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School Leadership Support Towards Teachers' Management of Students' Discipline in Uganda Secondary Schools in the Post Corporal Punishment Era-Northern Region

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*Students' Discipline,
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The study explored leadership measures provided by schools' head teachers towards teachers' management of students' discipline in Uganda secondary schools. It adopted two qualitative data collection methods: semi-structured in-depth interviews and document review. Interviews were conducted with 4 head teachers focusing on their leadership support toward discipline management. One-on-one interviews allowed for deeper insights into the topic. Documents review included school policy, training programme for teachers, log books and disciplinary records providing how teachers were supported in managing learners' discipline. Purposive sampling of four schools was done based on the recommendations from the schools' inspectors' report. Data was thematically analysed by grouping it into themes and further assigned codes. To ensure the credibility of the instruments, consistency checks were done throughout the process of coding, transcription, and putting into themes while the instrument's trustworthiness was assessed by pre-testing the instrument questions in 2 schools. The finding indicated that discipline is defined as a system, and these systems are managed through procedures such as discipline code, consultation, guidance, and counselling to modify inappropriate behaviours, provide effective communication, and make school safe by providing a conducive healthy environment. The study recommends that school educators usher disciplinary problems with empathy for the possible problems students may be experiencing at school that cause their indiscipline. This necessitates the use of alternative discipline approaches in schools. Therefore, school teachers should all be taught alternative approaches to school discipline, such as guidance and counselling, to make the school a safe learning environment.

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INTRODUCTION

School leadership refers to the roles and responsibilities of educators who oversee and manage educational institutions. It involves the complex and demanding tasks of ensuring the well-being, development and success of both the school and its students and teachers (Amthal Hamad Al. Oraifan, 2021). School leadership therefore aims at shaping the behaviour of students desirably through promoting the all-round development of personality and evolving morally upright human beings. Discipline evolves decent conduct that contributes to respect for authority and love for orderliness to discharge duties with efficiency and a sense of responsibility that promotes social conscience.

As seen in history, leaders have often enforced discipline by the implementation of physical punishment, dating back to ancient periods such as the rules of Sparta, Troy, Athens, and various other Greek city-states (Wasef, 2021). This practice was prevalent in the medieval Christian church and was also observed in Judaism. It persisted in the legal systems of certain European towns as early as the 11th century in ancient Israel and was customary in traditional civilizations such as Egypt (Wasef, 2021) and the early churches as well adopted it to cultivate human faith, (Dupper & Dingus, 2008). In the late 18th century, there were advancements in methods used to manage learners' discipline which prioritizes correction rather than retribution (Gershoff, 2017) which led to the development of alternative methods of discipline management.

Nevertheless, indiscipline among school students is a major problem faced by school educators worldwide, for example, in Uganda, the Daily Monitor, January 5th, 2021 reported the incident involving the death of a senior student at Kyamate secondary school in Ntungamo district after their dormitory was reportedly set ablaze by bullies, brings to the force of violence of bullying in school,

media reports that the dorms were allegedly set ablaze by students who had been suspended for bullying colleagues (corporally punishing other students). It is important to acknowledge that certain types of physical punishment form a component of enduring behaviour among adolescents. This condition typically develops gradually and tends to escalate when not effectively controlled by school leaders.

Ministry of Education and Sports (Government of Uganda, 2006) had expressed serious concern over growing indiscipline among students, raising violence, hatred, drug abuse and other social problems that enter the schools. The ministry has emphasized the importance of effective school leadership as a means of promoting understanding and tolerance among students and that school discipline cannot, however, be developed in isolation, it involves co-operative work. The Ministry emphasised the importance of school leaders in strengthening the desire for cooperation and affording students opportunities to translate it into practice. Punitively, punishments involve employing a noxious or painful stimulus that generates a variety of problems and negative side effects to students are discouraged and the fact is that those who implement punishment rarely question the rules and their effects on overall development, self-esteem, and interest in learning.

