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Forms of Student Indiscipline in selected Public Secondary Schools: Teachers' and Heads of School Perspectives from Chalinze District Council, Tanzania

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Abstract: **Student indiscipline remains a great challenge in public secondary schools due to its effect on the quality of teaching and learning, security at school, and effective school management. This study sought to identify the common forms of student indiscipline in public secondary schools in Chalinze District Council, Tanzania, from teachers' and heads of school perspectives. Instructional Leadership Theory guided this study, which adopted a pragmatic research philosophy and used a convergent mixed-methods design. A total of 103 participants took part in this study including 94 teachers and nine heads of school. Questionnaires were used to gather data from teachers, whereas semi-structured interviews were used to gather data from heads of school. Documents such as disciplinary registers, attendance records, and incident reports formed the third source of data. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics mainly frequencies and percentages, while qualitative data were thematically analysed. The findings showed that truancy/absenteeism and lateness were the most commonly reported forms of student indiscipline, identified by 42 teachers. Following this were fighting, violence and bullying, which were reported by 35 teachers, while disrespect towards school authority was reported by 16 teachers. Forms of academic misconduct and substance abuse were each reported by nine teachers. Other forms included lesson skipping, disruption in class, making noises, theft, vandalism, improper dressing and sexual misconduct. Further findings from interviews indicated that student indiscipline interfered with classroom teaching, created fear among learners, and imposed additional workload to school administrators. The study concluded that student indiscipline is multidimensional in nature and hence the need for systematic approaches at the school level in response. It recommends improved classroom supervision, enforcing of school regulations, provision of guidance and counselling services, and working collaboratively between school leaders, teachers and parents.**

Keywords: **Student indiscipline, public secondary schools, teachers' perspectives, heads of school, Chalinze District Council, Tanzania.**

1. INTRODUCTION

Student indiscipline remains a challenge in educational systems all over the world owing to its interference with classroom management, school security, relations between teachers and students, and teaching and learning processes. Secondary schools are expected to instill in learners respect, responsibility, cooperation and adherence to school regulations. However, such challenging behaviors as classroom disruption, bullying, aggressiveness, absenteeism, verbal abuse, and academic misconduct remain a big challenge to teachers and school administrators. UNESCO (2024) underscores the significance of

a safe learning environment in promoting the wellbeing and participation of learners in the learning process. Student indiscipline is thus a multidimensional phenomenon with various forms which can be distinguished by their prevalence, severity, and context, thereby necessitating their identification for proper school management.

In Africa, student indiscipline poses a great challenge to the maintenance of orderly learning environments and positive relations in schools. Commonly investigated forms of student indiscipline include lateness, absenteeism, fighting, bullying, and disrespect towards teachers and classroom disruption. Ntshangase (2025) underscores the importance of the study of student discipline in relation to teachers, learners and their environments. These perspectives indicate that student indiscipline should not be treated as a homogenous phenomenon since the forms in which it manifests itself vary according to the organizational arrangements and environment. Likewise, in East Africa, investigation of the forms of student indiscipline becomes contextually relevant owing to the diversity of school policies and administrations and community environments in the region. An investigation of the experiences of teachers and heads of school can provide evidence about the forms of student misconduct that interfere with teaching and learning process.

In Tanzania, various empirical studies have been conducted on various forms of student indiscipline in public secondary schools. For instance, Yona and Leandry (2021), in their study in Morogoro Municipality, explored forms of student misconduct experienced by teachers, including inappropriate behavior towards teachers and the use of mobile phones inappropriately. On the other hand, Gervas (2023), in Bukoba Municipality, identified the following forms of student indiscipline: abusive language, stealing of students' property, absenteeism without authorization, lateness, failure to submit homework, classroom noise, fighting and examination malpractice. In a similar study, Kinanda (2024) explored teachers' perceptions of disruptive behaviors in Mwanza City and Ukerewe District including classroom noise, truancy and aggressiveness. These findings show that student indiscipline takes various forms including attendance-related misconduct, classroom disruption, interpersonal misconduct, misconduct involving property, and academic misconduct.

