

Principals' Enforcement of Rules and Regulations and its influence on the Psychological Well-Being of Orphaned Students in Public Secondary Schools in Makueni County, Kenya

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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.

Keywords: School Principals, Rule Enforcement, Psychological Well-Being, Orphaned Students

I. INTRODUCTION

Principals play a crucial role in upholding and reinforcing rules within schools through a multifaceted approach. They start by clearly communicating the rules and expectations to students, parents, and teachers, ensuring that everyone is aware of and understands the regulations in place. Principals lead by example, demonstrating their commitment to the rules through consistent adherence. When violations occur, they enforce consequences that are fair and proportionate, fostering a culture of accountability. According to Hermenau et al. (2015) principals also focus on education, organizing workshops and seminars to explain the rationale behind the rules and the potential consequences of breaking them. They may also implement reward systems to celebrate and encourage positive behaviour, engage parents in supporting rule adherence, and collaborate closely with teachers to ensure consistent enforcement in classrooms.

Furthermore, principals recognize that some rule violations may be symptomatic of underlying issues and provide counselling and support when necessary. Periodic review and adaptation of rules help ensure their ongoing relevance and effectiveness in maintaining a safe and productive school environment. This way, law and order are

maintained in the school environments as shown by Lupton and Jones (2002). Therefore, principals employ a blend of communication, modelling, enforcement, education, rewards, collaboration, support, and ongoing evaluation to reinforce rules within their schools. This comprehensive approach helps create an environment where rules are well-understood, respected, and followed by all members of the school community, contributing to a positive and productive learning environment.

Strict and consistent enforcement of rules and regulations by school principals can lead to a reduction in disciplinary issues and promote a more orderly and safe school environment. Findings by Cardona (2014) indicate that principals should ensure they inform stakeholders about the policies and procedures. Therefore, there is a need for the community to have detailed information about the rules created by school principals and what is contained in the discipline protocols of the school. Additionally, learners and their guardians should be furnished about what to expect when certain rules are breached. The implementation of regulations should also be made clear because it affects students' emotional development (Durlak et al. 2011). Therefore, it is important that school community understands rules, expectations, and potential disciplinary actions.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The effectiveness of classroom management relies heavily on the collaboration between teachers, students, and school principals. Principals play a crucial role in shaping the overall educational environment, which includes the creation and enforcement of classroom rules and procedures that benefit both teachers and learners, especially orphaned children (Fekadu, 2019). In this context, principals support teachers in the development and implementation of effective classroom rules and procedures. They provide leadership and guidance in establishing a positive and supportive school culture that prioritizes both academic progress and the psychological well-being of students (Desravines et al., 2016; Markholt et al., 2018). Principals can encourage teachers to consider the specific needs of orphaned children when crafting rules and procedures, ensuring that these students receive the necessary support and understanding.

Furthermore, principals are responsible for fostering an environment where teachers feel empowered to address classroom management challenges (Marks & Printy, 2023). They should provide resources, training, and professional development opportunities for teachers to refine their classroom management skills. Principals can also lead by example in enforcing school-wide policies and rules consistently, demonstrating to both teachers and students the importance of a fair and equitable learning environment. The role of principals in supporting effective classroom management extends to providing leadership, resources, and a conducive school culture that prioritizes the well-being of all learners, including orphaned children (Matsumura et al., 2019). Their involvement in the creation and enforcement of classroom rules and procedures is instrumental in promoting a positive and productive learning environment.

Despite the significant role that principals play in reinforcing rules and regulations within schools, 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.

1.2 Research Objective

(i) 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.

1.3 Research Hypothesis

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between principals' enforcement of rules and regulations and the psychological well-being of orphaned students in public secondary schools in Makueni County.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Review

2.1.1 Assertive Discipline Theory

This study was guided by the Assertive Discipline Theory which was proposed by Canter and Canter (2001) to address significant issues with psychological well-being management which affects students' learning and achievement. In 1976, the Canters introduced the fundamental principles and methods of Assertive Discipline, a classroom management theory that quickly became a valuable resource for teachers dealing with disruptive behaviour. Over the years, the Canters have continued to refine their approach (Charles & Senter, 2005). The theory asserts that

the principal should create a discipline plan with 4-5 rules as strategies for discipline management and specific consequences by first identifying rules and expectations and presenting them to students, ensuring that they are understood. Further, according to Canter and Canter (2001), the principal is required to use positive repetition to reinforce the rules by focusing on reinforcing positive behaviours rather than punishing the negative ones.

Assertive Discipline Theory suggests a five-step disciplinary hierarchy of escalating consequences when rules are broken. The first infraction involves giving a warning to the student; the second infraction gives the student a ten-minute time out while in the third one, the student is given a fifteen-minute time out. In the fourth infraction, the students' parents are called. Finally, the fifth infraction requires that the student is sent to the deputy head teachers' office. In the context of this study, this theory fits this study because all schools have rules and regulations or ethos which must be adhered to by all students including orphaned ones (Charles & Senter, 2005).

