary schools, 70 Principals, 70 Parents' Teachers' Association (PTA) chairpersons, 86 Form three class teachers and 354 Form three students.

Interview guide, questionnaires and focus group discussions were used as instruments for gathering data in regard to views of parents, teachers and students on the current state of discipline in public day schools. Questionnaires were validated by conducting a pre- test and through expert judgment by the supervisors. A test-re-test method was used to test reliability. Pearson's correlation coefficient test was used to test the null hypothesis. Data was analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. The significance level was set at $\alpha = 0.05$.

3. Results and discussion

3.1 Effect of parents' education level on parental involvement in students' discipline

A five-point Likert scale was used to measure the effect of parents' level of education on parental involvement in management of students' discipline. A rating of "Strongly Agree" was assigned a score of 5; "Agree" was assigned a score of 4; "Undecided" was assigned a score of 3; "Disagree" was assigned a score of 2; "Strongly Disagree" had a score of 1 assigned to it. A score of 4 to 5 meant that the school principals agreed with the item. A score of 3 meant that they were undecided or not sure while a score of 1 to 2 meant that they did not agree with the item. The head teachers were required to indicate their level of agreement with the statements on the effect of parents' level of education on their involvement in management of students' discipline. The results were presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Influence of parents’ education on parental involvement in student discipline

	5		4		3		2		1	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Highly educated parents motivate their children to work hard and complete school	45	64.3	15	21.4	5	7.1	3	4.3	2	2.9
Lowly educated parents motivate their children to work hard and complete school	3	4.3	5	7.1	4	5.7	31	44.3	27	38.6
Highly educated parents express high expectations for their children’s success in schooling	40	57.1	17	24.3	3	4.3	4	5.7	6	8.6
Highly educated parents supervise their children’s homework	21	30	37	52.9	3	4.3	5	7.1	4	5.7
Lowly educated parents supervise their children’s homework	7	10	6	8.6	3	4.3	47.1	33	21	33.0
Lowly educated parents monitor their children’s school attendance	10	14.3	5	7.1	10	14.3	15	21.4	30	42.9
n=70										

Table 1 indicates that majority of the head teachers (64.3 percent and 21.4 percent total 85.7 percent) agreed that highly educated parents motivate their children to work hard and complete school. Only 2.9 percent and 4.3 percent total 7.2 percent of them disagreed with the item. About 7.1 percent were undecided. The head teachers disagreed that lowly educated parents motivate their children to work hard and complete school as stated by 44.3 percent and 38.6 percent total 82.9 percent. Only 4.3 percent and 7.1 percent total 11.4 percent agreed that less educated parents motivate learners while 5.7 percent of them were undecided. The school administrators disagreed that lowly educated parents supervise their children’s homework as indicated by 33 percent and 47.1 percent total 80.1 percent. Only 8.6 percent and 10 percent of them agreed with the item while 4.3 percent did not have an opinion.

The results imply that parents with high level of education have the skills and moral authority needed to motivate their children to work hard and complete school successfully. Vellymalay (2012) agrees that educated parents show high involvement in motivating their children by assisting in the completion of homework and discussing their school activities at home which help to reduce discipline problems at school. Akeri (2015) concurs that highly learned parents motivate their children to work harder at school. However, Inziani (2013) observed that most of the parents in Kenya have only basic or no formal education hence they are unable to motivate their children due to ignorance.

On parental expectations, it was established that highly educated parents express high expectations for their children’s success in schooling with the highest proportion of the head teachers (57.1 percent and 24.3 percent total 81.4 percent) agreeing with the statement. Only 8.6 percent and another 5.7 percent totaling 14.3 percent of them disagreed with the item. About 4.3 percent were undecided. The results indicate that the less educated parents may not be able to express high expectations for their children’s success in schooling due to lack of knowledge about how to access prestigious career opportunities through education. Singh and Singh (2014) agree that the educational level of parents significantly influence the students’ adjustment in the society. However, Nzoka and Orodho (2015) note that most parents in Kenya do not communicate high expectations due to lack of formal education.

On supervision, the results indicate that highly educated parents supervise their children’s homework since majority (52.9 percent and 30 percent total 82.9 percent) of the head teachers agreed with the statement. Only 5.7 percent and 7.1 percent total 12.8 percent of the head teachers disagreed with that item. About 4.3 percent of the head teachers did

not have an opinion. The principals also disagreed that the less educated parents encourage their children to do homework as stated by 41.1 percent and 33 percent total 80.1 percent. Only 10 percent and 8.6 percent total 18.6 percent of the principals said that lowly educated parents supervise the learners' homework while 4.3 percent of them had no opinion.

The results imply that the parents with high level of educational achievement are competent enough to assist their children in successful completion of their homework. This finding agrees with Al-Matalka (2014) who found that highly educated parents were aware of the best effective ways of supervising and guiding their children's education. Lawson (2003) concurs that parents with less educational attainment may not be skilled to help their children in school matters and may be less confident that they will be effective. However, Cappella, O'Connor and McCloskey (2013) disagrees that helping children with homework is associated with students' discipline.

