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The Influence of Principals' Interpersonal Skills on Management of Student Discipline in Public Secondary Schools in Bomet County, Kenya

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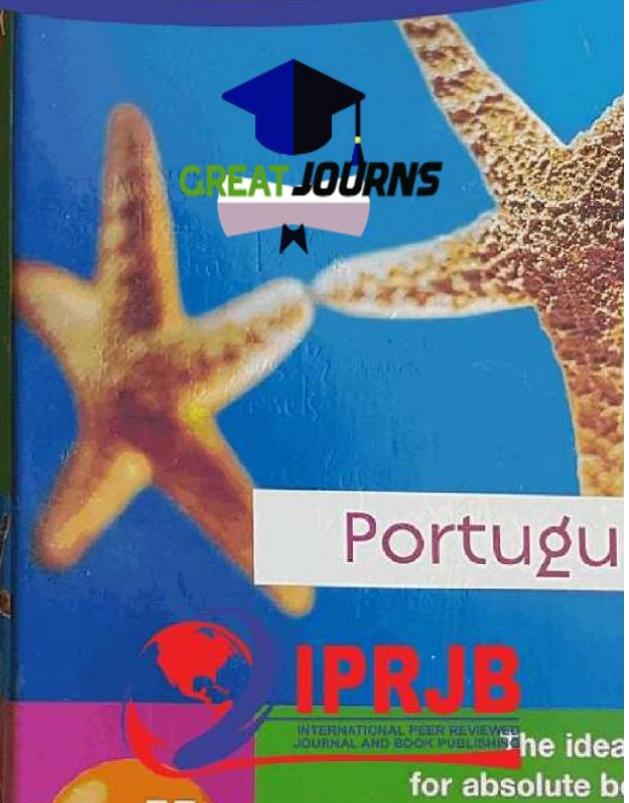
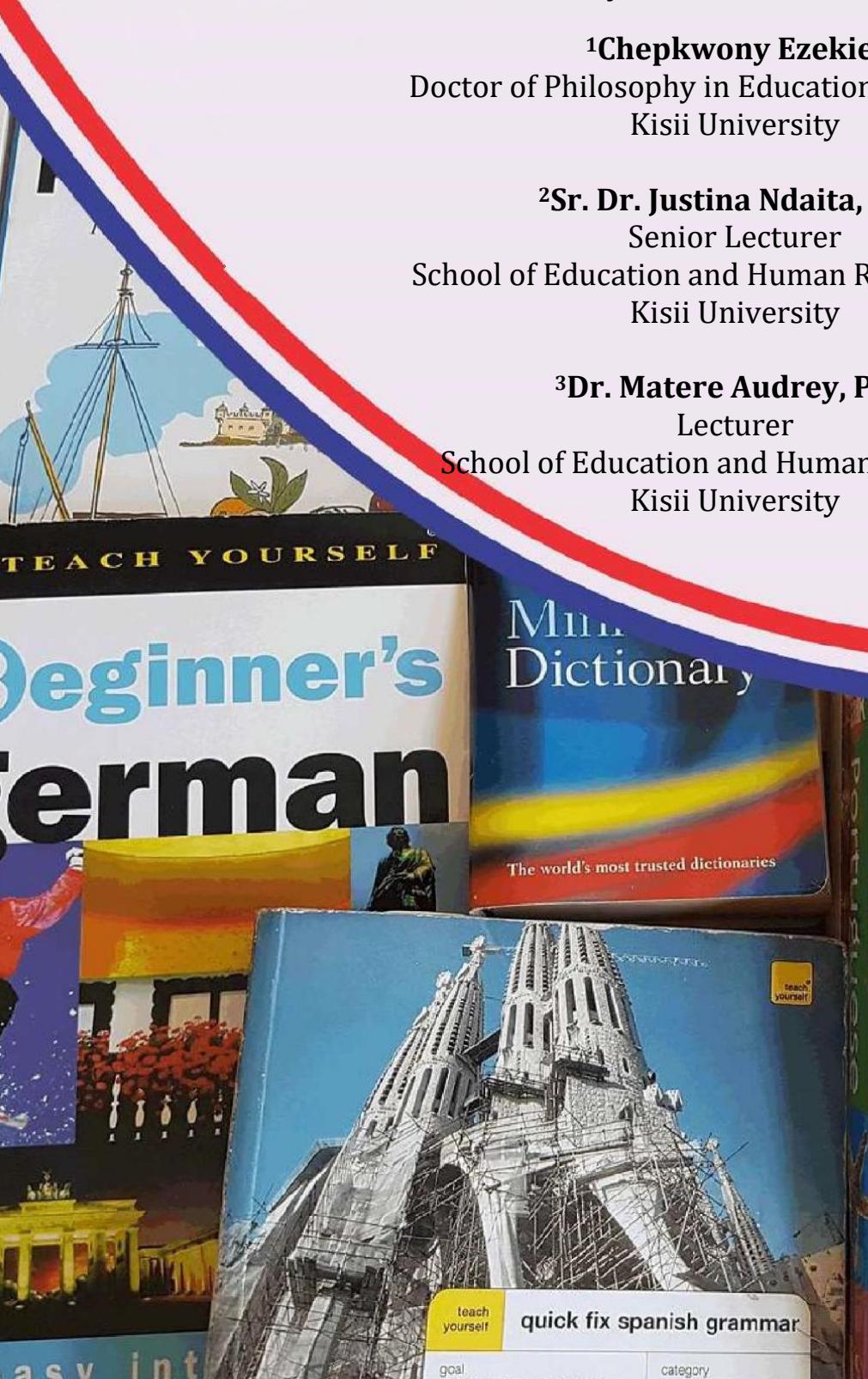
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**ABSTRACT:** One of the major roles of education is to instil discipline in students. Therefore, in any educational institution, training of discipline is incorporated into all the instructional and managerial processes. Kenya has witnessed numerous indiscipline cases among secondary school students in the recent past. These indiscipline cases include boycotting of lessons, dishonesty, disobedience to teachers, prefects and school administration, drugs and substance abuse, violence against fellow students and staff, and arson attacks. The purpose of this research was to investigate the Influence of Principals 'Interpersonal Skills on Management of Student Discipline in Public Secondary Schools in Bomet County, Kenya. McGregor's theory X and Y guided for this study. Descriptive survey design was used in this research. The target population was 572, comprising of 5 Sub-County Education Directors, 189 principals and 189 deputy principals and 189 senior teachers. A sample size of 239 respondents, comprising of 78 principals, 78 deputy principals and 78 senior teachers proportionally distributed and all the 5 Sub-County Education Directors, was obtained using Yamane's formula. Simple random sampling and purposive sampling was used to select respondents. The research instruments for this study were structured questionnaire and an interview schedule. A pilot study was carried out in Kericho County to ascertain the validity and reliability of the research instruments. Both qualitative and quantitative data were used. Interview data was subjected to content analysis to gain insight into the meanings and consequences of the participants' responses. For this research, SPSS version 24 was used to code and analyse quantitative data by generating descriptive statistics. The study findings revealed that principals' interpersonal skills had a positive and significant effect on the management of student discipline in public secondary schools ( $\beta_1=0.186$ ,  $p=0.009$ ). From the study findings, it is evident that interpersonal, strategic planning, problem-solving and decision-making skills play important roles in managing student discipline. Principals often show empathy when dealing with students' discipline. They also actively listen to students and staff issues influencing student discipline in school. Furthermore, they apply emotional intelligence when dealing with student discipline in their schools. The researcher recommended that school principals should prioritize effective interpersonal skills when dealing with students' discipline. More effective strategic planning methods should be employed to address issues influencing student discipline in schools.

