

# Influence of Non-Teaching Staff on Students' Discipline in Public Secondary Schools in Embu County, Kenya

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**Abstract:** There is general outcry world over in relation to crime which has affected all sectors of development. Educational institutions especially secondary schools are best avenues where youth can be impacted with knowledge and competences for holistic character formation. The study objective was to examine the influence of non-teaching staff on the discipline of students in public secondary schools in Embu County, Kenya. Inculcating discipline among students requires a multi-dimensional approach incorporating other stakeholders. Non-teaching staff in secondary schools interact often with students. They directly or indirectly influence their behaviour. The study adopted Systems theory by Ludwig Von Bettalanffy and Institutional theory by Meyer and Rowan. This study involved descriptive survey design and utilized qualitative research method. Stratified, purposive techniques were used to select the sample size. Data was collected by observation, open-ended questionnaires and in-depth interview. Pretesting of instruments was done to determine validity and reliability. A sample size of 20% was used for population above 50, 30% for any category above 10 but not exceeding 50. Census was used for cases below 10. All principals, one student per school and all non-teaching staff in public secondary schools were targeted. The results were analysed through tables, pie charts and graphs. The findings indicated that non-teaching staff were indirectly involved in discipline issues pertaining the students. The research recommends that non-teaching staff should be trained and directly involved in handling students' discipline cases.

**Keywords:** non-teaching staff, students' discipline, multi-dimensional approach, quality education.

## 1. Introduction

Educational institutions especially secondary schools are best avenues where youth can be impacted with knowledge and competences for holistic development and character formation, (Ngwokabuenui, 2015). It is regrettable that there is moral decadency especially in public secondary schools. Mulwa (2015), recommended that principals in public secondary schools should use collaborative decision-making approach on students' discipline.

### A. Objective

The study was carried out to examine the influence of non-teaching staff on the discipline of students in public secondary schools in Embu County, Kenya.

### B. Statement of the Problem

In the 21st Century, there has been increase in moral decadency among the youth. Some of these cases are caused by the digital platforms such as internet and social media platforms. Most times when crimes are committed in the schools, the blame is placed on the teachers and partially on the non-teaching staff. However, the non-teaching staff are not directly involved in management and administration of institutions but interact more often with the learners. Inculcating discipline among students requires a collaborative approach incorporating other stakeholders. Therefore, they directly or indirectly influence their behaviour. The problem, therefore, is an investigation on influence of non-teaching staff on students' discipline in public secondary schools in Embu County, Kenya.

### C. Literature Review

Systems theory by Ludwig Von Bettalanffy (1950) as quoted by Mahmut (2019) which states that any organization is a single, unified system of interrelated parts or subsystems. Each part of the overall system is dependent on the others and cannot function optimally without them. Behavior is influenced by a variety of factors that work together. Some of the factors that influence behavior are related to family, social friends, economic factors such as environment where one is living. These factors are interdependent and interrelated. An institution is influenced by both internal and external factors that determine the outcome. In the school setting, there are teachers, students and members of the non-teaching staff. Although teachers are charged with the responsibility of teaching and disciplining students, members of the non-teaching staff play a complimentary role that cannot be underrated.

The study employed institution theory by Meyer and Rowan (1977) the environment within the organization has a direct impact on the development of formal organizational structures. Cultural elements, symbols, normative beliefs and other organizational environment features shape institutional structure. This theory was founded by Meyer and Rowan (1977) and later proved to be popular in organisational management. It was applied in various studies including Mohamed (2017) who

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argues that organizational formations depend on “rational myths” or shared beliefs. According to Scott (2004), in order to succeed, institutions should abide by the rules and belief systems that prevail in their environment, whether institutional or organizational. By the words of Meyer and Rowan, 1977, institutional isomorphism, which comprises of both structural and procedural environments, will earn the organization legitimacy. This idea was supported by Saqib *et al.* (2021). Furthermore, organizations are experiencing institutional pressures from their most important industry peers as well as peers in their local community. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and social organizations, for example, can be vulnerable to isomorphic pressures (Marquis *et al.* 2016).