The results further show that the principals disagreed with the statement that lowly educated parents monitor their children's school attendance as indicated by majority of the head teachers (42.9 percent and 21.4 percent total 64.3 percent). Only 14.3 percent and 7.1 percent total 14.3 percent agreed with the item. About 14.3 percent of the school principals were undecided. The results indicate that the less educated parents lack interest in students' discipline issues since they may not be knowledgeable about what successful schooling entails.

Yahaya et al. (2010) concur that children play truancy because parents are not concerned about their schooling. Haack (2007) noted that the less educated parents are not caring, have poor relationship with their children and assume that it is the responsibility of teachers to discipline students. According to Davis -Kean (2005), the amount of schooling that parents receive influences how they get involved in school matters, structure their home environment and interact with their children in promoting discipline at school.

3.2 Effect of parents' education level on students' discipline

Cross tabulation

Cross tabulation was done between parents' education level and students' school attendance to determine the relationship between parents' education level and students' discipline in relation to their school attendance. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Cross tabulation on parental education level and students' attendance

Question	Parents' education level	Students' attendance to school					
		Regular		Irregular		Total	
		f	%	f	%	f	%
Influence of parents' education level on students' attendance	No formal education	19	5.7	23	6.8	42	12.5
	Primary	24	7.1	17	5.1	41	12.2
	Secondary	53	15.7	21	6.3	74	22.0
	Bachelors Degree	71	21.1	4	1.2	75	22.3
	Masters Degree	98	29.2	6	1.8	104	31.0
Total		265	78.8	71	21.2	336	100.0

n=336

From the findings, it was established that the children of parents who have no formal education did not attend school regularly as indicated by six-point eight percent of the students compared to five-point seven percent of those who indicated that the children’s attendance was regular. Five-point one percent of the students indicated that the children of parents with primary education had irregular school attendance in comparison to seven-point one percent who stated that the children attended school regularly. The results further show that fifteen-point seven percent of the students indicated that the children belonging to parents with secondary education had regular school attendance as opposed to six-point three percent of the students who indicated that the children attended school irregularly.

It was further established that the children of parents who were holders of a Bachelors degree attended school regularly as indicated by 21.1 percent of the students while only one-point two percent of them recorded irregular attendance. The results further revealed that the children of parents who were holders of a Masters degree had regular attendance as recorded by 29.2 percent of the students while only one-point eight percent of them recorded that the children attended school irregularly. The results indicate that most of the children of parents with low level of education or without formal education attend school irregularly while those of highly educated parents have regular school attendance. Okumu, Nakajo and Isoke (2008) concur that academic attainment of parents significantly influences their children’s school attendance. However, Nisa and Shafi (2015) disagree that parental education influence children’s discipline.

3.3 Testing Null Hypothesis:

H₀: There is no relationship between the level of parents’ education and their engagement in management of students’ discipline in public day secondary schools.

The hypothesis was tested using Pearson’s correlation coefficient test to ascertain the strength of the relationship between parents’ level of education and their engagement in management of students’ discipline. The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Correlation between parents’ level of education and their engagement in management of students’ discipline

	Parents’ education level	Parents’ engagement in management of students’ discipline
Parents’ education level	Pearson Correlation	.714**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	150

The results in Table 3 show that there is a strong positive correlation ($r=0.714$, $P < 0.05$) between parents’ education level and their participation in guiding the learners’ behaviour. This implies that highly educated parents are likely to participate more in guiding the students’ behaviour. On the contrary, most parents with low level of academic achievement lack confidence to discipline their secondary school children as they think that the students know more than their parents and should therefore be self-disciplined. Other parents believe that discipline issues should be handled by the teachers to an extent that even when the students make mistakes at home their parents threaten to report them to their teachers in school instead of disciplining the children at home.

3.4 Parents’ awareness of school rules and regulations

The PTA chairpersons were interviewed on their parental involvement in regard to their education level. Their responses are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Parents’ responses on whether they had read school rules

Response	Frequency	Percent
Yes	55	78.6

No	15	21.4
Total	70	100.0

Table 4 reveals that 78.6% of the parents said that they had not read the school rules compared to 21.4% of those who said that they were aware of the regulations. These responses support the views of the students, teachers and principals in their reactions to the questionnaires, interview guide and focus group discussions that only those parents who had high level of educational attainment were able to read and enforce the school rules at home. When asked about how they reinforced the rules, only the few well educated and knowledgeable parents said that they reminded their children about the rules and discussed the importance of obeying school directives.

The results imply that most of the parents of public day secondary schools in Kitui County, Kenya have little or no formal education which acts as a barrier to their effective participation in guiding the learners’ behaviour. These findings are consistent with a study by Indiatsi (2015) who found that parental level of education significantly influence the management of student’s discipline in public secondary schools. Al-Matalaka (2014) found that the highly-educated parents create and instill positive behaviour in the minds of their children. However, UNICEF (2010) disagrees that parents’ levels of education influences their participation in management of students’ discipline. It is noted that the findings contradict Section 31 (3) of the Basic Education Act, 2013 which states that a parent/ guardian should participate in the character development of their children (Republic of Kenya, 2013).