The theory has been used in a study by Kimkena (2007) to assess the impact of Assertive Classroom Discipline on student social skills. The findings showed that when students were subjected to disciplinary measures they improved social behaviour, courtesy, active listening, and interacting skills. Additionally, attention increased, while bad habits such as name calling, violence, gossiping, and exaggeration of accidental encounters decreased. Other studies by Nicholls and Houghton (1995), Aliakbari and Bozorgmanesh (2015) and Thilagaratnam and Yamat, (2021) affirm that the implementation of concepts of the theory helped decrease class disruption and improve students' academic performance.

The validity of the Assertive Discipline theory is supported by multiple studies, including Kimkena's (2007), which found that its implementation resulted in notable improvements in student social skills and reduced disruptive behaviors. Furthermore, corroborating research conducted by Nicholls and Houghton (1995), Aliakbari and Bozorgmanesh (2015), and Thilagaratnam and Yamat (2021) underscores the theory's effectiveness in decreasing classroom disruptions and enhancing students' academic performance. These consistent findings across multiple studies provide strong evidence for the validity and practical applicability of the Assertive Discipline theory in educational settings. In other words, the management of discipline of orphaned students depends largely on the practices such as strategies of enforcement of rules and regulations, stakeholders' involvement, counselling strategies and mentorship programmes adopted by secondary school principals.

The Assertive Discipline theory's emphasis on assertive classroom discipline aligns with the study's focus on principals' discipline management strategies. The theory provides a framework for understanding how principals' approaches to discipline, such as setting clear expectations and consequences, can impact students' behaviour and, consequently, their psychological well-being. Secondly, the theory's emphasis on creating a structured and respectful classroom environment resonates with the study's concern for orphaned students' psychological well-being. Principals who implement elements of Assertive Discipline may create an environment that is conducive to emotional support and security for orphaned students, potentially mitigating the psychological challenges they face. Lastly, the theory's emphasis on consistency in discipline practices can be relevant to the study, as it may help in assessing the effectiveness of principals' strategies in providing a stable and predictable environment for orphaned students, which is crucial for their psychological well-being. Therefore, the Assertive Discipline theory provides a theoretical framework that can inform and guide the investigation into how principals' discipline management strategies influence the psychological well-being of orphaned students in public secondary schools, helping to assess the impact of specific strategies and their implications for students' mental health.

2.2 Empirical Review

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 (Grissom et al., 2021). 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. Therefore, principals who prioritise these principles create a sense of trust among students, teachers, and parents. Trust is an essential element of any healthy learning environment, as it fosters a feeling of security and predictability (Sugut, 2020). 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.

With well-enforced rules and regulations, a positive school climate for academic achievement is created. The reason is that rules guarantee security and students are more likely to excel in their studies when they feel safe, respected, and supported emotionally. Positive discipline also shapes student behaviour (Tatiana et al., 2022). When students know what is expected of them and believe that consequences will be applied equitably, they are more likely

to exhibit positive behaviour. It should be noted that fair enforcement of rules and regulations establishes clear expectations. Students understand the boundaries and the consequences of their actions, which helps them make informed choices. Secondly, consistent enforcement holds students accountable for their actions. They learn that their behaviour has consequences, both positive and negative, which encourages responsible decision-making. Thirdly, when there are effective rules that regulate activities within the school, students are more likely to resolve disputes through appropriate channels rather than resorting to disruptive or aggressive behaviour (Eze & Victor, 2022). Therefore, a conflict-resolution framework is created through rules enforcement.

The implementation of rules and regulations by principals is also beneficial to students, especially orphaned learners and those who come from challenging backgrounds. For instance, discipline contributes to the social and emotional growth of children (Gregory & Fergus, 2017). The reason is that when students feel that rules are applied fairly, they develop social and emotional skills such as empathy, self-regulation, and impulse control. They learn to navigate interpersonal relationships effectively. Through rule enforcement, principals are able to role model effectively. The reason is that such administrators set an example for students. Therefore, learners are more likely to emulate the behaviours and values exhibited by principals, leading to improved conduct throughout the school community.

Lupton and Jones (2002) emphasize the critical role of effective schools in promoting inclusive practices, with a particular focus on aspects like clear school rules and regulations, collaborative leadership, and exemplary practices. These school rules and regulations serve as a guide for expected standards of psychological well-being, not only for students but also for teachers. In support of these observations, Adams (2019) conducted a study in Austria, which corroborated the significance of school rules and regulations as tools for cultivating good conduct among students. Such regulations foster self-control, orderliness, positive psychological well-being, and a culture of obedience to school authority (Adams, 2019).

School rules and regulations are believed by many scholars to play an important role in shaping the psychological wellbeing of the student, especially in addressing life challenges. Ziile et al. (2021) highlight that rules and regulations in schools tend to equip students, whether orphaned or not, the right skills in meeting challenges of life. Therefore, without school rules and regulations that instil discipline and positive behaviours in students, orphans and other students cannot meet life's challenges and may end up being failures in the society. An organization or institution cannot achievement any of its goals if the members of the organization are not discipline in their conduct (Simba et al., 2016).