**Key Words:** *Principals, 'Interpersonal Skills & Management of Student Discipline'*

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The humanistic idea of interpersonal skill includes authenticity. Authenticity refers to how genuine one is to one's own personality, spirit, or character in the face of external forces (Covelli & Mason, 2017). Authenticity, according to the study, is defined as being genuine, true to oneself, and truthful. Followers are inspired by this type of interpersonal skill. Furthermore, leaders cannot use the term "genuine leadership" to describe themselves. This term is given to them by those who have experienced their leadership. If subordinates believe a leader is honest, kind, and loyal to himself and his vision, he or she were given the term authentic leader. Authentic leaders have a genuine purpose that reflects their own values (Hirst *et al.*, 2016). Instead of seeing themselves as building administrators, they see themselves as servants or stewards. Leaders must keep their words and actions consistent in order to manage the perception of authenticity. The impact of principals' interpersonal skills on pupils' discipline was not addressed in this research.

Effective leadership in educational settings requires principals to possess a diverse range of skills, including strong interpersonal abilities (Skinner *et al.*, 2016). Among these skills, empathy stands out as a crucial attribute that plays a significant role in the management of student discipline. Empathy is the ability to adopt another person's perspective and experience the thoughts and emotions of that individual (Decety, 2020). A growing number of studies have shown that school-age children's empathy robustly contributes to their interpersonal communication, academic achievement and psychosocial adjustment. For school-age

children, school becomes the main place for learning and socializing. The student-teacher relationship is an important interpersonal relationship between children and adults after they leave home, which plays an important role in the development of children's self-ability.

## II: LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Principals' Interpersonal Skills and Management of Student Discipline

As educators and administrators grapple with the complexities of maintaining order within schools, it becomes increasingly evident that empathy is not only beneficial but also essential for fostering positive disciplinary outcomes. The concept of empathy encompasses an individual's capacity to understand and share the feelings and perspectives of others (Stietz *et al.*, 2019). In the context of school leadership, empathetic principals have the unique ability to connect with students on a deeper level, recognizing their challenges and offering support. This understanding allows them to address disciplinary issues from a place of compassion rather than simply resorting to punitive measures.

Furthermore, research by Ryan and Deci (2020) has shown that principals who exhibit higher levels of empathy are better equipped to navigate difficult situations involving student behaviour. By demonstrating genuine care and concern for students' well-being, these leaders create an environment where misbehaviour can be addressed effectively without compromising relationships or hindering academic progress. In light of this growing body of evidence supporting the importance of empathetic leadership in disciplining students appropriately, it is imperative for educational institutions to recognize its significance and promote its development among their principals. A study by Gregory and Fergus (2017) asserts that incorporation of specific strategies and approaches based on empathy can lead to more inclusive disciplinary practices that foster growth and learning while avoiding unnecessary exclusion or stigmatization.

As Okonofua and Walton (2020) suggest, in their study on classroom outcomes affected by one student's discipline problems, that empathetic principals can recognize the impact such incidents have on other students. This awareness enables them to address not only the immediate issue but also its broader implications for the class as a whole. In addition to understanding student experiences, empathetic principals possess the ability to connect with individuals at an emotional level. They genuinely care about each student's well-being while maintaining professionalism. Justice (2018) emphasizes that these interpersonal skills are essential for creating a supportive school climate where students feel valued and understood. An empathetic approach from principals contributes significantly to effective discipline management within schools. By demonstrating empathy towards disciplined students rather than solely focusing on punitive measures, principals can uncover underlying causes of misbehaviour or academic struggles (Henriksen *et al.*, 2019). This deeper understanding helps them implement appropriate interventions tailored to each individual's needs. Principals who exhibit self-regulation tactics demonstrate composure during challenging situations without resorting solely to punishment-based approaches. The findings from Justice's (2018) research shed light on how principals' interpersonal skills directly influence school climate: when administrators possess high levels of empathy paired with self-control over their emotional expressions, they can foster an environment where students feel safe and supported. This positive climate has a ripple effect on student learning outcomes and teacher retention rates.

One study by Li *et al.* (2019) found that principals who were able to empathize with students were more likely to use restorative justice practices, which focus on repairing the harm caused by misbehaviour rather than punishing the student. This approach has been shown to be more effective in reducing future misbehaviour than traditional disciplinary methods. Another study found that principals who were able to build positive relationships with students were more likely to have students who felt respected and supported (Louis & Murphy, 2017). This, in turn, led to fewer disciplinary problems.

Managing students' problem behaviours in the classroom is a difficult challenge for many teachers (Skura & Wheeler, 2023). A teacher's ability to empathize with students' perspectives and life experiences could impact their approach to the student's problem behaviours; however, few previous studies examine teacher empathy (Wink *et al.*, 2021). Results indicated the adapted measure reliably assessed teachers' cognitive empathy and an affective form of empathy characterized as empathic distress (experiencing personal distress from others' distress). Teachers higher in cognitive empathy reported more positive mind-sets about student behaviour, greater competence in handling problem behaviours, increased use of effective problem-solving strategies, greater relationship closeness, and lower levels of job burnout. Teachers high in empathic distress showed largely opposite findings, with more negative misbehaviour mind-sets, greater relationship conflict, less competence, fewer problem-solving strategies, and higher job burnout (Walton *et al.*, 2021). These findings have implications for supporting teachers to effectively intervene and build positive relationships with behaviourally challenging students.

The adoption of the empathic mind-set creates opportunity to build respect, rather than mistrust, in a teacher's relationship with a student who has misbehaved (Rainbolt *et al.*, 2019). Over time, each mind-set (punitive or empathic) can contribute to recursive cycles such that either the relationship deteriorates and thus discipline problems grow, or a positive relationship remains intact and thus future conflict is prevented. Moreover, due to many teachers entering the profession with a desire to support and help children grow (Cruz *et al.*, 2023), that same teacher might also harbour an empathic mind-set, one that prioritizes the maintenance of high-quality and productive relationships with students who struggle, including students who misbehave. Each mind-set can be activated and affects the way a teacher will respond to misbehaviour. When the empathic mind-set is activated teachers are less likely to label a misbehaving student as a troublemaker and are more likely to want to find out more about why the student misbehaved.

Tyler(2016)found that principals with strong interpersonal skills, such as active listening, are more effective at managing student discipline. Active listening involves paying attention to what students are saying, both verbally and nonverbally, and understanding their perspective. This allows principals to build rapport with students, resolve conflicts more effectively, and create a more positive school climate. Heffernan (2021) suggests that principals who have strong interpersonal skills are more likely to have schools with high levels of student achievement and a positive school climate. This will help you to be more effective at managing student discipline and creating a positive school climate.

In today's educational landscape, according to Scott (2018), the role of a principal extends far beyond administrative tasks and managerial responsibilities. Principals are not only expected to be effective leaders, but also possess exceptional interpersonal skills that enable them to connect with their stakeholders on a deeper level. These skills include active listening, which allows principals to truly understand the needs and concerns of students, teachers, parents, and other members of the school community (Brown, 2016). Active listening is an essential component of effective communication in any setting. It involves more than simply hearing what others have to say; it requires genuine engagement and attentiveness. By actively participating in conversations and discussions with various stakeholders, principals can foster relationships built on trust, empathy, and understanding.