3.5 Strategies that schools could use to enhance parents’ education level to improve student discipline

The school principals were asked to suggest strategies that schools could use to enhance parents’ level of education to improve management of student discipline. The objective was to determine the strategies that schools could use to improve management of students’ discipline in relation to parental education level. The results are shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Principals’ responses on strategies to be used by schools to enhance parents’ education to increase involvement in students’ discipline

	5		4		3		2		1	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Class teachers to invite parents to school to discuss students’ conduct	29	41.4	30	42.9	4	5.7	5	7.1	2	2.9
Teachers to enhance communication between parents and the school	32	45.7	23	32.9	4	5.7	6	8.6	5	7.1
BOM to equip parents with skills on parental home supervision	35	50.0	26	37.1	4	5.7	2	2.9	3	4.3
Principals to use annual general meetings to sensitize parents about the education policy on discipline	39	55.7	13	18.6	8	11.4	7	10.0	3	4.3

n=70

Key: f=frequency, %=percent

Table 5 shows that majority of the head teachers (41.4 percent and 42.9 percent total 84.3 percent) agreed that class teachers should invite parents to school to discuss students’ conduct. Only 2.9 percent and 7.1 percent totaling 10 percent of them disagreed with this item. About 5.7 percent of the principals were undecided. The results indicate that

invitation of parents to school to discuss students' conduct can help to improve on students' discipline. Feyfant and Rey (2006) and Waihenya (2014) concur that parents and teachers should cooperate by maintaining close communication through meetings to understand the school rules. According to Ngari (2014), teachers should work hand in hand with parents to improve discipline in schools. However, Maruhi, (2013) observed that majority of parents rarely consult teachers on education matters of their children.

When asked whether enhancement of communication between parents and the school could help to increase parental involvement, the head teachers agreed as indicated by the majority (45.7 percent and 32.9 percent total 78.6 percent) who agreed with the item. Only 7.1 percent of the school principals and 8.6 percent total 15.7 disagreed that enhancing communication can increase parental involvement. About 5.7 percent of the head teachers were undecided. The results indicate that enhancing communication between parents and the school can increase parental involvement leading to improvement of students' discipline. Durrant, Barker, Holden, Kearley, MacAulay, Peters and Tapanya (2014) concur that through communication, parents acquire problem-solving skills and increased confidence in their ability to resolve conflicts among students.

The results further show that majority of the head teachers (50 percent and 37.1 percent total 87.1 percent) agreed that the Board of Management should equip parents with skills on parental home supervision. Only 4.3 percent and 2.9 percent of the head teachers, total 7.2 percent disagreed with the item. About 5.7 of the head teachers had no opinion. The results indicate that parents' acquisition of parental skills can enable them to increase their participation in guiding their children's conduct. These results concur with a report by UNICEF (2010) which state that training programmes should be recommended to teach parents skills on how to interact with their children in a positive manner.

On parents' sensitization, it was noted that majority of the head teachers (55.7 percent and 18.6 percent total 74.3 percent) agreed that principals should use annual general meetings to sensitize parents on parental involvement in students' discipline. Only 4.3 percent and 10.0 percent total 14.3 percent disagreed with the statement. About 11.4 percent of the head teachers were undecided. The results indicate that sensitization of parents about the educational policy on parental involvement in students' discipline can help to increase parental participation in guiding students' behaviour. This implies that parents' knowledge of the parental involvement policy can help to improve on students' discipline. Okumu (2014) concurs that school managers should establish parent – mentoring programs to sensitize parents on their parental duties. The results agree with those of Nyandwi (2014) that school managers should campaign for public awareness in education through meetings.

Table 6: Parents' responses on head teachers' strategies to enhance parental education

Strategies to enhance parental education	Frequency	Percent
Invite speakers during prize giving days to talk to Parents on parenting	33	47.1
Enhance communication between parents and the school	17	24.3
Invite parents to school to discuss the students' conduct	13	18.6
Use annual general meetings to sensitize parents on the need to enroll for adult education	7	10.0

Slightly less than half (47.1) of the parents suggested that invitation of speakers to school to address the issue of parenting could increase parental intervention in school discipline. About 24.3 percent and 18.6 percent of the parents supported the views of the class teachers from the questionnaire that improvement of communication between the parents and the schools and discussion of the students' conduct respectively could help to improve the learners' discipline.

4. Conclusion

The results of the hypothesis that there is no relationship between parents' education level and their involvement in management of student discipline showed a strong positive correlation ($r=0.714$, $P < 0.05$) hence the hypothesis was rejected. The alternative hypothesis that there is a strong relationship between parents' level of education and their participation in controlling students' discipline was accepted. It was established that there is need to sensitize parents on home-based parental activities. Conclusion was made that parental education level affect their involvement in management of student discipline.

5. Recommendations

The following recommendations were made:

- 1) The school boards of management could organize workshops to equip parents with skills on parental participation.
- 2) The Ministry of Education could establish a policy on parental home supervision.
- 3) The Teachers Service Commission could organize in-service training programs to equip teachers with skills for sensitizing parents on home-based parental activities.
- 4) Principals could use annual general meetings to sensitize parents about the educational policy on parental involvement in relation to student discipline.

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