Theorists explain the rationale of organizational contexts and organizational factors through institutional theory and assert that by putting these norms into exercise, institutions become ideal and intensify their longevity. This element ensures the institution's existence. The theory supported the study because institutions have their own distinct culture and norms. Moreover, different categories of schools have varied number of support staff working in different sections. Every school has a unique culture which bind all members of support staff in that institution. Moreover, as these employees continue working together, they build a sense of belongingness to work as a team and promote education standards. It is through the performance of members of support staff, coupled with their care that the basic needs of students are addressed in schools.

The role of non-teaching staff in provision of quality education in secondary level is manifested directly and indirectly depending on the specific staff (Anietie *et al.* 2020). Although by virtue of their job placement, non-teaching staff are expected to play constructive roles in the school, sometimes this cadre may exhibit the potential for negative activities. Among the negative activities which can be perpetrated by non-teaching staff in educational institutions include intentional preparation of bad food, selling of drugs and cigarettes or pilfering of students' food to supplement their income.

Carolyn (2020) recommended talks with family and counsellors in order to create, long term plans to address students' misbehavior as effective way of handling learners' indiscipline. While this method seems to be effective. Students spend most of their time in school than at their homes. Many parents have little time with their children. Therefore, if careful measures are not taken the students are likely to go astray.

## 2. Materials and Methods

### A. Research Design

This study employed descriptive survey design since it allows the researcher to analyse the whole population using a sample as a representation. This research design is considered appropriate for this study since it allows the use of thematic methods to collect data such as questionnaires and interviews, observation, tape recording and document analysis. The design will assist the researcher to obtain a large number of respondents and inspect a wide range of policy implementation issues (Sharma, 2019). Furthermore, as supported by Kothari

(2014) the descriptive survey design will be appropriate because it is concerned with describing, recording, analysing, and interpreting conditions that either exist or existed. In addition, Nworgu (2015) refers to descriptive survey design as one which aims at collecting data on, and describing in a systematic manner the characteristics,

features or facts about a given population.

### B. Location of the Study

The study was conducted in Embu County, which is located to the East of Mt. Kenya, whose pinnacle cuts through the county's eastern boundary. It is surrounded by many counties, including Kirinyaga to the west, Tharaka-Nithi to the north, and Kitui to the East.

### C. Target Population

The target population comprised of the principals, students' representatives and non-teaching staff in public secondary schools in Embu County. Each school is headed by one principal. Hence, all principals in public secondary schools were targeted.

### D. Sampling Procedure and Sample Size

For the purpose of this study, a sample size of 20 percent was used for population above 50 characters as proposed by Khan (2020). The study also drew a sample of 30 percent from any category with the population above 10 but not exceeding 50 characters. Nevertheless, in the case of national schools (two schools), census was used.

This study employed stratified and purposive sampling technique. All public schools were classified according to the categories and types; national boys' schools and national girls' schools, county boys' schools and for girls, and then sub-county schools for both boys and girls (mixed schools). Any school considered for sampling had done Kenya Certificate for Secondary Examination (KCSE) for at least five years. The sample sizes were drawn per category of schools depending on the number in particular categories.

### E. Sampling of Schools

The researcher listed down all the schools according to their categories. More importantly, the representative sample percentage varied from 10 (census) for very small population to 30 percent for large population categories. Public secondary schools were classified as national, extra county, county and sub-county schools (Basic Education Act, 2013). This categorisation and establishment are both analysed in Table 1.

Table 1  
Categories of government secondary schools in Embu

Type of school	Number	Percentage	Sample
National	2	100	Census
Extra County	23	30	7
County	24	30	8
Sub-county County	116	30	35
Total	165		60

### F. Sampling of Principals

Table 2 shows sampling of principals of government secondary schools in Embu. Each school has one principal and

hence their number is equal to the number of schools per each category. Sampling of principals was similar to that of school such that all principals of national schools were selected while those in county and sub-county schools were sampled at thirty percent.