Furthermore, one crucial area where strong interpersonal skills become particularly relevant for principals is in the management of student discipline (Wang& Degol, 2016). Student behaviour is undoubtedly a significant factor that impacts the overall learning environment within a school. While disciplinary actions are necessary at times to maintain order and ensure students' safety, it is vital for principals to approach these situations with fairness and consistency. Principals who actively listen demonstrate their commitment towards addressing student discipline issues effectively while taking into consideration individual circumstances as well as broader systemic factors that may contribute to behavioural challenges (Stronge&

Xu, 2021). By empathetically engaging with students involved in disciplinary matters through active listening techniques such as paraphrasing or reflecting feelings back to them accurately principals can establish an atmosphere conducive for growth rather than punishment alone.

A study by Brooks and Brooks (2019) sheds light on another aspect related to effective principal-student interactions: management of student behaviour problems within classrooms. The findings highlighted that behaviour issues can significantly impact both teachers' stress levels and students' ability to learn effectively. Disruptive behaviours not only hinder lesson progression but also conflict with learning objectives. To address this issue, Brooks and Brooks explored evidence-based strategies that teachers could employ to reduce disruptive behaviours in their classrooms. Although the study did not specifically focus on principals' role here, it is important for educational leaders like principals who possess strong interpersonal skills to be aware of such strategies so they can provide support and guidance to their teaching staff when dealing with challenging classroom dynamics.

Additionally, Willis and Mastrofski (2018) emphasize the significance of administrators' skilfulness in working with people during everyday situations a quality closely tied to effective interpersonal skills. Their study succinctly highlights the importance of interpersonal skills in general and its relevance to principals' ability to navigate various situations involving different stakeholders. Overall, the results from these studies underscore that effective principals who possess strong interpersonal skills and actively listen to their stakeholders are crucial in creating a positive and conducive learning environment for students. These findings stress the need for principals to engage in continuous professional development activities aimed at improving their communication abilities, as well as their capacity to manage student behaviour problems within classrooms (Van der Klink *et al.*, 2017). In so doing, they can promote harmonious relationships between teachers, students, and other school community members while ensuring discipline policies are fair and consistently implemented.

Bellibas and Liu (2018), in their study, assert that effective principals play a vital role in creating an optimal learning environment for students. They are not only responsible for academic success but also for shaping the overall school climate. One critical aspect of their job is managing student discipline citations, which requires a delicate balance between maintaining order and fostering positive relationships with students. In recent years, there has been growing recognition of the importance of principals' interpersonal skills and emotional intelligence in effectively managing student behaviour (Dolev & Leshem, 2016). Interpersonal skills refer to the ability to communicate, collaborate, and build meaningful connections with others. Emotional intelligence encompasses self-awareness, empathy, and the skilful management of emotions in oneself and others. A principal's cultivation of strong interpersonal skills enables them to establish rapport with both students and staff members alike. By fostering open lines of communication, they create an atmosphere where concerns can be addressed promptly and constructively. Additionally, effective principals utilize their emotional intelligence to understand the underlying motivations behind student misbehaviour and provide appropriate support systems rather than resorting solely to punitive measures. When it comes to managing student discipline citations fairly, principals must navigate complex situations that demand careful judgment (Weiner & Jerome, 2016). Each case may differ significantly from another due to various factors such as age, background, or personal circumstances.

Principals who possess high levels of emotional intelligence are better equipped to handle these challenges while considering individual needs within a consistent framework (Drigas & Papoutsi, 2020). The significance of this topic lies in its potential impact on both academic achievement and social development among students. When principals emphasize interpersonal skills alongside emotional intelligence in addressing disciplinary matters, they contribute positively towards establishing a safe and supportive school climate conducive to learning. Students feel valued when they perceive fairness in how discipline is

administered leading them towards improved engagement academically as well as socially (Uslu & Gizir, 2017).

A study by Valente *et al.* (2019) found that principals' interpersonal skills (emotional intelligence) were positively correlated with effective management of student discipline. Principals who were better able to communicate effectively, build relationships, and manage conflict were more likely to have schools with well-behaved students. Principals who are good communicators are able to clearly articulate expectations to students, teachers, and parents (Leith wood *et al.*, 2021). They are also able to listen to and understand the concerns of others, which can help to resolve conflicts before they escalate. Principals who build strong relationships with students, teachers, and parents are more likely to be seen as fair and trustworthy. This can help to create a positive school climate where students are more likely to behave in a respectful manner.

Principals who are able to manage conflict effectively are able to de-escalate situations before they get out of hand (Phillips, 2021). They are also able to work with students, teachers, and parents to find solutions that everyone can agree on. By developing their interpersonal skills, principals can create schools that are more orderly and productive. During an interview with teachers, Afshar and Doosti (2016) explored the effects of training on supervisors' interpersonal skills. Listening was identified as a critical skill in teacher development. Supervisors saw themselves as more effective in defining instructional goals after receiving interpersonal skill training in listening, according to the study's findings. Teachers thought their bosses were more concerned about their needs. It did not, however, go into detail about how the principal's interpersonal abilities with students and staff affect student discipline.

Without feedback, teachers hardly know when success has been attained (Steinert *et al.*, 2016). The study proposes a feedback system that handles crucial performance data by listening, hearing, gathering, and evaluating it. This means that schools should use objective data collection methods and solicit unfiltered feedback. Furthermore, one benefit of a feedback system is that it helps the principle or any other leader to address problems early and reinforce the school's values and goals. It also claims that feedback systems enable teachers to share their knowledge and experience on a practical level.

Disparities in school punishment for African American children in urban schools are still a contentious issue (Williams *et al.*, 2020). While the procedures and preparedness of teachers and principals have been rightly questioned by research, assistant principals' functions as disciplinary gatekeepers have received little attention in the literature. The aim of this study was to investigate the experiences of five assistant principals at two urban middle schools in order to determine how they dealt with racial concerns while implementing interventions for school discipline for African American pupils. An analysis and discussion of the results are conducted using a critical race theoretical framework. This however covered the inter personal skills of deputy principals and how it influenced the discipline of students therefore leaving as gap that needs to be addressed.

A significant issue in secondary schools in Mauritius is a lack of student discipline. Jinot (2018) conducted a study to identify and investigate the primary causes of this issue in the context of Mauritius. Utilizing content analysis, the study found that the causes of students' lack of discipline come from the family (parenting style, working guardians, inefficient parental discipline, and dysfunctional families), students' attitudes toward education and schooling, educators' attitudes toward their role in upholding student discipline, principals' absence of authority and governance in doing so, and the influence of peer groups in the classroom. The study demonstrates that the decline in student discipline in high schools is due to all of the community's stakeholders. This study was carried out in Mauritius unlike the current study done in Kenya.

According to Goleman (2021), leaders frequently neglect to provide feedback such as praise and redirection to people who have faith in their leadership. Further, the majority of people interpret comments as criticism. She emphasizes that feedback is offered in the moment and that it is a continuous process. Feedback, according to the study, is the most problematic aspect of interpersonal skills. Additionally, strong leaders must invest in their workers, which necessitates more than the bare minimum. It concludes by emphasizing the need of leaders, including principals, having the fortitude to both ask for and give feedback. This aided their ability to lead. It did not, however, go into detail about how the principal's interpersonal abilities with students and staff affect student discipline.