In Kenyan public schools, lack of resources is a common problem, especially in remote regions like Makueni County (Kitulu & Kosura, 2015). The efficacy of disciplinary management techniques might be hampered by a lack of funds, overcrowded classrooms, and subpar facilities. Due to these restrictions, principals may feel forced to use disciplinary measures, which may be detrimental to the psychological health of orphaned pupils. It is commonly known that Kenyan public schools have high teacher-to-student ratios (Cheloti, 2016). This might make it extremely challenging for teachers to provide orphaned pupils with the specific attention they might need. To prevent orphaned kids from being disproportionately impacted, discipline management solutions must be developed with this contextual difficulty in mind.

To determine whether rules and regulations in school lead to discipline for the student, it is vital to consider the role of the teacher or the principal in this case. A study by Konstantinou et al. (2022) reveals that the teacher usually has the discretion of establishing rules and regulations in which the student should follow and the ultimate behaviour of the student usually lies at the responsibility of the teacher. This means the discipline of the student in school, whether orphaned or not, depends on the execution of the rules and regulations by the teacher or the relevant authority. Despite the critical role teachers or senior administrative officials play in schools in regards to rules and regulations, disorder and danger in school environments are still prevalent challenges in many schools across the globe. In places like Chicago, New York, Washington and Detroit, student violence is very common in high truancy schools despite strict rules and regulations enforced by the institutions' senior heads (Ngwokabuenui, 2015).

Martin (2021) emphasize that the two fundamental components of school life for any student is authority and discipline. Whether students follow the authority and become discipline entire depends on the way school rules and regulations are established and implemented. A study by Gounko (2013) reveals that sometimes students are more likely to follow rules and regulations in school if they are included in the creation and implementation of the school rules. Involving students in the creation and implementation of school rules and regulations helps builds their character and personality in their respective careers later on in life, thereby, demonstrating significant influence of their psychological wellbeing as a result.

While rules and regulations play an important role in influencing the psychological wellbeing of students in general, it is also established that rules and regulations that hinder the freedom of students can have negative consequence on the students' wellbeing. Based on a study by Manaf et al. (2017), school rules and regulations should

not be too restrictive for students because restrictive rules can end up being unrealistic and ineffective in the end of the day. Principals that are too restrictive in their enforcement of rules and regulations within the school premise can make the life of the student hard causing resistance and disobedience at the end of the day. For an orphan student in secondary school, this is very common as unrealistic constraints and struggles, as a result of excessive rules and regulations, can cause distress and lead to disobedience as a result.

For many scholars, the reason for the rampant student disobedience and disorderliness in schools, especially in African settings, can be attributed to the lack of proper regulations within the continent. According to Mulqueeny et al. (2020), at least 246 million school-going children and adolescents experience violence every year in school. Although most of the schools across the Sub-Sahara Africa region have established some form of rules and regulations, the enforcement of these rules and regulations are usually weak or non-existent creating room for student indiscipline and violence within the school premise. For an orphan student, this is unconducive learning environment that can eventually harm the student psychologically and health wise. Therefore, enforcement of rules and regulations do have an impact on the psychological wellbeing of orphan students in secondary and it is evident with the negative outcome as a result of the lack of implementation of these rules and regulations across African schools.

In places like South Africa, student violence as a result of inefficient enforcement of rules and regulations tend to manifest in form of psychological violence instead of physical violence. Because rules and regulations in schools are not properly enforced, students psychologically torment each other, especially in schools with larger student populations and in urban areas (Jacobs, 2013). This means that without rules and regulations, students are bound to exhibit bad behaviours that are bound to affect the psychological wellbeing of the rest of the students. Orphan students are bound to be drawn into these bad behaviours, especially after going through the psychological trauma of losing a parent or parents in the past.

While rules and regulations are the backbone of stability and effective learning in schools, especially in places like Africa, lack of infrastructure and resources can exacerbate social cohesion and increase the chances of student disobedience and violence. Schools with better physical learning environments tend to encourage social cohesion among students and increase chances of students' following the rules and regulations (Barrett et al., 2019). Inadequate infrastructure and resources within an institution can break the social cohesion that allows for effective rules and regulation implementation process. Students are bound to follow the rules and regulations that lead to disciplined behaviour and psychological wellbeing if the learning environment is conducive enough. Any element of frustration within the learning environment can alter the behaviour of the students even if rules and regulations are in place.

Another crucial factor that limits the influence of rules and regulation enforcement in schools on the psychological wellbeing of students, especially orphaned students, is the authoritarian nature of schools in Africa. The reason why most African schools experience disobedience and violence among students despite the rules and regulations in place is the authoritarian bent of governance in these schools. However, a study by Ombaka (2015) reveals that students tend to exhibit positive values and school management tend to improve when students are allowed in the decision making process. Rules and regulations in schools do not work if the authoritarian nature of schooling, especially in schools across Africa, is the norm. Kyaruzi (2022) reveal that orphans are prone to psychosocial distress than non-orphan peers, especially if the environment they are in is hostile.

