

1 Influence of the Principal's Communication Skills on Students'
2 Discipline in Public Day Secondary Schools in West Pokot Sub
3 County, Kenya

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7

8 **Abstract**

9 Ethical instructional leadership demonstrates that the success of any teaching and learning
10 process and the level of students' discipline is dependent on effective communication skills.
11 Learning and the success of student discipline are among the most primary goals of a
12 principal's instructional leadership. This study therefore, investigated the influence of the
13 principal's communication skills on student discipline in secondary schools in West Pokot Sub
14 County in Kenya. The study was anchored on deontological ethical and teleological ethical
15 theories which typically judge rightness or wrongness of an individual's actions in his or her
16 line of duty and if the actions are fair to the followers. The target population of the study was
17 3450 respondents. This comprised of 497 teachers and 2953 students from the public day
18 secondary schools in the study area. Simple random and purposive sampling techniques were
19 used to arrive at a sample of 593 respondents. Questionnaires, interview and document
20 analysis were used as the primary tools of data collection. The study used a descriptive survey
21 research design in data analysis using SPSS version 26 to obtain mean values and standard
22 deviation.

23

24 **Index terms**— principal's communication skills, students' discipline, public day secondary schools.
25 Abstract-Ethical instructional leadership demonstrates that the success of any teaching and learning process
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28 therefore, investigated the influence of the principal's communication skills on student discipline in secondary
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34 interview and document analysis were used as the primary tools of data collection. The study used a descriptive
35 survey research design in data analysis using SPSS version 26 to obtain mean values and standard deviation.
36 Encouraging open door policy was at a low level (2.32, std .96), encouraging students to bring new creative ideas
37 on discipline was also at a low level (2.73, std 1.10).

38 Allowing the students to determine the dress code (2.33, std 1.13) and setting aside specific days for meetings
39 with students on discipline matters (2.39, std 1.33). Findings from correlation analysis showed that there is
40 a significant relationship between principal's communication skills and student discipline. The study findings
41 indicate that the principals' communication skills can be considered below average. People do not live their lives
42 in moral isolation but grow up within particular set moral standards. Therefore the study recommends that

2 II. PRINCIPAL'S COMMUNICATION SKILLS AND STUDENTS DISCIPLINE

43 teaching being a moral enterprise the school principals should be regularly trained through in-service courses on
44 their communication skills since communication is an integral skill in shaping student.

45 1 Introduction

46 leaders are characterized by different values, norms, attitudes, beliefs, procedures, conduct, behaviours and
47 practices and which are to a certain extent dependent upon the organizational, professional or institutional
48 culture (Mihelic, Lipicnik, & Tekavcic, 2010). The responsibility of school principals is to provide instructional
49 leadership direction in the management of the school (Diliberti et al., 2019). The principal develops curricula
50 standards to assess teaching methods and monitor student achievement. The school principal has to supervise
51 the daily operation of the institution and facilitate establishment of academic goals through duty allocation to
52 teachers (Hornig & Loeb, 2010).

53 Studies indicate that discipline is fundamental in human conduct and if it lacks among the members of an
54 institution, then the institution cannot perform towards its ideal targets (Ouma, Simatwa, & Serem, 2013). With
55 regards to educational systems, disciplined students are those whose practices, actions and inactions adjust to
56 the set standards and guidelines within the school, (Ali, Dada, Isiaka, and Salmon, 2014).