Costa (2017) avers that empathy fosters trust. When people have varied knowledge bases and experiences, trust makes it easier for them to work together. According to Norman *et al.* (2019), what one says and does in an interpersonal environment communicates trust. When one's language and actions are viewed as contradictory, for example, trust is eroded. Trust, in the view of Liu and Mehta (2021), is what makes a relationship strong. They go on to describe trust as a "willingness to be vulnerable to the actions of another party in exchange for the anticipation that the other party would undertake an important activity." Furthermore, is critical for building and maintaining positive interpersonal and organizational relationships. Liu and Mehta add that once trust has been formed, doors to good communication open up. It did not, however, go into detail about how the principal's interpersonal abilities with students and staff affect student discipline.

A study by Kouali (2017), on the role of Cypriot principals in the classroom and how it affects teachers' job satisfaction, also looked into whether principals' handling of their instructional responsibilities could predict greater levels of job satisfaction among instructors. Together with qualitative approach, quantitative methods (two questionnaires) were used (interviews, observation, informal conversations, and collection of artefacts). According to the findings of multiple regression analysis, dealing with and completing principals' educational assignments does not predict greater levels of job satisfaction among instructors. Given the trends in contemporary literature stressing the importance of principals' transformational and instructional leadership and its effects on teachers, this outcome is somewhat unexpected. This study covered the roles of principals and how it affects behaviour of teachers but not students hence the gap.

According to Bright (2021), if members of an organization are distrustful of one another, their dedication, motivation, confidence, and perceptions at work may suffer. He also stated that trust has an impact on individual member behaviour as well as organizational dynamics. Furthermore, he made four points about the teacher-principal relationship: the more trust there is in the relationship between the teacher and the principal, the less risk there is when interpersonally communicating about professional issues; also, when there is less risk, teachers are encouraged to participate in the continuous improvement of the school's processes and systems; and finally, participation in school improvement connects the teacher and the principal. It however, did not dwell on how principals' interpersonal skills to students and staff influence student discipline.

Interpersonal skills influence the behaviour of teachers, students, non-teaching staff, and parents in a school setting (Gathumbi & Mulwa, 2019). The school principal, as the head of school, is responsible for informing all members of the school community of the school's rules and regulations. In the everyday school management routine, meaningful interactions are fostered by excellent interpersonal skills. Students' discipline is formed as a result of these encounters. Moreover, during school assemblies, kids are instructed and regularly reminded of their responsibilities. Fellow students, typically school prefects, on-duty teachers, senior teachers, deputy principals, and the school principal, outline the consequences of misconduct mostly through interpersonal skills. This helps to strengthen the school's discipline culture. Teachers and the school's principal educate kids about anticipated behaviour and clearly explain out school expectations and

procedures on a daily basis. This form of interpersonal competence improves attitudes toward teaching, learning, and the entire educational process and structure inside the school. The study however did not highlight on principals' interpersonal to students and staff influence student discipline in public secondary school hence literature gap.

According to Salina *et al.* (2021), some of the interpersonal skill strategies commonly used by teachers in Mukurweini District on student discipline include holding classroom meetings, using school prefects, interpersonal skill during assembly, guidance and counselling, rewards and incentives, holding open forums, and encouraging members to pass data among themselves. The majority of the teachers also stated that they used notice boards for student punishment on a regular basis. However, when it came to student discipline, facial expressions were rarely used. The majority of instructors (89%) said that school type influences how they communicate about student punishment. The findings of the study demonstrated that the school's category, such as boys alone, girls exclusively, or mixed for both boys and girls, has an impact on how teachers communicate about student discipline. The survey also discovered that the employment of a reward system, eye contact, and facial expression were the interpersonal skill tactics with the least preferences for teachers when it came to student discipline. According to the study, factors that hampered good interpersonal skills included data distortion, a language barrier, and a lack of suitable processes to guarantee a safe environment for students to express themselves to their professors. The study however did not highlight on principals' interpersonal skill skills to students and staff influence student discipline in public secondary school hence literature gap.

Kimani (2021), in a study on the influence of principals' interpersonal skill on students' discipline, found that there were poor interpersonal skill channels used by school administrators and undemocratic school administrations that did not consider meetings and assemblies as important interpersonal skill strategies. Meetings and assemblies were recommended as interpersonal skill tactics because they enhanced interaction and relationships between administration and students, resulting in school unity. This means that increasing effective interpersonal skills through the use of school assemblies for key concepts could improve secondary school students' discipline.

In dealing with pupils, most administrators adopt a master-servant or superior inferior approach (Mulwa *et al.*, 2020). Because they assume students have nothing to give, principals rarely listen to them. This produces friction, miscommunication, and stress, which finally leads to frustrations and violence, as seen in strikes. Katua (2019) proposes that chances be created for teachers, students, and administrators to sit down and freely discuss issues that affect them and their school. Collaboration between the principal, staff, students, parents, and the community is required for effective discipline management. Allowing kids to air their problems could lead to frustration, which could lead to disruptive conduct. Such incidents may be avoided if students were involved in decision-making during school assemblies. However, the study did not mention how the principal's interpersonal skills with students and staff affect student discipline.

According to Gregory *et al.* (2016), class meetings for collaborative decision-making were held within a school structure designed to improve discipline. Class meetings, according to the administrators, improved decision-making and allowed students to express their concerns. This means that both the students and the teachers had the opportunity to speak with one another, allowing them to share concerns that were affecting the students at the time.

Neutuch (2018) also mentions the importance of principals adopting an open-door policy in which students can speak with the institution's leader at any time to explain their problems, bring new chamber as well as creative ideas, accept that he or she is capable of making mistakes, and challenge his or her viewpoints. The principal should be liberal, avoid favouritism, and treat all students equally. He or she should also

support a democratic school structure that allows students to pick their own leaders. Principals should promote an open-door policy in which students are welcome to meet with the institution's leader to discuss their concerns. The open-door policy helps students to embrace 21st-century skills of invention and creativity as they explore and present new creative ideas, as well as setting aside particular days in the week for them to meet with the principal to discuss topics of concern relating to their welfare. Furthermore, allowing students to make decisions in areas that affect their own learning and the learning of the entire school community in conjunction with educators entails significant student participation and involvement. Coordination of co-curricular activities, settling minor cases of indiscipline, and taking responsibility for students' welfare are all examples of such participation. It however did not highlight on principals' interpersonal skill to students and staff influence student discipline.

Guidance at educational institutions, according to Clark *et al.* (2016), can be characterized as a mental process of being exposed to valuable data, experiences, and resources in order to support decision-making for interpersonal and social development. The individual providing guidance has the knowledge and abilities, as well as the exposure, to provide meaningful direction to the person being guided. As a result, it is assumed that a teacher can give guided exploration of possibilities utilizing all available resources to help a learner to make appropriate academic and career choices for school guidance. Counselling in educational institutions is an affective (emotional) process in which a teacher serves as a helper with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to assist a child or a young person in dealing with underlying emotional issues that may be interfering with his or her ability to function adaptively in any given situation, both inside and outside of school. It did not, however, emphasize how the principal's interpersonal abilities with students and staff affect student discipline.