Governments worldwide including Uganda made a commitment to grant all children equal rights by adopting the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children (CRC) (UNICEF, 1992). The Convention safeguards children from any kind of physical and mental harm, as stated in Article 37 and Article 39, and also respects the child's human dignity as aligned with the principles outlined in the Convention Article 28(2). Similarly, the Ugandan Government in her Constitution of 1995 enacted the

law on the ban on physical punishment specifically Article 24 of the constitution.

While the law has been effective in eliminating corporal punishment as a means of managing students' inappropriate behaviour in schools in industrialized countries like the United States of America and Europe, Uganda presents a different scenario (Musa & Martha, 2020). The prevalence of caning in primary and secondary schools in Uganda is concerning, as it can result in severe and lasting physical harm, and in certain cases, even fatalities (Musa & Martha, 2020). Previous studies in Uganda (Ssenyonga et al., 2019) have shown its negative impact on students' retention and learning achievement. This study therefore explored leadership support towards teachers' management of students' discipline from schools that have demonstrated exemplary discipline management as per the school inspectors' reports.

LITERATURE REVIEW.

Theoretical Framework

The study was informed by two theories: The assertive Discipline Model advanced by Lee and Marlene Canter as cited in (Bechuke and Debella, 2012), and the Choice theory developed by William Glaser in 1999. The assertive Discipline model specifically targeted classroom discipline management. It emphasizes that teachers teach students discipline through a disciplinary framework consisting of rules and the corresponding consequences. This involves determining the rules and expectations, presenting them to the students, and checking their compliance. It emphasizes effective communication, positive behaviour, reinforcement of learners' adherence to rules, rewarding, and providing positive encouragement, (Onyango, 2016a).

The choice theory developed focuses on the requirements for autonomy, a feeling of inclusion, a fair distribution of authority, and the desire for enjoyment. The theory prioritizes facilitating learners' success by instructing them in the art of making suitable decisions, the theory emphasizes that learner's conduct is a direct outcome of their choices. The theory explains that teachers must assist learners in choosing appropriate alternatives to

facilitate a child-friendly environment that promotes positive learning.

Empirical Review.

School Leadership investigation support towards teachers' management of students' discipline in Nigeria and quantitative survey methods collected data from respondents. The study established that throughout Nigerian schools, school educators had been dealing with steady compliance with leadership options in discipline management. The current research bridged this gap by carrying out the study in Uganda. It adopted a qualitative approach and case study designed using inspectors' reports on schools that demonstrated exemplary leadership skills.

A quantitative study on head teachers' leadership skills in supporting staff was carried out in secondary schools in Kenya (Aboagye, 2019). The article examined the management styles of head teachers using questionnaires as the main tool for data collection instrument. The article explores different management and supportive styles of head teachers in primary schools, the current study attempts to bridge this gap by carrying out such study in secondary schools.

Furthermore, the influence of discipline management by school head teachers on students' academic performance was investigated by Kiggundu (2009) in Central Uganda. The study adopted a quantitative approach and survey design. The study found that well-developed school rules and regulations which are known to teachers helped them in controlling students' discipline. The current study attempted to fill in the gap in the literature by adopting a qualitative design, case study design in-depth interviews with respondents, and document review to ascertain the practice, and conduct the study in Northern Uganda.

Olaitan et. al. (2013) carried out a study on the management of disciplinary problems in secondary schools. The study examined the causes of disciplinary problems using a variety of techniques and approaches including the involvement of teaching staff actively in discipline management as well as providing moderate right syndrome and formulation of behavioural expectations for teachers

and students in Nigerian secondary schools. The study adopted a quantitative approach with a survey design with a study population comprising 150 school management population, 450 teaching staff, and 574 non-teaching staff. Self-developed questionnaires comprising four liked responses rating scales were used for data collection. The current study attempted to bridge this gap by carrying out such a study in four secondary schools in Uganda and collecting data using in-depth interviews with head teachers only.