Table 2  
Sampling of public secondary school principals

Category of school	Number of schools	Number of principals	Percentage	Sample
National	2	2	100	Census
Extra county	23	23	30	7
County	24	24	30	7
Sub-county	116	116	30	35
Total	165	165		51

### G. Sampling of Students

For students' population, one senior student (mainly the president) was selected per category of schools through purposeful sampling. Thus, there were a total of 165 students selected through purposeful sampling. The researcher made a deliberate attempt to cover all sub-counties for fair representation and more accurate information.

### H. Sampling of Non-teaching Staff by Category of Secondary Schools

Table 3  
Sampling of students of public secondary schools

Category of school	Number of schools	Number of Students
National	2	2
Extra County	23	23
County	24	24
Sub-county	116	116
Total	165	165

Different categories of secondary schools have varying numbers of non-teaching staff depending on their establishments. Nevertheless, each established public secondary school had its non-teaching staff. In such a situation, schools were classified as outlined under subsection 3.5 in accordance with the Basic Education Act, 2013. From this arrangement, a sample of schools was drawn from each category and then sampling of non-teaching staff was conducted per each category. In this case, schools were selected per category using random sampling.

The sampling of categories of non-teaching staff is analysed in Table 4. Here a sample of 30 percent of non-teaching staff was drawn from national schools. For county and sub-county schools sampling was done at 20 percent as supported by Gay and Airasian (2003) in Khan (2020) who claim perhaps the sample size for descriptive research ought to be approximately 10% to 20% of the population.

Table 4  
Sampling of non-teaching staff by type of school

Type of school	Number in the category	Non-teaching staff establishment per school category	Total number of non-teaching in the school category	Sampling percentage	Sample size
National	2	28	12 (6x2)	30	4
Extra County	23	18	115 (5x23)	20	23
County	24	13	72 (3x24)	20	14
Sub-County	116	6	232 (2x116)	20	46
Total	165		431		87

### I. Instrumentation

Data was collected by using open-ended questionnaires and in-depth interviews. For school principals, data collection was done by use of in-depth interviews while questionnaires were administered to students and non-teaching staff.

### J. Pretesting of Research Instruments

The study was carried out to assist in assessing the quality of data collection instruments in two public secondary schools. Two experts who are the research supervisors from Kenya Methodist University School of Education were consulted to ensure the validity of the findings. In addition, the researcher ascertained that the items adequately covered the research objectives. The results of the pilot study were used to check for and correct any ambiguity.

Tools were piloted in two schools to test their reliability. This process helped to address ambiguities, misunderstandings, or other shortcomings in the final instruments. The research instruments were above 0.7 which is the accepted level based on Cronbach coefficient which is the recommended level for pilot study.

### K. Data Collection Procedure

The researcher applied for a research permit from the NACOSTI after obtaining a letter of introduction from Kenya Methodist University. Permission was also sought from Embu County Commissioner, the County Director of Education and principals of sampled schools to conduct research. The researcher informed the principals of the selected schools using mobile phone and booked appointments to deliver the questionnaires and conduct interviews. The researcher personally visited the selected schools in order to establish personal connection with the school authorities for the purpose of data collection. The researcher then distributed the questionnaires to the participants and once filled they were collected.

### L. Data Analysis

The data collected was analysed in accordance to Taherdoost (2016), where the data was organized into patterns, categories and descriptive units in order to have relationships between them and conclusions were drawn.

### M. Analysis of Qualitative Data

The data were entered into the computer using STATA version 17. The generated results were presented using narratives, tables, percentages, and graphs to facilitate interpretation of the findings. To depict the situation as it was on the ground, narrative and interpretive reports, as well as citations, were written down. All data were strictly interpreted

in relation to the research questions, and conclusions were drawn from the findings in relation to the research objective.

*N. Quantitative Data Analysis*

Questionnaires were sorted out to ensure only the completed ones are analysed while incomplete ones were discarded. The study variables were assigned different codes and defined accordingly before formulating equations or models showing causal relationships between independent and dependent variables. Once coded, various diagnostic tests were conducted to eliminate any type of biasness. Such tests included normality, linearity, multicollinearity, heteroskedasticity and autocorrelation. These tests enabled the researcher to establish the suitability of the collected data in satisfying various assumptions.