Financial constraints have been one of the biggest contributors to the declining psychological wellbeing of orphaned students in secondary schools across Kenya. Orphan students are more prone to psychological trauma if they cannot be get school fees to continue even if the rules and regulations of the institution are ideal. According to Oyuga and Aluka (2016), orphan students have to constantly leave school or blocked from attending classrooms if they cannot afford to pay fees on time or experience severe hardship. Even if the principals enforce the rules and regulations of the school, orphans constantly feel left out when there are financial constraints within their educational process, thereby, reducing their psychological wellbeing in school in the long run. Some orphan students end up having low self-esteem and confidence in their studies, thus causing them to dropout as a result.

On the other hand, lack of emotional support systems has a more severe impact than rules and regulations among orphaned students in secondary schools across Kenya. High psychological wellbeing of students in schools is significantly influenced by the emotional support system these students have either within the school or outside the school. A study by Oyedele et al. (2016) reveals orphans are less likely to perform well in class since they lack the basic needs such as love from parents to motivate them to learn and succeed in school. These orphaned students have to go through distress alone without proper guidance, which severely impact their psychological wellbeing while in school in the long run. Rules and regulations that do not cover these aspects of the school system or student's life do not mean much when it comes to improving the psychological wellbeing of orphaned students in the long-term.

One of the biggest barriers to the relationship between school rules and psychological wellbeing of orphaned students is stigmatization. Bano et al. (2019) orphaned children are often looked down upon because of their situation and this tend to affect their psychological wellbeing in the long run, no matter the situation. This means orphaned

students are rarely affected by the rules and regulations of the school, unless the rules and regulations specifically discourage any form of discrimination and stigmatization from the institutions or other students within the institutions. In Africa, stigmatization and discrimination are so widespread among various institutions, including learning institutions; some orphaned students are diagnosed with psychiatric disorders as a result. This is evident in Tanzania where 70 percent of orphaned teenagers experience some form of discrimination while it is common for orphans to be abused in Eastern Zimbabwe (Hermenau et al., 2015).

Despite the enforcement of rules and regulations, orphaned students are more likely to face psychological difficulties compared to non-orphaned students because of the trauma and loss they experienced in the past. Christopher and Mosha (2021) argue that the loss of a parent or parents usually affects the psychosocial wellbeing of an orphaned child, especially when the orphaned children are under the care of unskilled guardian. Therefore, rules and regulations enforced in schools by the principal does not totally improve the psychological wellbeing of orphaned students if the rules and regulations does not address the trauma and loss these orphaned students experience. As a formal and informal training, education is a lifelong process that begins at home and continues in school (Fekadu, 2019).

The scenario is replicated in Makueni County with some of the students lost their lives. However, Kindiki (2019) has not articulated how the enforcement of different school rules and regulations influence the psychological well-being of orphaned students in public secondary schools.

In counties such as Kisumu County, fire outbreaks have been on the rise despite many secondary schools enforcing strict rules and regulations towards their students. Muasya (2021) reveal that the leading cause of fire outbreaks in public secondary schools in Kisumu County, Kenya and other parts of the country is arson. Although most of these secondary schools where fire outbreaks are common have strict rules and regulations, majority of arson incidents in secondary schools are attributed to rogue students. Arson reports caused by students were reported to have reached a total of 750 across most secondary schools in Kenya between 2008 and 2018 (Cooper, 2021). Most of these incidents led to loss of lives among the students indicating the severity of the situation in many secondary schools across Kenya. Therefore, rules and regulations are not enough to ensure the psychological wellbeing of students in secondary schools, especially orphans.

While rules and regulation enforcement still plays an important role in the influence of the psychological wellbeing of students or orphaned students in Kenyan secondary schools, the learning environment can also have a significant impact on the psychological wellbeing of the student. For instance, fire outbreaks as a result of arson committed by students are usually attributed to curriculum pressures rather than rules and regulations that control students' behaviour across secondary schools in Kenya (Elizabeth, 2014). The pressure from intensified curriculum creates anxiety and unnecessary stress among students that eventually breaks the social cohesion in secondary schools, thus leading to outbreak of fires and arson cases in Kenya. Therefore, rules and regulations enforcement by the principal in secondary schools do have an impact on the psychological wellbeing of the orphaned student, but there are other factors to put into consideration.

III. METHODOLOGY

This study employed a descriptive correlational research design to examine the relationship between strategy implementation and organizational performance. Conducted in Makueni County, the study targeted 1,979 respondents, including principals, teacher-counselors, and orphaned students from 393 public secondary schools. The sample size was 333 respondents selected through stratified and purposive sampling techniques. 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.

IV. FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

4.1 Findings

4.1.1 Response Rate

The respondents who participated in this study were 66 principals, 169 teacher-counsellors and 98 orphaned students in public secondary schools in Makueni County, Kenya. The response rate was presented in Table 1.