At the local level, public secondary schools in Chalinze District Council provide a context of investigation into student indiscipline. Teachers come into direct contact with students during lessons and other activities in schools and hence are able to observe classroom disruptions, lateness, absenteeism and violation of school rules. Heads of school manage school administration and discipline procedures and hence can give their views regarding the forms of student indiscipline that may affect the whole school.

However, despite the evidence provided by studies conducted in Morogoro, Bukoba and Mwanza, findings from these studies cannot be automatically generalized to Chalinze District Council since none of the reviewed studies identifies the common forms of student indiscipline in Chalinze through the comparison of teachers' and heads of school perspectives. Thus, this study represents both a contextual and an empirical gap that deserves investigation. Therefore, this study will explore the common forms of student indiscipline in public secondary schools in Chalinze District Council, Tanzania. More specifically, it will investigate the forms of student indiscipline experienced by teachers and heads of school, perspectives regarding student indiscipline, and the areas of agreement and differences.

2. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study were guided by the following research questions:

1. What forms of student indiscipline are commonly experienced in selected public secondary schools in Chalinze District Council?

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study were guided by Instructional Leadership Theory, developed by Hallinger and Murphy (1985). According to this theory, school leaders have the responsibility of setting school goals, managing the instructional programme and providing the learning environment which encourages learning. In this regard, the theory suggests that the heads of school have the obligation of establishing behavioral expectations for learners, supervising teaching and learning, monitoring the progress of learners and ensuring that the school regulations enhance teaching and learning. In public secondary schools, lack of supervision and inconsistent application of school rules may make it possible for such behaviors as truancy, lateness, bullying, fighting, classroom disruption, and disrespect towards teachers to interfere with teaching and learning.

This theory is relevant to this study as it will guide the investigation of the common forms of student indiscipline from teachers' and heads of school perspectives in Chalinze District Council. It will serve as a theoretical framework for analyzing how student misconduct affects classroom management, instruction time, school security and the general learning environment. The study will be guided by three concepts namely supervision of teaching and learning, enforcement of school rules, and creation of a safe and orderly school environment. Through these concepts, the theory will help explain the significance of school leadership in the identification and management of student misconduct. Nonetheless, the study will recognize that student indiscipline may be influenced by peer relations, family environment and individual learner characteristics. Instructional Leadership Theory will thus serve as the principal theoretical framework in analysis of the findings without making an assumption that school leadership determines student behavior.

4. LITERATURE REVIEW

Forms of Student Indiscipline in Public Secondary Schools

Student indiscipline continues being a challenge in educational institutions since it affects classroom management, school security, attendance and the delivery of education. They include bullying, verbal abuse, physical aggressiveness, classroom disruption, truancy, lateness, and violation of school rules. Recent global literature reveals the necessity of dealing with bullying and providing safe learning environments as well as the literature on educational disengagement shows that understanding of attendance and participation challenges should be understood in the socio-institutional context (UNESCO, 2022, 2024). These behaviors are multidimensional in nature and may be intentional violations of school rules or some difficulties which require appropriate interventions on the part of teachers and school leaders.

In Africa and East Africa, student indiscipline may take such forms as absenteeism, fighting, disrespect towards teachers, classroom noise, theft, incomplete homework and examination malpractice. However, their prevalence and severity depend on the environment in which schools operate, regulations in place and the environment. In Tanzania, Kinanda (2024) identifies noise, truancy, delinquency and aggressiveness in public secondary schools in Mwanza City and Ukerewe District. In a similar study, Gervas (2023) identified abusive language, theft, absenteeism without explanation, lateness, incomplete homework, classroom noise, fighting and examination malpractice in public secondary schools in Bukoba Municipality. Kisisiwe et al. (2024) also explored student discipline management in public secondary schools in Temeke Municipality. They showed the necessity of addressing misconduct that threatens the order and security in schools. These studies demonstrate that student indiscipline covers a wide range of behaviors from classroom disruption to attendance, interpersonal, academic and property-related misconduct.