Mukindia (2017) posits that a solid school guidance and counselling strategy assists students in a variety of ways, including increasing their ability to rationally control sentiments in their interpersonal lives and behaviours, hence reducing indiscipline incidents. It helps learners reach their full potential or achieve the integration of contradictory parts within themselves by equipping them with the skills, awareness, and knowledge they need to deal with social inadequacies. However, the study did not mention how the principal's interpersonal abilities with students and staff affect student discipline.

Fonseca Cacho (2020) holds the view that pupils should get notices in their classes or on government notice boards. In interpersonal interactions, it is critical to maintain a formal and courteous demeanour. First, the person imparting the data is seen as a positive influence by everyone in the school, and second, one learns how to successfully communicate and ensure that the work is completed correctly. So that was all about communication skills and how crucial they are. It did not, however, mention how the principal's interpersonal abilities with students and staff affect student discipline. School rules and regulations, as well as basic student conduct, are some issues that should be posted on notice boards (Burden, 2020). Because the children are reading these rules and regulations on a daily basis, this improved discipline. It also claims that written work is more durable and less susceptible to misunderstanding.

School rules and regulations, in the opinion of Betters-Bubon *et al.* (2016), are one of the tactics used to instil excellent behaviour in pupils. The principal should have them printed and fastened on the school bulletin board for easy access and enhanced student awareness. This aids in the reduction of indiscipline instances by ensuring that children are well-behaved, have self-control, and, as a result, obey school authority. School rules and regulations, according to Brunzell *et al.* (2019), describe the "dos" and "don'ts" for members of the school community. Despite these requirements, rule and regulation violations are common in Kenya's secondary schools. Furthermore, schools encounter a wide range of indiscipline issues, such as students fleeing school, consuming alcoholic beverages, participating in frequent strikes that result in school closures, and frequent suspension of students, all of which have an impact on students' academic

performance. To reduce occurrences of indiscipline, schools should make sure that all students have access to school regulations and daily routines by posting them in classrooms and dining halls, as well as on all notice boards, so that students may see them face to face (Kambuga *et al.*, 2018).

Katolo (2016) avers that school policies and daily routines should be written down and posted on notice boards, classrooms, and dining halls so that kids can see them in person. The mission and vision of the school should be stated in large characters and fastened on bulletin boards. As a means of helping school principals to lead their school institution more efficiently, significant research into the communication process and interpersonal skills should be conducted. It did not, however, mention how the principal's interpersonal abilities with students and staff affect student discipline.

There is more to interpersonal skill than speaking (Dimbleby & Burton, 2020). Interpersonal ability can be observed in the form of conduct. Personal communication skills of school leaders, including verbal and nonverbal communication, open door policy, and regular meetings, can pave the way for good interpersonal skills with other participants.

## 2.2 Theoretical Framework

This study was guided by Theory X and Theory Y by Douglas McGregor (1960). In 1960 Douglas McGregor presented a convincing argument that most managerial actions flow directly from the assumption's managers hold about their subordinates. The idea is that management's views of people control operating practices as well as organizational structure. McGregor referred to these contrasting sets of assumptions as Theory X and Theory Y. Since then, these theories have been used to examine human motivation and management. Leaders with Theory X assumptions have the following views of people: that the average person dislikes work and will avoid it if possible; that because people dislike work, they must be coerced, controlled, directed, and threatened, and that the average person prefers to be directed and controlled by someone in authority. The opposite assumptions characterize the Theory Y managers. To them: work is as natural as play or rest; commitment to objectives is a function of rewards for achievement, and under proper conditions, people accept and seek responsibility.

McGregor considers Theory X to be incompatible with democratic or participatory organizations because it conflicts with individual need fulfilment on the job. Therefore, he espouses Theory Y, because people's behaviour in modern organizations more nearly matches its set of assumptions. Theory Y does not concentrate on organizational structure as much as it argues for a general management philosophy that would force reconsideration of structural dimensions. For example, job enrichment would replace highly specialized jobs and departments. Span of control would be wide, not narrow, in order to provide greater freedom and opportunities for growth and fulfilment of employees' needs. Emphasis on hierarchy would be replaced by emphasis on decentralization and delegation of decisions. Formal, rational authority would give way to "empowerment" of subordinates.

Theory X and Theory Y may be used to examine how school principals manage student discipline. This is because the two theories describe workforce motivation applied by managers in human resource management, organizational behaviour, organizational communication and organization development. Theory X explains the importance of heightened supervision, external rewards, and penalties, while theory Y highlights the motivation role of job satisfaction and encourages workers to approach tasks without direct supervision. As such, principals who lean towards Theory Y generally get poor results. Enlightened principals use Theory Y, which produces better performance and results and allows people to grow and develop. This is because principals under Theory Y assume that most students like to work and that students have self-

control and are smart. They also assume that students can motivate themselves and want to have good discipline.

Discipline in a school is achieved by the successful exercising of this control to ensure conformity with the established rules. It is when there is a serious breach of the rules, a breakdown of discipline, that the need for punishment may arise. Punishments are necessary to deter violations of rules and procedures. It should be noted that punishments are not needed or even desirable for all rule and procedure violations. Many such violations can be handled by simple, direct teacher actions. However, one may need to have a punishment available in case of chronic misbehaviour or serious infractions occur. Penalties serve as a deterrent; moreover, planning ahead for penalties sets the standards for consistent response to particular classes of misbehaviour. The types of inappropriate behaviour for which teachers often mete out punishments include incomplete, missing or poorly done assignments; tardiness, abusive name-calling or other forms of aggression; damage to property, and repeated violations of classroom rules and procedures.

From the point of view for principals, effective leadership management reduces resources allocation for discipline purposes (Ali & Waqar, 2013). Therefore, the resources can be allocated for more productive corporate actions of both principals and teachers for innovative teaching and learning operations. Ali and Waqar add that administrative efficacy can be improved through effective leadership management. In fact, principals can gain professional development in the areas of direction and organization (Hutton, 2014) because Theory X/Y improves principals' awareness of how they should constructively value teachers. In other words, school principals develop their professionalism as a result of being able to productively support teachers' growth.

### 2.3 Conceptual Framework

#### Independent Variables

##### Principals 'Interpersonal Skills

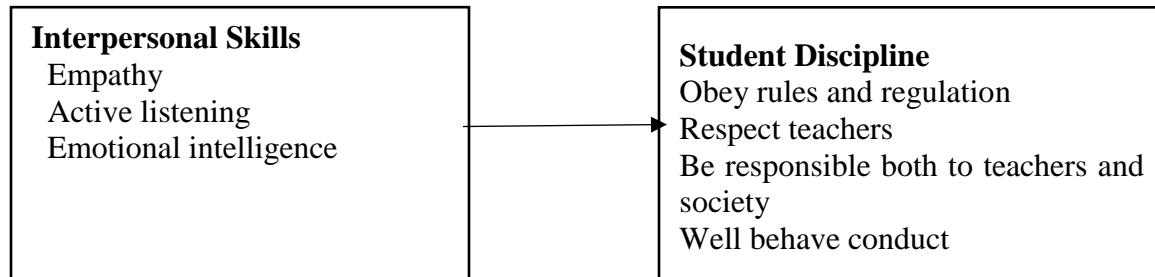
##### Interpersonal Skills

Empathy  
 Active listening  
 Emotional intelligence

#### Dependent Variables

##### Student Discipline

Obey rules and regulation  
 Respect teachers  
 Be responsible both to teachers and society  
 Well behave conduct



### **III: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Research Design**

The research used a descriptive survey design that can handle both quantitative and qualitative data. Participants in descriptive survey research were asked to respond to questions via interviews and questionnaires. In addition to providing a high level of generalizability, a survey also gives a high level of representation by covering a broad population. It is more important to adopt an exploratory research design since it allows the researcher to gather, summarize, present, assess, and interpret data in a way that is easier to comprehend and compare (Kothari, 2008). It is possible to get a more accurate picture of general demographic characteristics because of the large number of people doing the survey (Omair, 2015).