Once that is accomplished, hypothesis testing was done through regression analysis using Ordinary Least Square (OLS) Method. The model to be tested is formulated as follows:

$$QE = \alpha + \beta_1 INTS + \beta_2 ENTS + \beta_3 CCIS + \mu \tag{1}$$

Where:

QE - Quality Education

$\alpha$  - Constant

$\beta_{1...4}$  - Coefficient

INTS - Involvement of non-teaching staff with students

ENTS - Effect of non-teaching staff on students

CCIS - Collaboration causes with indisciplined students

$\mu$  - Disturbance Term

The coded data inputs were fed into the computer statistical package using appropriate commands, and through this process, the output data was analysed and the results interpreted.

*O. Ethical Consideration*

The researcher strictly observed all legal and ethical considerations as expected in conducting research. The researcher sought permission to conduct study from NACOSTI and other relevant authorities.

**3. Results and Discussion**

*A. Response on Influence of Non-teaching Staff on the Students' Discipline*

From the table 5, about 71% of the principals show that non-teaching staff have a strong effect on interaction among the students and administration while about 29% indicated that non-teaching staff have a weak effect on the latter. From the findings, it is clear that there is need to involve non-teaching staff in administration and management of learners' discipline.

Digitalization has become a daily indulgence in today's modern society. Most non-teaching staff members have little knowledge of the digital media programmes and use. About 67% of the non-teaching staff were found to have weak knowledge on the use of different digital media platforms, as only about 22% had strong knowledge on the digital media use. This shows that the rate of digital illiteracy among members of the non-teaching staff is high in the modern digitalization era.

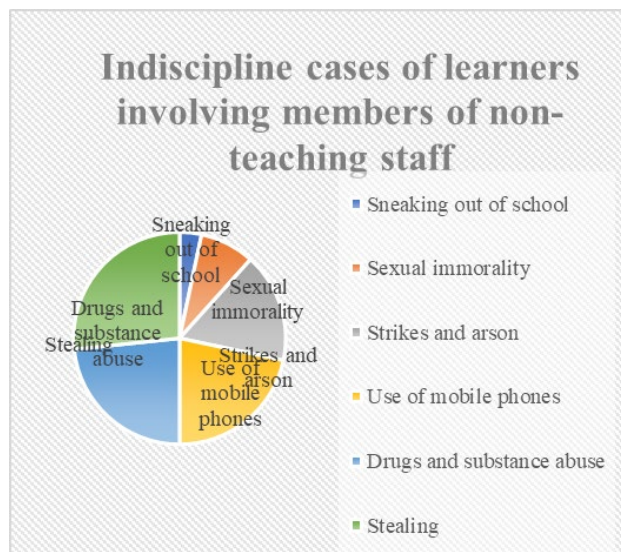


Fig. 1. Indiscipline cases of learners involving members of non-teaching staff

Table 5

Effect of non-teaching staff on interaction among students and administration and knowledge on digital emergence issues			
Effect of non-teaching staff on interaction among students and administration	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative percent
Weakest	4	6.67	6.67
Weak	13	21.67	28.33
Strong	35	58.33	86.67
Strongest	8	13.33	100.00
Total	60	100.00	
Knowledge on digital media platforms			
	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative percent
Weakest	5	8.33	8.33
Weak	40	66.67	75.00
Strong	13	21.67	96.67
Strongest	2	3.33	100.00
Total	60	100.00	

Table 6

Indiscipline cases of learners involving members of non-teaching staff				
Common indiscipline cases	Freq.	Percent	Pie chart ratio	Cumulative percent
Sneaking out of school	2	3.33	12	3.33
Sexual immorality	5	8.33	30	11.66
Strikes and arson	10	16.67	60	28.33
Use of mobile phones	13	21.67	78	50.00
Drugs and substance abuse	14	23.33	84	73.33
Stealing	16	26.67	96	100.00
Total	60	100.00	360	

From the Fig. 1, the common cases of indiscipline among students such as drugs and substance abuse are high at 23%. Members of non-teaching staff; sometimes sneak in drugs and allow students to peddle and use. Furthermore, some of the non-teaching employees use those drugs hence acting as bad role models to the students.