Recent research on the strategies used by head teachers in supporting and managing learners' discipline, however, studies have revealed that punitive strategies appear to be of limited usefulness in promoting responsible student behaviour (Jean-Pierre & Parris, 2019; Ajowi & Simatwa, 2010; Nayaya & Ajibola A. Lukman, 2013; Halu-Halu, 2013), discipline is associated with teaching students self-control based on a contract that binds a teacher and a group of students together to make learning more effective. Thus, emphasis is put on student self-regulation by negotiating, discussing, and contracting between teachers and students to let the group take responsibility for appropriate behaviour as cited in (Onyango, 2016a). Effective student discipline management is linked to teachers' ability to set appropriate behaviour and gain learners' respect and cooperation in school, (Onyang, 2016). Caring teachers choose relationship-based discipline strategies like discussions to support their students, (Asad, 2020; Lwazi Sibana, 2016; Bayraktar & Dogan, 2017; Onyango, 2017). This means that teachers provide exemplary role models for fostering imitative supportive behaviour among their students. This argument was further supported by Lema and Gwando (2018) who provide evidence that students who perceived high levels of teacher support were much less likely to engage in antisocial conduct towards their peers at school. To Ofoyuru & Tookema, (2011) counselling supports students and tames their character. Eyasu (2019) and Joanne (2016) consider counselling an important strategy for managing students' inappropriate behaviour. Similarly, (Sekiwu & Naluwemba, 2016) confirmed that teachers' roles include guidance/counselling

and developing learners' skills to take up future responsibilities.

In Uganda, head teachers' management styles and secondary school students' discipline were investigated. The study adopted a cross-sectional survey design with a quantitative approach and data collected from 700 students and 25 head teachers. The findings indicated that head teachers' dominantly used management styles in supporting teachers do not correlate significantly with the discipline of students and that discipline is mainly dependent on other factors such as social, economic and environmental, but not one's dominantly used management method. Though head teachers guide teachers and students in morality-related issues, sometimes the guidance falls on deaf ears. The current study attempted to fill the gap in the literature by adopting a qualitative approach with a case study design and, conducting the study on only head teachers in Northern Uganda only.

Conversely, there seems to be a severe lack of alignment between the head teachers' support of their teachers in discipline issues. Furthermore, neurological evidence indicates that teachers support students engaged in misbehaviour without considering the necessary repercussions (Chitiyo et al., 2022). As previously said, students engaged in misbehaviour due to a range of factors, including academic challenges that need guidance and counselling. This implies that misbehaviour is a manifestation of crisis communication. Moreover, research has shown that emotional and behavioural challenges have a strong need for more intimate teacher-student interactions (Simatwa, 2010) because informational power holds the potential to cultivate effective communication and intimacy between teachers and students.

METHODOLOGY.

The research adopted a qualitative approach grounded in an interpretive paradigm, using multi-case design to explore school leadership support towards teachers' management of students' discipline in Uganda secondary schools during the post-corporal punishment era. An interpretive paradigm operates on the premise that reality is subjective, multifaceted, and socially created through languages, consciousness, and shared

meaning, it emphasizes individuals' subjective experiences, (Chanda, 2022). Semi-structured in-depth interviews and document reviews were used as qualitative methods for data collection, the in-depth interviews allowed for deeper insights into the exploration of leadership provided such as training while documents review supported evidence on the management of students' discipline which were retrieved from school policy, school training programme, log books and disciplinary records. Data was collected purposively from 4 schools whose head teachers had shown exemplary discipline management based on the recommendations from the school inspectors' report. Purposive sampling targeted head teachers in providing school leadership support to teachers (Amankwaa & Revell, 2016). Interviews were conducted with 4 head teachers focusing on their leadership support toward discipline management while audio recording at the same time from each respondent. Thematic analysis was adopted, following Braun and Clark's (2006) framework. Repeated reading of the transcript and listening to audio recorded provided formalization with the data which led to coding and themes development. The credibility of the instrument was further ensured by piloting the instrument in two schools, while adherence to COVID-19 guidelines as part of ethical issues in the research.

PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS.