#### **3.2 Study Area**

The study was conducted in Bomet County. Bomet County is bordered by four counties, namely; Nakuru to the East, Kericho to the North East, Nyamira to the South and Narok to the West. Total land area is 2037.4 km<sup>2</sup>, with fertile ground suitable for agricultural totalling 1,716.6 km<sup>2</sup>. Bomet East, Bomet Central, Chepalungu, Konoin and Sotik are some of the sub-counties that make up Bomet. The County had a population of 782,531 in 2012 and was expected to reach 846,012 in 2015, according to the KNBS (2009) housing and population census report. In 2017, this population was predicted to reach 891,168, an increase of 2.3 percent.

Sub-counties with the largest densities of persons per square kilometre are Bomet central (494) and Bomet east (393) followed by Konoin (393) and Sotik (393) followed by Chepalungu (303), correspondingly. The county has 189 public secondary schools distributed across the five sub-counties as follows: Sotik (36 schools), Bomet Central (36 schools), Bomet East (34 schools), Chepalungu (46 schools) and Konoin (37 schools). Bomet County was chosen because it has witnessed several cases of indiscipline cases and the appended map (Appendix VI) shows that indiscipline cases are distributed all over the County. Examples of such cases are: the case of the year 2021 when ten students of Kimulot Boys High School were arrested following a fire incident in their dormitory. Additionally, in Menet Secondary School a Form Four student was arrested after he allegedly attacked and injured a fellow student with a machete. Tenwek High School was closed after a night of tension as students threatened to go on the rampage. There was damage on dormitories burnt down at Tengecha Boys' High and Cheborgei Boys in Kericho County, and Kimulot Boys' High in Bomet County. Dormitories at Kabungu Boys' High School and Chebunyo Boys' Secondary in Bomet Central and Chepalungu constituencies were also destroyed in suspected cases of arson by students.

#### **3.3 Target Population**

The term 'target population' denotes to the entire group that a researcher is interested in or is trying to make a conclusion about. The target population for this study was 189 public secondary schools. Therefore, the target population were 572 comprising of 5 sub county education directors, 189 principals and 189 deputy principals and 189 senior teachers. The target population were drawn from the five sub counties in Bomet County. The respondents were chosen for this study because they have the required data concerning effects of principals' managerial skills on academic performance in public secondary school in Bomet County, Kenya. The study population is presented in Table3.1.

**Table 3.1: Target Population**

Respondents	Population	Sub County Education directors	Principals	Deputy Principals	Senior teachers	Total
Sotik	36	1	36	36	36	109
Bomet Central	36	1	36	36	36	109
Bomet East	34	1	34	34	34	103
Chepalungu	46	1	46	46	46	139
Konoin	37	1	37	37	37	112
<b>Total</b>	<b>189</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>189</b>	<b>189</b>	<b>189</b>	<b>572</b>

### 3.4 Sample Size and Sampling Procedure

Sample size refers to the number of data or replicates contained in a statistical sample (Schoemann, Boulton & Short, 2017). To draw conclusions about a population from a small sample, a study's sample size must be large enough. To ensure that the results of a study can be applied to the full community, sampling techniques are used to pick a subset of a population from whom research can be done. For qualitative studies, the researcher makes use of the purposive sampling technique. Principals and teachers were selected for interviews using the probability sampling method. When using probability sampling, a random approach was employed to ensure that each sample unit is selected at random. There is a chance that a member of the study population was selected for the sample.

The research used simple random sampling. All of the study's units were combined into a single numbered unit from which a random sample was taken. In order from 1 to N, each item on the list is numbered sequentially (where N is the size and the population). The researcher calculated the sample size for principals, deputy principals and senior teachers using Yamane (1969) formula, as shown in Equation 3.1. This equation was used to determine the nth value, which is the sample size.

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + (N)e^2} \dots \dots \dots \text{Equation 3.1}$$

Where:

n = sample size

N = Population Size 567

e = error term of 0.05%

n = 234 for principals, deputy principals and senior teachers

Therefore, the sample size was 239 respondents, comprising 78 principals, 78 deputy principals and 78 senior teachers proportionally distributed and all the 5 Sub County Education directors. Table 3.2 presents the sample size and distribution.

**Table 3.2: Sample Size**

Respondents	Population	Sampling Techniques	Sample
Sub-County Directors	5	100%	5
Principals	189	189/567*234	78
Deputy principals	189	189/567*234	78
Senior teachers	189	189/567*234	78
<b>Total</b>	<b>572</b>		<b>239</b>

### 3.5 Research Instruments

This study used both structured questionnaires and interview schedule as the main research instruments.

#### 3.5.1 Research Questionnaires

A data questionnaire collects data from a huge number of people (Rowley, 2014). Respondents have the flexibility to share their thoughts and ideas through the medium of a survey. The 78 principals, 78 deputy principals, and 78 senior teachers from selected schools were asked to fill out questionnaires. To save money, self-completion questionnaires was employed for large numbers of respondents, particularly those who are literate (Konig&Neumayr, 2017). Using a questionnaire helps the scholar to gather data from a wide range of people with different backgrounds. In addition to maintaining their confidentiality, presenting the findings in a printed format ensures that any potential bias was eliminated. Data gathered through the use of questionnaires is typically easy to summarize. The researcher used closed-ended questionnaires to obtain data from the participants in this study. Closed-ended questionnaires used a Likert scale (1-5) in which 5 represents highly agreeing, 4 represents agreeing, 3 represents disagreeing, 2 represents strongly disagreeing, and 1 represents extremely disagreeing. An important advantage of using questionnaires is that they allow the student to collect a large amount of data, which can then be analysed in greater detail.

#### 3.5.2 Interview Schedule

An interview is a type of dialogue in which questions and answers are used to gather data for a specific purpose (Mann, 2016). Sub-County Education Directors were surveyed using an interview guide. The researcher provided semi-structured interview schedule with questions related to the research objectives. Using an interview schedule, the study's primary informants, sub county education directors, were able to provide in-depth data. Interviews are the most common method researchers use to get qualitative data. Researchers can gain deeper insight into people's ideas by conducting interviews, rather than by filling out questionnaires (Alshenqeeti, 2014). Interviewing is also a useful tool for studying the formation and negotiation of meanings in a natural situation, according to Alshenqeeti (2014). In addition, interviews are valuable given they allow subjects to express themselves verbally and emotionally about the topic under investigation; hence, it provides a comprehensive snapshot, analyses language, and reports thorough opinions of informants (King, Horrocks& Brooks, 2018).

### 3.6 Pilot Study

To ensure the validity and reliability of the research tools, a pilot study was conducted. Eight public secondary schools within Kericho County participated in pilot study representing 10% of sampled schools. Those who participated in pilot study was 8 principals, 8deputy principals and 8senior teachers from selected schools representing 10% of the sample size.