The highest crime committed is stealing of items which is at 27% rate. From the interviews conducted, most items are sneaked out through mobile phone connections, which is also a school crime at 22%, with the knowledge of security guards and sometimes the guards assist in looking for market for such items. Commonly stolen items are bedcovers, calculators, dictionaries and shoes. In addition, use of mobile phones in schools is on rise because some members of support staff hide the gadgets for the students or assist the students with theirs.

Table 7  
Rating the contribution of different categories of non-teaching staff to students' discipline in secondary schools

Accounts clerk	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative percent
Weakest	25	12.82	12.82
Weak	9	4.62	17.44
Strong	74	37.95	55.38
Strongest	87	44.62	100.00
Total	195	100.00	
Secretaries	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative percent
Weakest	15	7.69	7.69
Weak	8	4.10	11.79
Strong	85	43.59	55.38
Strongest	87	44.62	100.00
Total	195	100.00	
Librarians	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative percent
Weakest	61	31.28	31.28
Weak	9	4.62	35.90
Strong	53	27.18	63.08
Strongest	72	36.92	100.00
Total	195	100.00	
Cooks	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative percent
Weakest	6	3.08	3.08
Weak	6	3.08	6.15
Strong	48	24.62	30.77
Strongest	135	69.23	100.00
Total	195	100.00	
Lab technicians	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative percent
Strong	84	43.08	43.08
Strongest	111	56.92	100.00
Total	195	100.00	
Security officers	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative percent
Weak	18	9.23	9.23
Strong	60	30.77	40.00
Strongest	117	60.00	100.00
Total	195	100.00	

The rating of the contribution of accounts clerk to students' discipline in secondary schools by sampled students is shown on Table 7. Based on the results from research analysis, 83 percent (161) of the respondents highly rated the accounts clerks' influence on students' discipline in secondary schools. The remaining 34 (17%) student respondents who were

sampled, agreed that the accounts clerks' influence to students' discipline in public secondary schools was weak. This implies that although the accounts clerk deals with money in school, it is imperative that this non-teaching staff officer manages students' discipline as well.

Abstracting from the table 7, the analysis of the rating of the contribution of the secretary to students' discipline in sampled public secondary schools in Embu County, 88 percent (172 of 195) of the students sampled agreed that secretaries were quite instrumental in maintaining their discipline in schools. Indeed, only 12 percent (23) of the respondents felt that school secretaries were not concerned in their discipline in school. This implies that the secretary, as a member of non-teaching staff in public secondary schools in Embu County, has a high influence in students' discipline.

Drawing from the findings, the rating on the contribution of the librarian to students' discipline in selected secondary schools in Embu County, as shown on Table 7, 64 percent of the respondents rated the contribution of school librarians to students discipline quite strongly. Nevertheless, 36 percent of the respondents indicated that the role played by the librarians in shaping students' discipline was somehow less important. This implies that with the majority of the students indicating that librarians have a role to play in shaping discipline, then this cadre need to be more involved in instilling discipline in secondary schools.

Table 7 shows the rating of the contribution of the cooks to students' discipline in secondary schools in Embu County. The evidence indicates that 94 percent of the respondents admitted that school cooks have a role to play in students discipline among secondary schools. At the same time 6 percent of the respondents indicated that cooks play a weak role in moulding the discipline of students in Embu County.

Table 7 gives the rating of the contribution of the lab technicians to students' discipline in secondary schools in Embu County. It is evident from the table that all the selected students (100%) ranked lab technicians highly in involvement in students' discipline among schools in the County. This implies that lab technicians play a pivotal role in moulding students discipline in secondary schools in Embu County.

Table 7 finally gives the rating of the contribution of the security officers to students' discipline in secondary schools in Embu County. It is evident from the table that all the selected students (91%) ranked security officers highly in involvement in students' discipline among schools in the County. This implies that security personnel play a major role in moulding students discipline in secondary schools in Embu County.