Table 1
Questionnaires Return Rate

Respondents	Sample	Returned	Return Rate
Principals	66	27	40.9%
Teacher-counsellors	169	148	87.6%
Orphaned Students	98	90	91.8%
Total	333	265	79.6%

The questionnaires return rate as presented in Table 1 show that 40.9% of the principals, 87.6% of teachers and 91.8% of the orphaned students participated in the study. Overall, the response rate was 79.6%. Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) observe that a 50 percent return rate is adequate for analysis and reporting. A response rate of 60 percent is good and a response rate of 70 percent and over is very good. The response rate for this study was therefore very good since it was over 70 percent. This would provide the required information for purposes of data analysis hence this could enhance sample representation and meaningful generalization.

4.1.2 Principals Enforcement of Rules/Regulations

Additionally, data on the distribution of gender and levels of principals’ enforcement of rules and regulations was collected. The results are summarised in Figure 1.

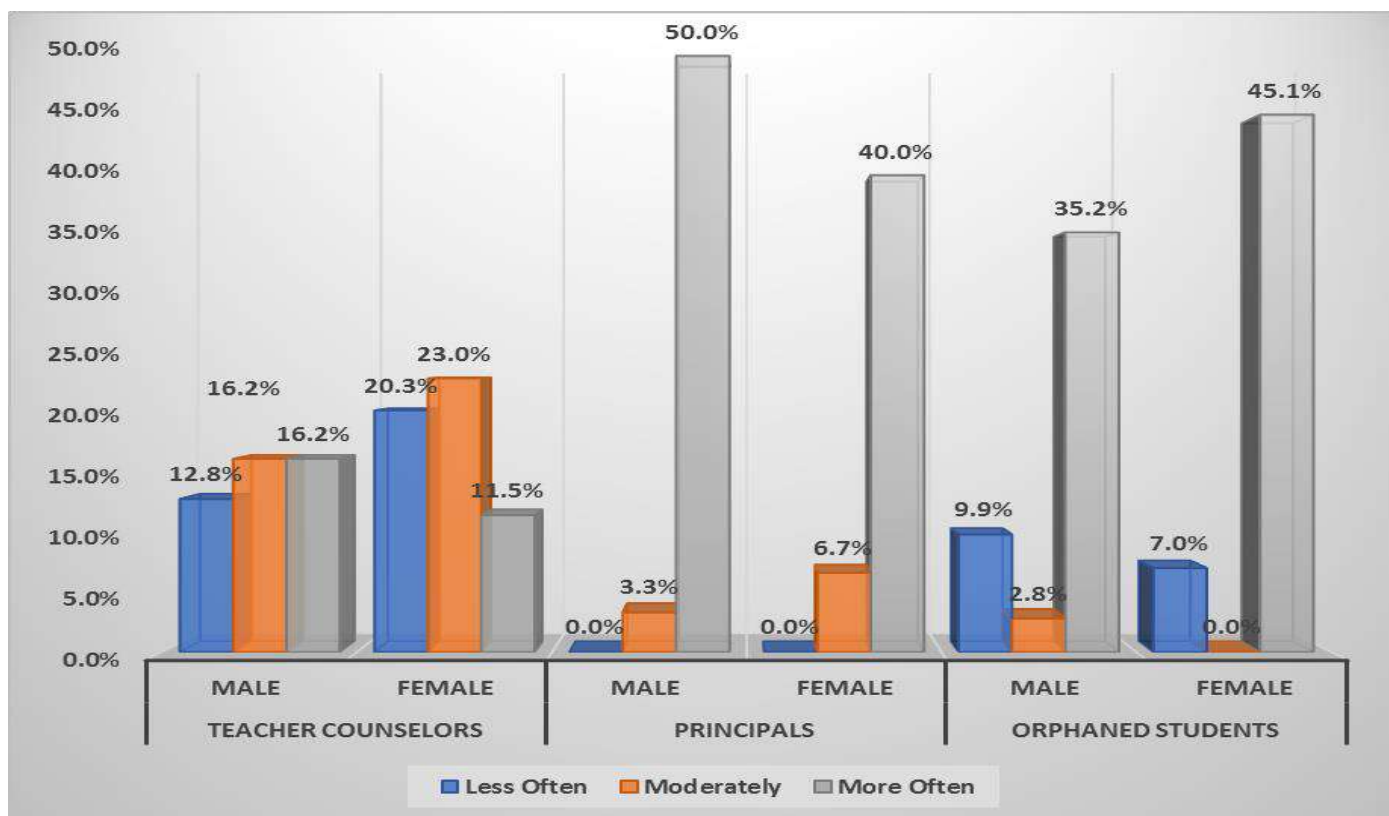


Figure 1
Distribution of Respondents across Gender and Levels of Principals Enforcement of Rules/Regulations

As per the data, 50% male and 40% female principals engaged in the enforcement of rules more often. Also, 3.30% male and 6.7% female principals engaged in the enforcement of rules moderately. Finally, no female or male principal ever engaged in the enforcement of rules. Additionally, principals more often dealt with 16.2% male and 11.5% female teacher counsellors in the enforcement of rules. They moderately dealt with 16.2% male and 23.0% female teacher counsellors. Less often, the principals dealt with 12.8% male and 0.0% female teacher counsellors. Principals also more often dealt with 35.2% male and 45.1% female orphaned students in the enforcement of rules. They moderately dealt with 2.8% male and 0.0% female orphaned students. Less often, the principals dealt with 9.9% male and 7.0% female orphaned students.