### **3.7.1 Validity of Research Instruments**

According Hayashi, Abib and Hoppen (2019), validity is the correctness, accuracy, significance, and reliability of the results of study conclusions. Both on the content and the face validity of the study instruments, the researcher sought the advice of experts from Kisii University's school of educational studies. Before beginning the data collection procedures, the study's instrument was improved based on the expert's comments. A small number of principals in the neighbouring Kericho County, which has similar features as Bomet County, also tested the equipment. Piloting is considered significant in establishing the content validity of the instrument and in improving formats, questions and scales. Content validity encompasses the methodical scrutiny of the test content with an aim of establishing whether it covers a characteristic sample of behaviour aspect being investigated (Dunn, 2020).

### **3.7.2 Reliability of Research Instruments**

This metric assesses how well a research tool reproduces the same results or data over and over again. It is only through doing a pilot study that the researcher was able to determine whether or not the questionnaire items are sufficiently clear to collect the data needed for the study and, if necessary, make changes as a result (Taber, 2018). According to Taber (2018), conclusions drawn from research results are correct as well as relevant if they are based on evidence that accurately represents the phenomenon under investigation. Experts indicated that a questionnaire is valid and reliable if it measures the parameters for which it was designed. No matter how many variables influence the precision and generalizability of a survey tool or concept, determining the precision of data and describing options for generalizing precision and enhancing replication opportunities always remained scientific evidence of a scholarly study (Saxe *et al.*, 2017).

The instruments of study were administered in consistent fashion to enable reliability by using Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha to compute for each item to determine the reliability of the research instrument. The instrument's internal dependability is considered to be at least 0.7 reliability coefficients high (Taber, 2018). Likert scale type questions are best assessed for reliability using Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha, which aggregates all the items and provides advise on which item should be discarded if it fails to obtain the data intended to gather (Safa, Von Solms&Furnell, 2016). Before conducting a full-scale research study, piloting and calculating obtained data is necessary to ensure the validity of research instruments and familiarize researchers with the administration of the questionnaires. It is at this stage that the instrument is deemed fit for data collection of the said research.

### **3.8 Data Collection Procedures**

The Board of Graduate Studies of Kisii University wrote an introduction letter to the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) to request an authorization letter (permission) for research. Bomet County's Commissioner and Director of Education received the research authorization letters from the researcher. In addition, to explain the study's goals and methodologies to school administrators, head teachers set appointments for the researcher. The researcher then handed out questionnaires to the participants for them to fill out on their own. In addition, the researcher provided interview guidelines and coordinate interview times with school principals. Each respondent's data were compiled and recorded in accordance with the plan.

### **3.9 Data Analysis and Presentation**

In order to analyse data collected with a view to making deductions and inferences, data were classified, categorized and analysed in accordance with study objectives. Both qualitative and quantitative data analysis techniques were used. This was done since each data type (qualitative and quantitative data) have their own unique way of data analysis.

Qualitative data involved a process of data editing, coding, classification, and identifying key themes and sub-themes. Content analysis was used to analyse the responses from interview schedule. Therefore, themes were identified and assigned codes, followed by classification of themes. Themes were then integrated and coding helped in generating new ideas and gathering materials by topic which helped in management of data. Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) note that in qualitative analysis data is analysed in a systematic manner in order to come to conclusion and recommendations.

The quantitative data collected were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics with the help of Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), version 24. The descriptive statistics included percentages, frequencies, standard deviation and mean. To obtain these descriptive statistics the coded data in SPSS were analysed. Tables containing percentages, frequencies, standard deviation and mean as per the variables were produced. The inferential statistics used were correlation and multiple regression.

### **3.10 Ethical Considerations**

Respondents should not be subjected to any bodily or psychological injury as a result of the researcher employing threatening language or asking questions that are irrelevant or embarrassing (Arifin, 2018). Prior to beginning data collection, permission was acquired from Kisii University, and strict adherence to ethical guidelines was enforced to ensure the privacy and confidentiality of all participants. A copy of the NACOSTI permit were sent to the respondents to explain why the study is necessary. If any plagiarism is found during the research project, the intellectual property rights shall be protected. Human decency and respect for all participants in this study were of the utmost importance to the team conducting it. To ensure for plagiarism the research was run through Turnitin software where the requirement is below 20%.

## **IV: DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION**

### **4.1 Influence of Principals' Interpersonal Skills on Management of Student Discipline**

The first objective of the study was to establish the influence of principals' interpersonal skills on management of student discipline in public secondary schools in Bomet County, Kenya.

#### **4.1.1 Principals' Responses on Application of Interpersonal Skills**

The study sought to establish principals' responses on how they applied interpersonal skills in management of student discipline. The study findings were as presented in Table 4.9.

**Table 4.1: Principals' Responses on Application of Interpersonal Skills**

Statements		SA	A	UD	D	SD	Mean	Std. Dev.
I always have empathy in dealing with students and staff issues	F %	15 21.8	45 62.7	2 3.3	1 0.3	9 11.9	3.82	1.14
I actively listen students and staff issues influence student discipline in school	F %	16 22.4	41 57.3	5 6.6	4 5.4	6 8.4	3.80	1.10
I am emotionally intelligent in dealing with student discipline in the school	F %	9 13.1	8 10.7	2 3	38 53.1	14 20.0	2.43	1.28
I apply interpersonal skills concerning student discipline in the school	F %	26 35.5	33 45.7	2 3	5 7.5	6 8.4	3.92	1.19
I am always attentive and careful listening to students complain	F %	26 35.5	33 45.7	2 3	5 7.5	6 8.4	3.90	1.19
I always comprehend what I have heard about students' discipline	F %	11 15.2	10 13.8	5 6.6	10 14.3	36 50.4	2.13	1.30
I always support the useful ideas and honest efforts of teachers concerning students' discipline	F %	25 34.3	32 44.2	2 2.7	10 13.4	4 5.4	3.88	1.17
I always respond positively to communications from students	F %	25 34.3	32 44.2	2 2.7	10 13.4	4 5.4	3.77	1.16
I am always willing to ensure discipline is maintained in school	F %	27 37.9	28 39.1	5 6.3	4 5.1	8 11.6	3.71	1.29
I always build relationships with students and teachers	F %	9 12.1	42 59.0	12 16.2	6 8.1	3 4.6	3.66	0.96
I am always positive concerning students' discipline in school	F %	3 3.5	45 63.0	17 24.3	6 8.1	1 1.2	4.03	0.83

Table 4.9 shows that the vast majority of the principals, 60(84.5%), agreed that they always had empathy in dealing with students and staff issues. However, 10(12.3%) of the principals disagreed that they always

had empathy in dealing with students and staff issues. Further, the study results showed, in terms of mean and standard deviation, that the principals agreed with the statement that they always had empathy in dealing with students and staff issues (mean=3.82, standard deviation=1.14). This finding agrees with the study done by Ijadi-Maghsoodi *et al.* (2017) who alluded that principals with empathy while dealing with students usually have a positive outcome in discipline issues at the end. Principals who show empathy to students who are misbehaving are more likely to have a positive outcome in the discipline process. This is because empathy allows the principal to understand the student's perspective and why they might be behaving the way they are (Kehoe *et al.*, 2018). This understanding can help the principal to find a solution that addresses the underlying issue, rather than just punishing the student. A student who is misbehaving in class might be doing so because they are feeling overwhelmed or stressed. A principal who is empathetic to the student might be able to talk to them about what is going on and help them to develop coping mechanisms for dealing with stress. This would be a much more effective way to address the issue than simply suspending the student or giving them detention. In addition, principals who show empathy to students are more likely to build positive relationships with them. This can make it easier to resolve discipline issues in the future, as the student will be more likely to trust the principal and be willing to listen to them.