In presenting and interpreting the results: The schools visited were coded as follows: A_s=Aboke School, J_s= Ocer Jesuit School, R_s= Restore School, P_s = Peter and Paul School. Results for in-depth interviews with head teachers are presented and identified codes were as: IDIHTRA_s = In-Depth Interviews with Headteacher of Aboke School, IDIHTRJ_s = In-Depth Interviews with Headteacher of Ocer Jesuit School, IDIHTRR_s = In-Depth Interviews with Headteacher of Restore School and IDIHTRP_s = In-Depth Interviews with Headteacher of Poke School.

Documents viewed from schools were coded as: DAA_s = Documents Analysis from Aboke School, DAJ_s = Documents Analysis from Ocer Jesuit School, DAR_s= Documents Analysis from Restore

High School, and DAP_s = Documents Analysis from Poke School. The results of the findings revealed that: the use of rules/regulations, effective communication, providing rewards/encouragement, guidance and counselling, dialogue meetings/discussions and alternative school discipline were the major school leadership support towards teachers management of discipline.

Rules/regulations.

School leadership support towards teachers' management of students' discipline requires rules/regulations, and through rules/regulations; teachers are supported to uphold strict moral conduct for the learners in schools. In support of rules/regulations in school to enhance discipline, (IDIHTRA_s) had this to say;

“school rules and regulations are official school documents that administrators use for supporting teachers in managing students' discipline and she explained that rules/regulations should be clear and that, new students are oriented on “.

Similarly, (IDIHTRP_s) supported the ideas and had this to say:

“Rules/regulations are guiding principles that students should follow and should be made part of the school routine and therefore schools are expected to teach teachers to foster harmony amongst learners”. While (IDIHTRJ_s) added “rules/regulations are used as tools for disciplining, this help school disciplinary committee in handling cases of indiscipline”.

Finally, (IDIHTRR_s) said;

“rules/regulations should be clearly understood by teachers to orient with students”.

This argument was triangulated with the reviewed code of conduct for learners' manual/school rules and regulations which indicated that all four schools sampled had the school code of conduct for learners (DAA_s, DAJ_s, and DAP_s); however, in 1 out 4 schools (DAR_s), the code of conduct for learners was not clear and was not signed by the school board of governor. Therefore, the document was not considered authentic. However, there was evidence

in all the schools (DAAs, DAJs, DARs and DAPs) sampled that copies of the school code of conduct for the students had been given to parents and students themselves. And that all stakeholders were involved and consented with the school code of conduct for students. Evidence to that effect was the availability of minutes for the annual meeting of the parents, which were also included in the agenda for the meeting (DAA_s, DAJ_s, DAR_s), except for (DAP_s).

Effective communication,

All the school head teachers shared a similar opinion that communication was one way school leadership supports teachers' management of students' behavioural problems. The responses obtained imply that effective communication is used to support teachers in managing learners' discipline. Although some of their broad explanations depict authoritative communication, many of them explain the importance of communication in managing discipline. During the interviews, some of the examples of their responses captured were as follows:

IDIHTRA_s said:

"Effectively communicating to teachers supports them and as a result their roles in School can be clearly seen and therefore, effective communication should be done for example in; meetings, assemblies and workshops by teachers to promote learners' discipline."

Similarly, **IDIHTRJ_s** said that:

"Effective communication means communication to teachers and students on their roles in school, involvement of students in different activities, and regular meetings and giving orientation to new students so that they become part of the system. "

Furthermore, the two head teachers explained broadly that effective management requires effective communication to foster the necessary discipline if a school is to achieve its goal. Disciplinary measures are therefore expected to be communicated to teachers timely so that they enforce compliance on the indiscipline students. They gave some reasons to

support their explanations: **IDIHTRR_s**, and **IDIHTRP_s**. They said, "Effective communication when done through student *conferences meetings, spiritual talk, individual counselling, group and peer counselling, dialoguing with students, understanding student's issues, involvement of parents in discipline helped management shade light to discipline process at school.* "