57 Discipline ideally implies more than adhering to the set guidelines and standards and involves the student's
58 ability to differentiate right from wrong based on the societal expectations (Gitome, Katola, & Nyabwari, 2013).
59 Discipline is a basic requirement for a successful school system and therefore a matter of interest for all school
60 heads (Eshetu, 2014). He further argues that discipline is a parameter of someone's successful life and it is
61 reflected through the accumulation one's daily activities and behaviours in terms of morals, values and ethics
62 which are always connected and interrelated to the society and attached to societal culture. Indiscipline is
63 argued to be a demonstration of unaccepted conduct in a social network set up or in the general public (Omote,
64 Thinguri, & Moenga, 2015). In the school environment, Ali et al. (2014) argue that indiscipline is any kind
65 of misconduct which learners exhibit in their actions. Currently school principals are faced with enormous
66 challenges in addressing the rising cases of students' indiscipline. Therefore the role of school principals can
67 be said to be perhaps the most dynamic and influential function in the education sector. The duties of school
68 principals have evolved drastically and have been dominated by discourse around principals' responsibility in
69 school achievement, effectiveness and students' moral growth. This requires school principals to embrace ethics in
70 their communication by being truthful and unbiased. Exercising sound communication ethics requires competent
71 communication skills which involve studying, understanding and applying them. It also entails knowing when
72 to follow guidelines, using discernment and judgment of particular situations, environments, and audiences, and
73 articulating sound and just reasons for a decision (Tompkins, 2011) Bechuke and Debeila (2012) argue that with
74 the ban of corporal punishment as a disciplinary measure, majority of the teachers have experienced difficulties
75 to adopt the recommended alternatives in maintaining discipline in schools. As a result teachers tend to set very
76 strict rules to guide students conduct in schools instead of considering the prevailing circumstances. They further
77 argue that teachers are less knowledgeable on the methods that could enhance learners' selfreliance. Therefore
78 this study sought to establish the influence of principals' communication skills on students' discipline.

79 2 II. Principal's Communication Skills and Students Discipline

80 Yalokwu, (2002) defines communication as the effective transmission of a common understanding among people
81 through speaking, writing or the other methods. He asserts that unless there is a perfect understanding resulting
82 from transmission of verbal or non-verbal symbols, communication will not be said have taken place. That is
83 communication should result in what the communicator wants. It should generate the desired effect and maintain
84 the effect. (Littlejohn & Foss, 2010) opines that communication as a process encompasses the level of observation
85 or abstractness, intentionality, and normative judgment. The level of observation or abstractness depends on how
86 broad communication is done. There are different reasons for which people communicate. Some communicate to
87 share ideas, express emotions and pass on information to others through a certain media or technology. Giambra
88 (2014) agrees to this by stating that some people just communicate to meet their social needs.

89 Globally communication is a tool of relaying information of whichever kind, be it school regulations, government
90 policies, rules and laws among others. According to Nakkazi (2012), communication should produce the desired
91 effect.

92 In educational institutions communication is a vital tool used in the progress of the set programmes and with
93 regard to handling student discipline. A communicative leadership is essential for any school or organizations
94 with values that are non-negotiable (Zulch, 2014). He further argues that the desired end goal of a school
95 is dependent on the manner in which communication takes place. Unavailability of communication and poor
96 communication by teachers are the major factors that have led students to abandon their study objectives and
97 begin to engage in deviant behaviours at a certain level (Dinu, 2015). The wholesome success of students is
98 directly related to the effective communication of the teachers (Khan, et al 2017). Effective communication skills
99 stimulate moral imaginations that are key the formation of ethical behaviour by the learners. The role of the
100 principal, as an instructional leader, can only be realized by having comprehensive communication skills. Good
101 communication skills help to develop better understanding and beliefs among people, inspire them to follow
102 the principles and values which their leader wants to inculcate in them (Zulch, 2014). School principals as the

103 lead ethical instructional leaders of educational institutions should build among students an understanding that
104 education is embedded on promoting values and character formation which relies on the epistemic status of moral
105 reflection and moral agency (Carr, 2014). Mendels (2012) believes that today's principals need to be focused
106 on instruction and demonstrate effective communication skills so as to manage students moral development who
107 have become more exposed to the world of technology.

108 A study by ??raft and Shaun (2013) on the effects of teacher-family communication on student engagement in
109 Boston, Massachusetts revealed a positive relationship between teachers and parents communication on students
110 engagement in U.S.A public schools. They further argued that effective teachers and students communication
111 improves their sense of competence and behavioral change. Myers (2011) opines in his study that the school
112 head's communication is reflective of his or her leadership style. If the leader communicates well, the climate
113 for learning is cultivated well to ensure effective learning. This expansive idea has not been actualized in our
114 schools' reality. Nobody of us may intend to be a failure in his/her activity. Therefore, school heads for the
115 present schools have at the top of the priority list that the brains and the contemplations of teachers and students
116 that they manage are not the same as they were previously, the present individuals will never acknowledge to be
117 treated as slaves or typical specialists who indiscriminately comply with the supervisor's orders.