4.1.3 Psychological Wellbeing of Orphaned Students in Public Secondary Schools in Makueni County

Teacher counsellors were requested to rate the psychological well-being of orphaned students. In this case, the teachers were supposed to assess and report orphaned students' well-being in terms of purpose in life, positive relations, autonomy, and self-acceptance. The responses are summarised in Figure 2.

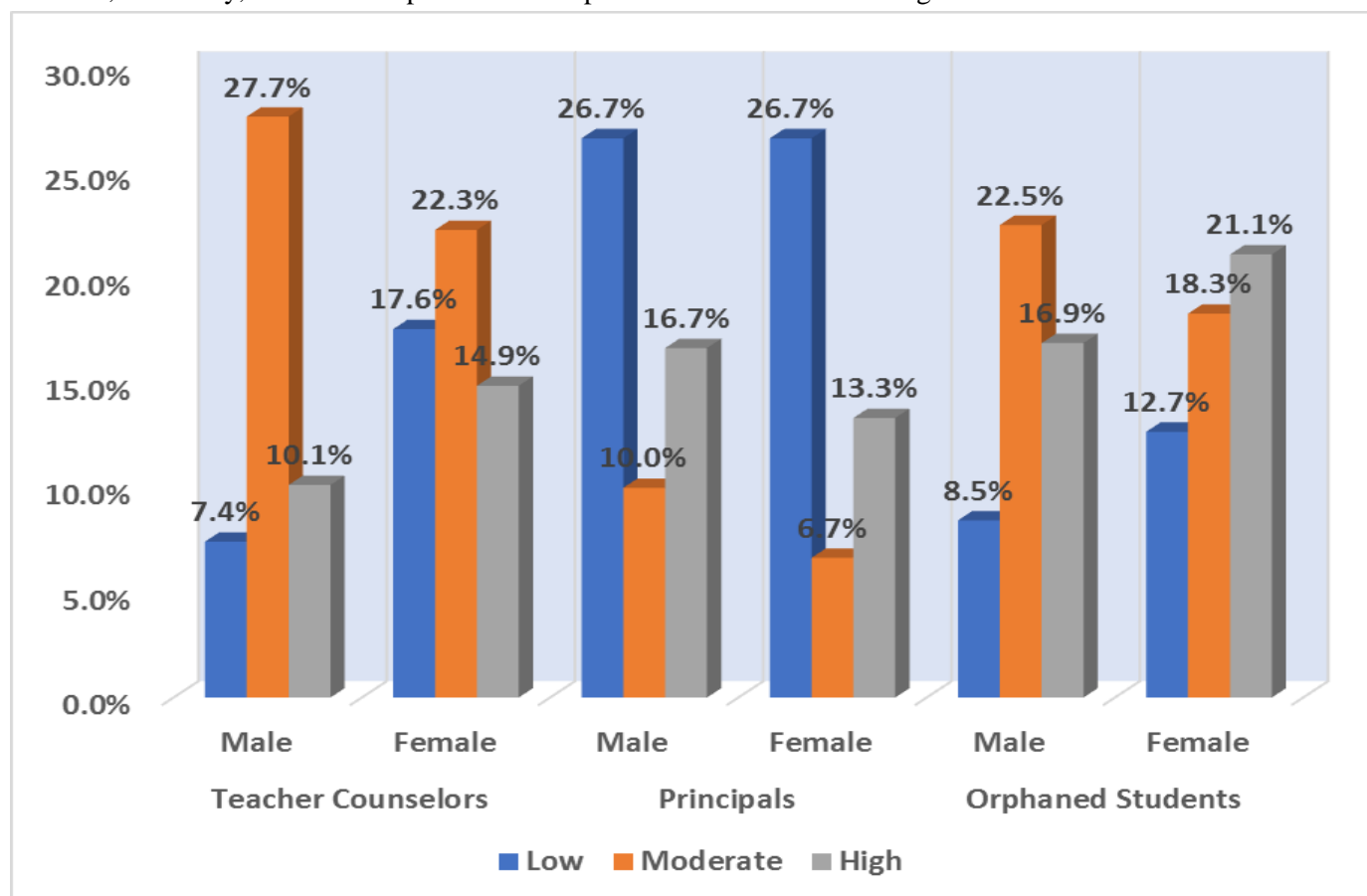


Figure 2
Overall Ratings of Orphaned Students' Psychological Wellbeing as Rated by Teacher Counsellors, Principals and Orphaned Students