Fellowship programs and rewards

Headteachers explained that schools cannot function well without spiritual prayers. The component of the religious curriculum is vital to help guide students morally, therefore the school leadership supports teachers spiritually to help curtail indiscipline behaviour in schools. In their explanations captured during the interviews;

IDIHTRA_s had this to say,

"Developing students spiritually through routine prayer programs uphold their faith help to inculcate self-discipline,

IDIHTRJ_s said,

"Fellowship programs and rewards are school leadership support system to manage discipline"

And, IDIHTRP_s also explained that,

"Spiritual growth and development through church services to tame immoral conduct, promote character development that support discipline management"

To support this claim further, (**IDIHTRA_s**) had this to say;

"Meetings, on the other hand, help school educators to disseminate school rules/regulations and responsibility, help orient new students into the school system, and make learners understand deeply disciplinary matters. As a school educator, this is one way a school can handle disciplinary matters".

Supplementary to these claims, minutes of the staff disciplinary committee, which was scrutinized during the documents review, indicated that in all the four schools studied (DAA_s, DAJ_s, DAR_s, and DAP_s), minutes show that almost every school had

between 1 to 3 cases of indiscipline which were reported and handled by the school disciplinary committee termly. In some instances, students solve cases themselves through prefectural bodies, as reported by members of the staff disciplinary committee. Prefect bodies were found to be very active in Restore High School (DAR_s), as evidenced by the minutes of their disciplinary committee meeting filed properly in the disciplinary committee file.

Guidance/counselling or spiritual talks.

In the context of providing alternative supportive disciplinary measures to students, the research findings revealed that adopting techniques like guidance and counselling was found useful in maintaining discipline in school, although they explained that this may require training of teachers on it. In trying to manage challenging students' behaviour in schools, head teachers need to provide training to teachers on how to support their students. In the interviews with head teachers, they maintained the importance of guidance and counselling. The examples of their explanations of the themes are given below:

IDIHTRA_s said:

“The school need timetabled sessions generally for guidance and counselling, and that, there are certain cases where individual needs counselling, then they are referring to the senior woman teachers, but also during school assemblies and school seminars, especially during the orientation of the new students, school give counselling to the whole school.”

On the other hand, (IDIHTRJ_s) had negative explanations about the implementation of guidance and counselling because of the lack of qualified personnel. He had this to say:

“The known issue of concern is the lack of trained/ expertise in teachers who handle guidance and counselling, aware that the lack of resources makes it difficult for the teachers to implement the program effectively; otherwise, it is one of the programs we utilise to curtail indiscipline in our school.”

It also emerged from documents reviewed from schools that students conference meetings, spiritual talks, individual counselling, group and peer counselling, making rules and regulations known to both students and teachers dialoguing with students, understanding students' issues, involvement of parents in discipline management & counselling the culprit immediately on indiscipline act as it occurs were some of the disciplinary measures used at the school. The findings from documents reviewed were not very different from what was reported by (IDIHTRR_s) and (IDIHTRP_s), for example; (IDIHTRR_s) explained that;

“There is time allotment for guidance and counselling from senior one to senior six students, and we hold guidance/counselling sessions with them. So there is a benefit for it because we teach different topics where all students can benefit, for example, there are topics like substance and drug abuse, HIV/AIDS, teenage pregnancy”.

Further interviews with (IDIHTRP_s) revealed that the disciplinary measures applied at their school are guidance, counselling, and actual disciplining of the indiscipline students. To him, guidance and counselling were offered through clubs, such as health clubs and child rights clubs, and also follow up on issues that require students to be counselled and be head teachers. He added: *“Some of the guidance and counselling services include having student conferences meetings, providing spiritual talk by the school priest, individual counselling, group counselling, and peer counselling.”*

Alternative to instilling discipline.

Additionally, an alternative to instilling discipline was mentioned as school leadership support towards teachers' management of school discipline. Headteachers explained that alternative discipline was introduced in 2006 when the government of Uganda banned corporal punishment in all educational institutions; this was because the issue of children's rights within the context of disciplinary measures was found to be one crucial issue in the dispensation of modern education. To improve school discipline, they reported that guidance and counselling were also effective in dealing with

indiscipline because they addressed the problem directly. It emerged from head teachers' explanations that guidance and counselling are an alternative school discipline offered mainly through meeting sessions. This implies that teachers are to be supported in doing counselling services.