118 According to Onyeiwu (2010), in his study in Nigeria, the realization of the goals of a secondary school
119 as an educational organization hinges on effective communication among the various operating personnel.
120 Communication acts as system binder that binds the parts of the system together and binds the system to
121 its environment. In other words, no goal can be achieved if people do not communicate effectively with each
122 other.

123 Different types of a principal's communication skills have a great effect on the learners' discipline. For a
124 school to maintain a positive image in terms of discipline there ought to be effective communication between
125 and among the education stakeholders (Bursal?o?lu, 2013). He further argues that effective communication
126 has to yield the initiated behavior on the part of the sender which conveys desired message to the receiver
127 and causes desired response in behavior from the receiver. Leaders who communicate effectively encourage
128 and stimulate their followers towards the intended goals. They ensure discipline, and a sense of responsibility
129 among team members. Poor communication skills may lead to the failure of a school to yield the desired
130 results as a social agent of change. The source of many personal, organizational and social problems can
131 be found in the lack of effective communication. Ensuring that there is an effective communication system
132 without any misunderstandings and communication misinterpretations should be main tasks of any principal
133 who strives to create a dynamic and targeted relationship among all the organization's followers (Angelika
134 Anderson, 2018). School principals while communicating must ensure that there would be no chance of any
135 kind of miscommunication or misunderstandings. Therefore, the institutional head has to possess effective
136 communication skills both verbal and written to ensure that no miscommunication takes place ???i?man, 2012).
137 According to Mbiti, (1974), communication is essentially a bridge of understanding between people in any
138 institution. Communication leads to good management which aids achievement of organizational goals.

139 Muriithi (2013) did a study to examine the influence of teachers' communication strategies on students'
140 discipline in public secondary schools in Mukurweini district. Four objectives were formulated that sought to;
141 establish the use of teachers' oral communication on students' discipline in public secondary schools in Mukurweini
142 district; to establish the use of written communication by teachers on students' discipline in Mukurweini district;
143 establish the use of non-verbal communication by teachers on student discipline in the same discipline and
144 to determine the prevailing conditions that hinder effective communication towards student discipline. The
145 study employed descriptive research design which is suitable in collecting both qualitative and quantitative data.
146 The sample included 45 teachers and 540 students. Data was collected by the use of questionnaires. The
147 findings indicated that holding of classroom meetings, use of school prefects, communication during assembly,
148 use of guidance and counseling, use of rewards and incentives, holding of open forums, encouraging members
149 to pass information among themselves are some of the communication strategies commonly used by teachers' in
150 Mukurweini District that have positively impacted on student's discipline.

151 According to Kiprop (2012), most principals adopt a master-servant or superior-inferior attitude in dealing
152 with students. Believing that students have nothing to offer; principals rarely listen to students. This creates
153 tension, misunderstanding and stress eventually leading to frustrations and violence as manifested in strikes.

154 Mulwa (2014) conducted a study to investigate the effects of principals' alternative disciplinary methods on
155 students' discipline in public secondary schools in Kitui County, Kenya. His main goal was to establish the use of
156 class meetings with students for collaborative decision making on students' discipline. He based his study on the
157 Systems theory. The findings showed that class meeting enhance decision making since the learners were fully
158 involved during the class meeting. This kind of platform provided a window for the principal and the learners to
159 interact in real time hence, bringing about effective communication.

160 The manner in which the principal communicates portrays his or her ability to cause change in a school.
161 Hester and Killian (2011) argues that the school heads in their communication ought to consider the principles
162 of ethics if it they have to achieve the desired goal. They further argue that for the principals to be the forces of
163 change, they must be virtuous in their own moral standing. Upholding ethical communication skills for example
164 honesty has profound effects in teaching morality and character formation (Sanderse, 2012). They should strive
165 to be agents of change by being the servants of the people they serve. This implies that principals as ethical

166 instructional leaders should in their communication be clear, brief and should value the thoughts, ideas and
167 feeling of others.

168 According to Katolo (2016), school heads are critical in shaping an effective school administration where
169 learners' discipline is catapulted by the burning desire for continuous improvement in their scholarly work. The
170 most powerful predictor of a child's behaviour is the perception of control. Students who feel that their school
171 head is not supportive to them mostly tend to display negative behaviours (Rimm-Kaufman & Sandilos, 2012).