Additionally, the study findings revealed that majority of the principals, 57(79.7%), of agreed that they actively listened to how issues affecting the students and staff influenced student discipline in school. Ten (13.8%) of the principals disagreed they actively listened to students and staff issues influencing student discipline in school. In terms of mean and standard deviation, the principals agreed with the statement that they actively listened to students and staff issues influencing student discipline in school (mean=3.80, standard deviation=1.10). This finding coincided with the study by Chicca and Shellenbarger (2018) who purported that listening to students is the key if discipline is to be achieved in school. Listening to students is essential for achieving discipline in school. When students feel heard and respected, they are more likely to be cooperative and follow the rules. They are also more likely to feel motivated to learn and achieve their goals. The benefits of listening to students in the context of discipline. It helps to build trust and rapport between students and teachers. It can help to identify the underlying causes of misbehaviour. It can help to develop more effective disciplinary strategies. It can help to create a more positive and productive learning environment.

Furthermore, it was noted from the study that majority of the principals, 52(73.1%), disagreed that they were emotionally intelligent when dealing with student discipline in their schools. Overall, the principals disagreed with the statement that they were emotionally intelligent when dealing with student discipline in the school (mean=2.43, standard deviation=1.28). This tallied with the study findings by Valente and Lourenço (2020) who noted that students should be handled carefully with emotions being controlled while trying to instil discipline to students.

It was further found that a vast majority, 59(80.2%), of the principals agreed and some, 11(15.9%), disagreed that they applied interpersonal skills concerning student discipline in the school. Further, in terms of mean and standard deviation, the principals agreed with the statement that they used clear communication concerning student discipline in the school (Mean=3.92, standard deviation=1.19). This finding agreed with the study done by Domitrovich *et al.* (2017) who alluded those skills, more so interpersonal, should characterise a head of an institution so as to curb student's indiscipline. The head of an institution needs to be able to communicate effectively with students, teachers, parents, and other stakeholders. This includes being able to listen to and understand different perspectives, as well as being able to clearly articulate expectations and consequences.

A school principal needs to be able to empathize with students, even when they are behaving in an unacceptable way. This means understanding the reasons why students might be misbehaving, and being able to respond in a way that is both fair and compassionate (Chung *et al.*, 2018). The principal will inevitably face challenges in their role, including dealing with student indiscipline. It is important for them to be able to remain calm and composed under pressure, and to be able to bounce back from setbacks (Martinez *et al.*, 2017). As head of an institution, the principal needs to be seen as fair and impartial by all stakeholders. This means consistently applying rules and enforcing consequences, regardless of who the student is or what their circumstances are (Dwyer & Bidwell, 2019). The principal should also lead by example and set a positive tone for the school. This means modelling the behaviour that they expect from students, and being able to inspire and motivate others to achieve their best (Naidoo, 2019).

It was further noted from the study that 59(81.2%) of the principals agreed and 11(15.9%) disagreed that they were always attentive and careful when listening to students' complaints. In terms of mean and standard deviation, the principals agreed with the statement that they are always attentive and careful listening to students complain (Mean=3.92, standard deviation=1.19). This finding concurred with the study done by Meyerhuber (2019) who averred that attentive and careful listening to students' complaints is a crucial for any learning institution.

Nevertheless, the study revealed that many, 46(64.7%), of the principals disagreed that they always comprehended what they heard about students' discipline. Further, the study results also showed, in terms of mean and standard deviation that the principals disagreed with the statement that they always comprehend what they have heard about students' discipline (Mean=2.13, standard deviation=1.30). This finding agrees with the study done by Gardner (2021) who noted that understanding what has been said of about student's discipline is important in maintaining school discipline.

It was further noted that 57(78.5%) of the participants agreed that they always supported the useful ideas and honest efforts of teachers concerning students' discipline. Overall, the principals agreed with the statement that they always supported the useful ideas and honest efforts of teachers concerning students' discipline (Mean=3.88, standard deviation=1.17). This study finding merge with the study done by Adhikari (2018) who stated that supporting ideas, opinions and efforts by teachers towards ensuring students' discipline is imperative.

Further, it was noted from the study that 57(78.5%) of the principals agreed that they always responded positively to communications from students. Generally, the principals agreed with the statement that they always responded positively to communications from students (Mean=3.77, standard deviation=1.16). This study finding agrees with the study done by Gelles *et al.* (2020) who noted that responding positively to student's communication is very important for school discipline.

The study findings also revealed that 55(77.0%) of the participants agreed and 12(16.7%) disagreed that they were always willing to ensure discipline is maintained in school. In terms of mean and standard deviation, the principals agreed with the statement that they were always willing to ensure discipline is maintained in school (Mean=3.71, standard deviation=1.29). This finding correlated with study done by Kalin *et al.* (2017) who stated that willingness to see to it that discipline is maintained in school is paramount.

In addition, it was noted that 51(71.1%) of the participants agreed they always built relationships with students and teachers. Conversely, it was noted that 9(12.7%) of the respondents disagreed that they always built relationships with students and teachers. Overall, the principals agreed they always built relationships with students and teachers (Mean=3.66, standard deviation=0.96). This concurred with the study done by

Sudargini and Purwanto (2020) who stated that building healthy and friendly relationships with students promotes student's discipline.

Finally, 48(66.5%) of the respondents agreed they were always positive concerning students' discipline in school. However, 7(9.3%) of the respondents disagreed they were always positive concerning students' discipline in school. As per the survey results, the principals agreed in terms of mean and standard deviation that they are always positive concerning students' discipline in school (Mean=4.03, Std. dev=0.83). This finding agrees with the study done by Lee *et al.* (2021) who alluded that teachers should be optimistic towards student's discipline in school.

## V: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 5.1 Summary of the Findings

The first objective of the study was to establish the influence of principals' interpersonal skills on management of student discipline in public secondary schools in Bomet County, Kenya. From the study findings, it was shown that the respondents agreed that they always showed empathy in dealing with students and staff. Additionally, the respondents actively listened to students and staff on issues influencing student discipline in school. Furthermore, the respondents showed emotional intelligence in dealing with student discipline in their schools. A vast majority of the respondents exercised clear communication concerning student discipline in their schools. The respondents said they were always attentive and careful when listening to students' complaints. The majority of the respondents always comprehended what they heard about students' discipline. It was further noted that participants always supported the useful ideas and honest efforts of teachers concerning students' discipline. Moreover, the respondents always responded positively to communications from students. The study findings furthermore revealed that the participants were always willing to ensure discipline was maintained in their schools. In addition, the participants always built relationships with students and teachers to enhance discipline. Finally, the respondents were always positive concerning students' discipline in school.

### 5.2 Conclusions of the Study

From the study findings, it is evident that interpersonal, strategic planning, problem-solving and decision-making skills play important roles in managing student discipline. Principals often show empathy when dealing with students' discipline. They also actively listen to students and staff issues influencing student discipline in school. Furthermore, they apply emotional intelligence when dealing with student discipline in their schools.

### 5.3 Recommendations of the Study

Firstly, it is recommended that school principals should prioritize effective interpersonal skills when dealing with students' discipline. More effective strategic planning methods should be employed to address issues influencing student discipline in schools.

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