Figure 2 shows that the teacher counsellors rated the male orphaned students' psychological well-being as moderate (27.7%), low (7.4%), and high (10.1%). The teachers also rated female orphaned students' psychological well-being as moderate (22.3%), low (17.6%), and high (14.9%). Principals rated the male orphaned students' psychological well-being as moderate (10.0%), low (26.7%), and high (16.7%). The principals also rated female orphaned students' psychological well-being as moderate (6.7%), low (26.7%), and high (13.3%). Male orphaned students rated their own psychological well-being as moderate (22.5%), low (8.5%), and high (16.9%). Finally, female orphaned students rated their own psychological well-being as moderate (18.3%), low (12.7%), and high (21.1%).

Responding to the question on the frequency of enforcing adherence to school rules and regulations as a disciplinary management strategy in your secondary school, the principals reported that they often enforced adherence to school rules and regulations. The same response was obtained from the students who reported that, the principals always enforces adherence to school rules and regulations as a disciplinary management strategy through the prefects and the teachers on duty.

Responding to the question on, "what is the influence of your enforcement of rules and regulations on the psychological well-being of orphaned students in your secondary school?", 20 principals said,

"School rules and regulations are among the strategies designed to instil good conduct of students, self-control, orderliness, good psychological well-being and obedience to school authority".

Responding to the same question, 69 students said, *"Enforcing the school rules and regulations is important since the rules prescribe the standard of psychological well-being expected of the students."* These responses show that the principals' enforcement of rules and regulations had a positive influence on the psychological well-being of orphaned students in public secondary schools.



4.1.4 Correlation Analysis

The researcher tested hypothesis H_{01} which stated that;

H_{01} : *There is no significant relationship between principals’ enforcement of rules and regulations and the psychological well-being of orphaned students in public secondary schools in Makueni County.*

To test this hypothesis, Pearson’s Correlation coefficient was used. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Pearson Correlation Coefficient for the Relationship between Principals’ Enforcement of Rules and Regulations on the Psychological Well-Being Orphaned Students

		Principals’ enforcement of rules and regulations	Psychological Wellbeing of Orphaned Students Scores
Principals’ enforcement of rules and regulations	Pearson Correlation	1	.380**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	148	148
Psychological Wellbeing of Orphaned Students Scores	Pearson Correlation	.380**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	148	148

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 1 shows that, there is a positive correlation ($r=0.380$, $p<0.05$) between the principals’ enforcement of rules and regulations and the psychological well-being of orphaned students in public secondary schools in Makueni County. Since the p-value is less than the alpha level of 0.05, the hypothesis H_{01} is rejected, indicating a statistically significant influence of principals’ enforcement of rules and regulations on the psychological well-being of orphaned students.

The findings suggest that a stronger enforcement of school rules and regulations by principals is associated with improved psychological well-being among orphaned students. This implies that consistent enforcement of disciplinary measures contributes positively to the emotional stability and overall well-being of orphaned students in secondary schools. Additionally, both principals and students reported that adherence to school rules and regulations are frequently enforced, indicating a consistent disciplinary approach within the school environment.

4.2 Discussions

The findings show that enforcing school rules positively influenced the psychological well-being of orphaned students by promoting good conduct, self-control, and orderliness. These findings agree with the assertion made by Ndeto (2015) that rules and regulations are not the only strategies designed to instil discipline among students, but are among the important strategies required in schools to achieve effective psychological wellbeing of students. Similarly, the results support the findings by Ndinza (2015) that school rules and regulations are an important tool in managing student behaviour and ensuring discipline across all spheres of life in the school while guaranteeing a safe learning environment for all students. Without school rules and regulations, students are bound to develop bad behaviours that may not only affect their lifestyle but also may affect their learning outcome. In line with this study’s findings, previously Yeager (2014) had revealed that school rules and regulations are one of the strategies designed to regulate the attention, emotion and behaviours of students in the face of tempting alternatives and achieve longer-term aims. As shown by Ombaka (2015), regulations are more effective if the students are involved in their creation.

The current study’s findings support previous inferences by Kosgei (2020) that with proper rules and regulations implemented in schools, students can be more confident and achieve more self-control, which is important in propelling their academic performance in the long term. Students should be disciplined throughout their academic life no matter their background and it is the role of school principals to ensure they engage in the enforcement of rules and regulations as this can help orphaned students excel in their studies. Furthermore, this study’s results are congruent with the assertion by Kilel et al. (2023) that school rules help orphaned students have some sense of normalcy and recover from the psychological impacts emanating from their loss of parents because they create some sort of order and discipline between the teachers and students and offer an opportunity for career growth for the orphan student. Similar assertions are echoed by Robert (2008) who found that students are socialized to always follow a particular value, norms and behaviour pattern or social group implying that rules and regulations shape orphaned student’s lives to specific standards. Regulations provide principals with the fundamental framework they

need to preserve order in their schools, as indicated by M'muyuri (2021) and Ndinza (2015).