However, despite these studies, findings from other Tanzanian councils cannot establish the forms of indiscipline which are most prevalent in Chalinze District Council. While teachers may experience frequent classroom noise, lateness, incomplete homework and refusal to obey instructions, the heads of school may have to deal with absenteeism, fighting, theft and violation of school rules regularly. These are the issues that require empirical investigation rather than established facts about Chalinze District Council. Moreover, studies of particular student behaviors or strategies of addressing student discipline may fail to adequately compare teachers' and heads of school perspectives on the range and prevalence of student indiscipline.

There is thus an empirical gap in relation to the common forms of student indiscipline in public secondary schools in Chalinze District Council. The present study will bridge the gap through the investigation of the forms of student indiscipline reported by teachers and heads of school, comparison of their perspectives and identification of the forms which they see as the most prevalent. The findings of this study will be useful in the management of student indiscipline.

5. METHODOLOGY

For this study, a pragmatic research philosophy and a mixed-methods design adopted to investigate common forms of student indiscipline in public secondary schools, namely teachers' and heads of school perspectives from Chalinze District Council, Tanzania (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). The study involved 103 participants, consisting of 94 teachers who provided quantitative data through questionnaires and nine heads of school who provided qualitative data through semi-structured interviews. Documentary review of disciplinary registers, attendance records, and incident reports supplemented the primary data. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics especially frequencies and percentages, while qualitative data were thematically analyzed. The two sets of data was integrated in the process of interpretation in order to identify areas of similarities and differences in the common forms of student indiscipline.

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Validity enhanced through the expert review and pilot testing of research instruments. Questionnaire reliability was tested using Cronbach's alpha where appropriate with a coefficient of 0.70 and above considered adequate. Qualitative validity was enhanced through triangulation and detailed documentation of the analytical process. Ethical principles were observed in obtaining the necessary research permissions and informed consent, voluntary participation, confidentiality and anonymity when appropriate and use of the collected data solely for academic purposes.

6. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Forms of Student Indiscipline in selected Public Secondary Schools

Objective one was to investigate the common forms of student indiscipline experienced in public secondary schools in Chalinze District Council. The respondents were asked to identify the forms of student indiscipline that they frequently experience in their respective schools. Since respondents reported more than one form of indiscipline, the total frequencies are more than the number of respondents (N = 94). The findings are shown in 1

Common Forms of Student Indiscipline in Public Secondary Schools (N = 94)

Common Form of Student Indiscipline	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Truancy, absenteeism and lateness	42	44.7
Fighting, violence and bullying	35	37.2
Disrespect toward school authority	16	17.0
Academic misconduct and substance abuse	9	9.6
Escaping lessons/class hours	8	8.5
Classroom disruption and noise-making	5	5.3
Theft and destruction of school property	4	4.3
Poor dressing and sexual misconduct	4	4.3
Negative peer influence/family-related factors	4	4.3

Source: Field Data (2026)

1. Truancy, Absenteeism and Lateness

The data in Table 1 show that truancy, absenteeism and lateness were the most frequently reported forms of student indiscipline identified by 42 teachers (44.7%). These forms of misconduct affected students' participation in learning activities and continuity of the teaching process. The results of interviews corroborated the above-mentioned data, as the following quotation indicates: *"Drug abuse, lateness to school and classes are among the disciplinary issues of students. Those who take drugs usually can't concentrate during lessons, can't attend school regularly and their academic performance drops drastically. In order to handle these students, one has to provide continuous guidance and supervision." (Head of School 5)*

In fact, the above findings are consistent with Gervas (2023) and Fumito and Kinyaduka (2025). Both of them found that absenteeism, lateness and truancy are problems of discipline of students in Tanzanian secondary schools. Keppens (2023) also associated school absenteeism with poor academic performance. With regard to Instructional Leadership Theory, the above findings emphasize the need for attendance control, supervision, guidance and counseling as well as collaboration between school leaders, teachers and parents to improve punctuality of students and their regular attendance to school.