This statement was supported by the (*IDIHTRA_s*), who stated that;

"Teachers' knowledge in counselling services creates orderliness in school and provides motivation to students which makes them take responsibility for their behaviour in the school."

Additionally, (*IDIHTRJ_s*), explained that an alternative disciplining procedure is a school leadership support needed by teachers toward discipline management, this makes students and teachers share their pride in the school community. Similar information was also obtained during the interview with (*IDIHTRP_s*), who confirmed the benefit of school leadership support toward teachers' management of discipline, to him, the school disciplinary committee supports teachers in tracking the incidents of misbehaviour as well as understanding the students' problems and reporting the state of discipline affair to the school's head teacher.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS.

All head teachers defined discipline as an organized system set to guide/change the behaviour of students for the proper running of the school, such as in the areas of time management (*IDIHTRJ_s*, *IDIHTRR_s*, and *IDIHTRP_s*) and character development as well as self-control (*IDIHTRA_s*). From the findings, it emerged that disciplinary code (rules/regulations), effective communication, providing guidance/counselling, dialogue meetings/discussions and alternative school discipline represents the key findings related to leadership support to teachers toward school discipline management. For example, the study's findings showed that school head teachers provided rules/regulations to teachers. This support was done through the development and implementation of policies to support the well-being of students. Findings revealed that educators discussed these rules/regulations with teachers and student leaders at different stages of the formulation. Furthermore, the

study established that meetings and assemblies were the preferred ways for teachers to pass information to students. These findings align with the studies by (Musa & Martha, 2020; Maphosa & Shumba, 2010) which showed that providing regulations /rules through discussions is a strategic way of managing school discipline and that failure to implement rules and regulations leads to the collapse of discipline in schools. Kaman (2021) further argues that sufficient use of rules and regulations in terms of time management on the part of students and school administrators is directly associated with increased academic performance.

The study further established that effective communication is one of the school leadership supports towards teachers' management of students' discipline; this was evident by school educators having communication through meetings with teachers who in turn supported students' leadership through workshops and seminars which were useful. This finding is similar to that of (Jasmine, 2014) in a study on the strategies for managing students' discipline; they found communication, rewards, punishment, and counselling as strategies for managing students' discipline in secondary school. This is in tandem with the views of (Amin et al., 2021), who found communication a prominent method of supporting teachers in maintaining students' discipline.

The further finding shows that restorative justice practices used in these schools have helped in reducing unbecoming behaviours in schools, here restoring hope has helped the teacher to guide students in gaining confidence in their lives, and this was done through career guidance and counselling (career talks), use of spiritual leaders to mentor teachers to reduce indiscipline. According to the findings, school leadership support towards teachers' management of discipline requires knowledge of guidance/ spiritual counselling to the teachers to inspire their students to behave well, supporting teachers through guidance and counselling provides pivotal roles in improving learners' welfare in school. These findings agreed with that of Onyango (2016b) on the central role in managing student behaviour problems by offering

guidance and counselling services to teachers through training and capacity building.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS.

Conclusion.

In general, by considering the findings of this study, the results revealed that there is established school leadership support towards teachers' management of students' discipline which involves discussions/dialogue meetings, use of rules/regulations, providing guidance and counselling techniques to teachers and effective communication to teachers and alternative discipline techniques knowledge by teachers are vital in the management of student's discipline in secondary school when teachers are supported on.

Recommendations

Considering the findings and conclusions of the study, the researcher proposes the following: Educational professionals should approach disciplinary issues with compassion, considering the potential challenges that children may face at school and home that contribute to their lack of discipline. Thus, it is imperative to implement alternative disciplinary methods in all educational institutions. Consequently, it is essential to provide comprehensive training to head and school teachers on alternative ways to discipline, including guidance and counselling.

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