172 Organisational leaders are both implicitly and explicitly charged with being ethical and moral in their
173 communication (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2011). Instructional leaders have a clear focus on student learning by
174 having a vision, clear learning goals, and high expectations for learning for all students; interactions and cordial
175 relationships with relevant stakeholders and interaction, emotional and interpersonal support, visibility and
176 accessibility. The actualization of these values requires effective communication from the school principals.
177 Oboegbulem and Onwura (2011) assert that effective communication occurs when the sender and receiver of a
178 message deduce the same understanding of the content of the message. The success of secondary school functions
179 depend on the effectiveness of communication from the school leadership to the followers.

180 From the literature review, it was observed that several studies have been done around the variable, principal
181 communication but there is a research gap on the influence of effective communication skills on student discipline
182 especially in West Pokot Sub-County. For instance, Myers assumes in his research that the principal is considered
183 as the most powerful person to affect the work atmosphere in a school even with the understanding on the
184 cultural change of the students handled today which has resulted from globalization and trends in information
185 dissemination among the adolescents. However, no studies have been noted to have investigated any impact or
186 influence of the principal's communication skills on students' discipline. This study sought therefore to fill the
187 gap of the influence of the principal's communication skills on student discipline in public day secondary schools
188 in West Pokot Sub-County, West Pokot County in Kenya.

189 **3 III.**

190 **4 Materials and Methods**

191 The study used a descriptive survey research design. The target population of the study was 3450 respondents.
192 This comprised of 497 teachers and 2953 students from the public day secondary schools in the study area. Simple
193 random and purposive sampling designs were used to arrive at a sample of 593 respondents. The study used
194 research questionnaires, interview and document analysis guides to collect data. A pilot study was conducted in
195 one school from Pokot South Sub County to establish reliability of the research instruments. The collected data
196 was entered, edited, and analyzed by SPSS -26. Descriptive statistics, frequencies and means were used and the
197 results presented by tables and graphs. Qualitative data was analyzed thematically according to the respective
198 specific themes in the objective.

199 IV.

200 **5 Key Findings a) Descriptive results for ethical communication 201 skills and student's discipline**

202 The study sought to find out the influence of the principals' communication and students' discipline. The
203 respondents were required to use the scale which had a key of: 5=Strongly Disagree 4=Disagree 3=Not sure
204 2=Agree 1=Strongly Agree. The findings were recorded in table 1 communication strategies and student
205 discipline.

206 **6 Table 1: Communication strategies and student discipline**

207 **7 Communication statements**

208 Mean SD Encourages open door policy where students are free to see the head of the institution to explain their
209 problems.

210 **8 .96**

211 Encourages students to bring new creative ideas on discipline.

212 **9 1.10**

213 Allowing students to have a say in determining the dress code of the school.

214 **10 1.13**

215 Setting aside specific day(s) in a week for meetings between the Principals and the students to discuss matters
216 pertaining to student discipline.

217 11 1.33

218 From the results in table 1, it was observed that, the principals encourage open door policy where students are
219 free to see the head of the institution to explain their problems had a mean of 2.32 (Std .96) which was below
220 average, encourages students to bring new creative ideas on discipline with a mean of 2.73 (Std 1.10) indicating
221 an average effort from the principals, Allowing students to have a say in determining the dress code of the school
222 had a mean of 2.33 (Std 1.13) and Setting aside specific day(s) in a week for meetings between the principals and
223 the students to discuss matters pertaining to student discipline had a mean of 2.39 (Std. 1.33) indicating average
224 participation. From the study findings it is observed therefore that the principals' ability to communicate can
225 be considered average.

226 The teachers were asked to state the extent to which they believed that the principals' communication
227 influenced the quality of student discipline in their schools. Their responses were as shown in figure ??.

228 12 Figure 1: Principal's Communication

229 The results from the teacher's responses indicate that the teachers believed to a large extent 50% that if the
230 principals communicate effectively on the expected ethical standards, discipline will be enhanced. However, 17%
231 believed to a small extent that communication led to enhanced discipline among students, 7% to a very small
232 extent and 3% to a very extent. This is validation from the students who also believed that with faultless
233 communication on management of student discipline there will be improved student moral behaviour in schools.
234 The findings conform to a study conducted by Sng Bee, (2012) which found out that good communication skills
235 are not only important for teacher but also important for students for their educational success.