This agrees with June (2023) who argues that support staff in schools comprise a diverse range of roles and responsibilities. They include office assistants, cleaners, cafeteria workers, bus

Table 8  
Causes of collaboration of non-teaching staff with indiscipline students

Collaboration causes of non-teaching staff with indiscipline students	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative percent
Lack of involvement in administration and management	34	19.00	19.00
Inadequate training on digital literacy	43	24.02	43.02
Poor working conditions and unclear terms of service	46	25.70	68.72
Underpayment	56	31.28	100.00
Total	179	100.00	

drivers, school nurses, counsellors, librarians, IT specialists, and many others. Each member of the support staff contributes uniquely to the school's functionality, providing essential services that contribute to the overall success of the institution.

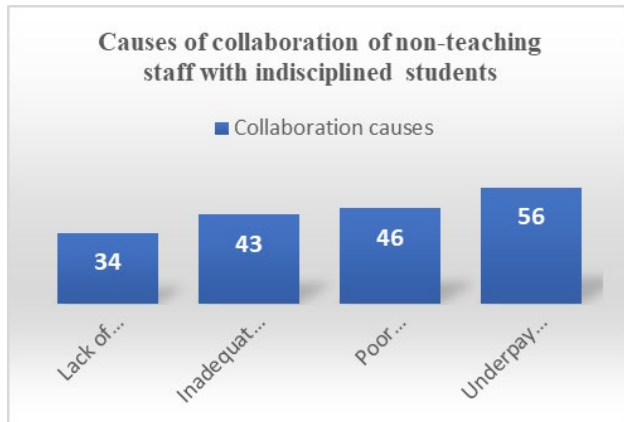


Fig. 2. Causes of collaboration of non-teaching staff with indiscipline students

The Fig. 2, shows various causes of indulgence in indiscipline activities with the students. Non-teaching staff being the least paid cadre in public secondary schools with 31.28% followed by poor working conditions (25.7%), digital illiteracy (24.02%) and lack of involvement in school discipline management (19%) respectively, some result to illegal sources for extra income.

#### B. Discussion of the Findings

Common criminal activities that involve the students and non-teaching staff include; the use of mobile phones, sneaking in and use of drugs and substance, stealing and selling of stolen items from learners such as dictionaries, calculators and shoes, sexual immorality and sneaking in and out of school compound. Indiscipline in public secondary schools are not only perpetuated by the cooks and the security personnel as posed to be but also the laboratory technicians and librarians who are the least suspected. This is in support with Anietie et al (2020) who argues that the non-teaching cadre can deviate from their expected duty performance to collaborating with learners to conduct immoral activities in schools such as smuggling of drugs.

Unguided use of digital media and internet has led to increase in cases of sexual immorality in secondary schools especially in boarding secondary schools. This includes rise to corrigible Truth-or-Dare (ToD) games which are played to promote irresponsible confidence by daring each other to engage in unhealthy activities for instance daring one to offer sexual favours to the other, promoting Lesbianism, Gayism, Bisexual, Trans-sexual, Quay behaviours (LGTBQ+) which is adversely affecting learners and academic performance as well as their behaviour morally, socially and emotionally.

Some reasons for collaboration of non-teaching staff with indiscipline students cited were that this cadre is underpaid yet overworked. There are no clear terms of service and poor working conditions hence lack motivation. They lack adequate training on use of internet and social media platforms. They are not directly involved in administration and management of learners' discipline issues.

#### 4. Conclusion

From the findings it is evident that there is a lot of interaction between the members of the non-teaching staff and students. Non-teaching staff can prevent unrest in schools, if actively involved in the administration of the school.

Non-teaching staff can influence the discipline of the learner negatively if they are not motivated, recognized and appreciated by the employer, for instant if they are not well remunerated and trained in digital platforms.

#### 5. Recommendations

The school board of management, county governments and ministry for education should review policies on terms and conditions of employment of non-teaching staff in order to recognize and appreciate their roles. The non-teaching staff should be trained on how to handle digital media in order to address digital emerging issues. The administration should identify areas where non-teaching staff can best be involved in discipline management and be held accountable. Moral education bodies should reinforce their efforts to ensure acceptable moral training is imparted to learners. Further studies should be carried out in relation to roles of non-teaching staff in schools.

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