This study's findings are congruent with those of Ziile et al. (2021) that rules and regulations in schools tend to equip students, whether orphaned or not, with the right skills in meeting challenges of life. Therefore, school rules and regulations are believed by many scholars to play an important role in shaping the psychological wellbeing of the student, especially in addressing life challenges. Without school rules and regulations that instil discipline and positive behaviours in students, orphans and other students cannot meet life's challenges and may end up being failures in the society. In a similar stance, Simba et al. (2016), had found that school head teachers should ensure that there are clear rules and regulations that control conduct within the school. Further, this study's findings are in agreement with those from the study by Konstantinou et al. (2022), which revealed that the principal usually has the discretion of establishing rules and regulations that students should follow and the ultimate behaviour of the student usually lies at the responsibility of the teacher.

Similarly, this study's findings are in agreement with Shume and Refu (2019) appropriate establishment and implementation of school rules and regulations contributes to positive well-being. Similar assertions are echoed by Gounko (2013) that students are more likely to follow rules and regulations in school if they are included in the creation and implementation of the school rules. Therefore, school rules and regulations are necessary because their absence can lead to problems, as indicated by Mulqueeny et al. (2020). This is supported by Jacobs (2013), who says that when rules and regulations in schools are not properly enforced, students psychologically torment each other, especially in schools with larger student populations and in urban areas (Jacobs, 2013). This research also established that well-enforced rules and regulations create better physical learning environments. The findings agree with Barrett et al. (2019) that rules help in encouraging social cohesion among students and increase chances of students respecting each other, contributing positively to psychological well-being.

However, this study's findings differ with those of Shume and Refu (2019), who indicated that orphans tend to experience different outcomes when school rules and regulations are applied. Shume and Refu (2019) found that orphans are usually disadvantaged educationally than other students within the same household due to the enforcement of rules and regulations in schools, which affects their psychological well-being negatively. Similarly, Oyuga and Aloka (2016) opined that the enforcement of rules and regulations can have a negative impact on orphaned students' psychological well-being. The reason is that orphans require special attention in schools because they lack the parental guidance that eventually shapes the character and behaviour beyond their home. Previous research by Manaf et al. (2017) shows that strict rules may have negative impacts on the children's well-being, especially orphans. Therefore, school rules and regulations should not be too restrictive for students because restrictive rules can end up being unrealistic and ineffective in the end of the day.

Some previous findings differ with the current research because they assert that rules and regulation may increase violence among students, especially due to the authoritarian governance in these schools, as shown by Cooper (2014) and Muasya (2021). For instance, according Kyaruzi (2022), rules and regulations in schools do not work if the authoritarian nature of schooling, especially in schools across Africa where such approaches are the norm. For instance, the rule to send students with fees arrears disadvantages orphans, as shown by Okari (2023). This reduces their psychological wellbeing in school in the long run. Some orphan students end up having low self-esteem and confidence in their studies, thus causing them to dropout as a result. Punitive rules and regulations affect students' psychological well-being negatively, as was found by Smilak (2023). According to DePaoli (2021), students may experience tension, worry, and a sense of unfairness as a result of punitive measures like suspension and expulsion

In summary, the study findings regarding the school principals' roles in implementing order show that the presence of clear rules and regulations within schools, significantly benefits the psychological and overall well-being of orphaned students in Makueni County. These regulations provide a structured and predictable environment, which is especially crucial for orphaned students who may already be grappling with the emotional and psychological challenges associated with losing their parents or guardians. The rules establish a sense of order and routine in the lives of orphaned students. Predictability and structure can provide a comforting and stabilizing influence, helping them cope with the emotional trauma they may have experienced. By knowing what is expected of them in terms of behaviour and conduct, these students can navigate school life with greater confidence and a reduced sense of anxiety. Secondly, rules and regulations promote a sense of fairness and equity within the school community. Orphaned students might be particularly sensitive to issues of fairness, given their potential vulnerability. When rules are consistently applied to all students, regardless of their personal circumstances, it fosters a sense of inclusivity and reduces the likelihood of discrimination or exclusion based on their orphan status. Moreover, these regulations serve as a guide for acceptable behaviour and conduct, helping orphaned students adapt to social norms and expectations within the school and, by extension, the broader society. They learn essential life skills, such as respect for authority, time management, and teamwork, which are crucial for their future well-being and success. Finally, rules and regulations often provide a framework for conflict resolution and problem-solving. Orphaned students may encounter

challenges or conflicts related to their unique circumstances, and having clear guidelines for addressing such issues can prevent them from feeling isolated or helpless. It encourages a supportive environment where students are encouraged to seek help and guidance when needed.

V. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

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. This finding is substantiated by both quantitative surveys measuring enforcement levels and qualitative interviews with students, forming a convergence of data sources. 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.

5.2 Recommendations

The students should understand the importance of adhering to school rules and regulations, including dress codes and class attendance since such can positively impact their psychological well-being.

On the other hand, the 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.

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