236 Principals were exposed to similar questions on communication in their daily endeavors in school and all of
237 them were in agreement that teachers meet the threshold of teacher conduct and regulation to a larger extent.
238 They said that this has remained a positive precursor in encouraging students to copy positive behaviour from
239 the regulated code of conduct.

240 On which channels of communication, they use in their respective schools, announcements during assemblies
241 played out as the common medium of communication, notice boards come out as the second most used method.
242 For instance, one principal said: "?in my school I embrace many media as forms of relaying messages to both
243 teachers and students. Key among them is announcements done during school assemblies and notices placed
244 at different noticeboards in the school?" This conformed to Muriithi's study which found out that teachers'
245 communication on students' discipline was done largely during assemblies.

246 Majority of the principals believed that to a larger extent good communication can lead to better school discipline.

247 On how effective the communication strategy leads to effective discipline among the students' in secondary
248 schools, one principal said, "?.. A principal may communicate as perfectly as possible but, the key question
249 lies on the students being communicated to. Do the students appreciate the messages that are being put across?
250 What if the principals and those involved in administration are doing the right thing in communicating and yet
251 the consumer does to the contrary? Another principal quipped, "?.. There is a gap between the communicator
252 and the student being communicated to. Different people take the information given to them at the same time
253 differently. If a for instance the question is absenteeism where the message is, seek for permission before getting
254 out of school, there are those who in the same day of the message has been given will be absent without any
255 official permission. Will it matter therefore how the communication was done or it more on the consumer of the
256 information?

257 On the challenges that result from channels of communications in the schools, majority of the principals felt
258 that that the major problems are not in the medium of communication but in the students' who are being
259 communicated to. The communication channels are sufficient and pretty.

260 The deputy principals were also asked similar questions as the principals on channels of communication adopted
261 in their respective schools. Like the principals, the deputy principals indicated that assembly announcements,
262 noticeboards and fixed message posters were the most used media of Teachers and students develop trust in the
263 leadership and they collaboratively strive towards maintaining high levels of discipline as long as the principals
264 are perceived as trustworthy, honest, and admired (Oyer, 2015). School Principals in West Pokot can advance
265 the overall mission of continuous improvement of good morals among students by developing superior ethical
266 communication skills within their schools. The illusive student discipline among secondary school students in
267 Kenya can then be addressed and properly managed.

268 V.

269 13 Correlation Results

270 In correlation analysis, the aim is to investigate the strength and nature of relationship between variables;
271 especially, between independent variable and the dependent variable (Helwig, 2019).

272 Communication skills of the school principals were positively and significantly associated with the students'
273 level of discipline ($??=.235$, $p<.001$) an indication that ethical instructional leaders have to possess effective
274 communication skills which are highly associated with good students' discipline. This emphasizes the critical role
275 effective ethical communication skills play in achieving the desired students' discipline in secondary schools.

276 14 VI.

277 **15 Conclusions**

278 The study concludes that there is a significant relationship between principals' ethical communication skills and
279 students' discipline in secondary schools. It is argued that possession of ethical communication skills by the
280 school leadership underpins positive behaviours among students. The study also concludes that the perception
281 of teachers, students regarding principal's communication skills is average or below average among principals
282 in West Pokot Sub County. Focusing on building students' discipline is to build noble and positive characters
283 among the students and strengthening modern human resources. The Poor perception of teachers and students
284 can impact negatively on levels of student discipline.

285 16 VII.

286 **17 Recommendations**

287 Effective communication skills are critical today in transforming a society through education. Having leaders
288 who are conscious of the role played by ethical communication skills in schools is a mandatory option. This can
289 be achieved through an elaborate plan of continuous in-service training of current principals and other teachers
290 with an aim of addressing student discipline.

291 On perceptions change, the current principals in West Pokot Sub County need to work towards understanding
292 the reasons of their ethical rating with a view to strengthen their strong points and improve where they are not
strong so has to build a positive attitude from their followers.

293 Figure 1:

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