2. Fighting, Violence and Bullying

Table 4.3 reveals that fighting, violence and bullying were the second most frequently reported forms of student indiscipline identified by 35 teachers (37.2%). These forms of indiscipline were characterized by the fact that they created fear, disturbed classroom instruction and undermined relationships between students. The results of interviews confirmed the quantitative findings. As one Head of School put it: *"Conflicts among students are rather common occurrences, mainly caused by misconceptions, the influence of peers and personal conflicts. In case of occurrence of conflicts, I can't go on with teaching until the problem is solved. I sometimes call the parents of the students to solve misunderstandings." (Head of School 8)*

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Another Head of School revealed that the problem of bullying, theft and threats was that these forms of indiscipline made students feel unsafe and unwilling to participate in school activities. The participants named peer influence and personal conflicts as the factors that made these problems appear, which required counseling and parental involvement.

In fact, the above findings are consistent with Kılıç and Künü (2022). They have identified fighting and bullying as disciplinary problems in secondary schools. At the same time, the above findings may be explained by Instructional Leadership Theory that emphasizes the need to maintain a safe learning environment. Consequently, the school leaders should improve the supervision of students, peer counseling, conflict resolution programs and collaboration with parents in order to reduce violent behaviour of students.

3. Aggressive and Violent Behavior

Table 1 shows that fighting, violence and bullying were reported by 35 respondents (37.2%), thus they constituted the second most frequent forms of student indiscipline. Classroom disturbances and noise-making accounted for 5.3%, while stealing and vandalism accounted for 4.3%. The mentioned forms of misconduct disrupted teaching, threatened students' safety and negatively affected their participation in learning activities.

The results of interviews confirmed the above quantitative data. One Head of School stated the following: *"Conflicts among students arise in the classroom regularly. This is further complicated by the presence of misunderstandings, peer influence, or personal conflict among students. Once a conflict occurs, I must stop the lesson to resolve the conflict, and learning comes to a halt." (Head of School 2)*

One more participant reported that the problems of bullying and threats created fear and discouraged students to participate in school activities. It turns out that the aggressive behaviour of students goes far beyond the problem of fighting and includes intimidation, bullying and disturbances that require spending much time on the part of the school leaders for solving conflicts and involving parents into the process.

It should be noted that the above findings are consistent with Kılıç and Künü (2022). They identified fighting and bullying as disciplinary problems in secondary schools. The findings also support Instructional Leadership Theory, which emphasizes the need to maintain a safe learning environment. Thus, the school leaders should improve the supervision of students, peer counseling, conflict resolution strategies and collaboration with parents in order to reduce aggressive behaviour of students.

4. Disrespect Towards School Authority

Table 4.3 demonstrates that disrespect, disobedience and abusive language were reported by 16 respondents (17.0%) and constituted the third most frequently reported form of student indiscipline. Improper dressing and sexual harassment were also reported by 4.3% of the respondents. Such forms of indiscipline demonstrate violations of school regulations and undermine the authority of teachers as well as classroom discipline.

The results of interviews confirmed the above findings. One Head of School explained the situation as follows: *"Certain students fail to treat teachers properly. They disobey teachers, violate school regulations, and sometimes make improper comments during their communication with teachers. This is harmful to discipline as it can be an example for other students if the problem is not solved." (Head of School 5)*

As a result, it turns out that disrespectful behaviour of students creates tension between teachers and students, violates compliance with school regulations and interferes with teaching. It is consistent with Andrea and Leandry (2021). They found that disrespect to teachers is a disciplinary concern in public secondary schools in Morogoro Municipality.

At the same time, the findings are consistent with Instructional Leadership Theory. The theory emphasizes the need to set behavioural expectations and create a positive school climate. Thus, the school leaders should improve guidance and counseling, enforce school regulations consistently, establish proper relations between teachers and students and collaborate with parents in order to improve the behaviour of students.

5. Academic Misconduct and Substance Abuse

Table 4.3 shows that academic misconduct, including examination cheating and failure to complete assignments, and substance abuse were reported by 9 respondents (9.6%). Although they are not so frequently reported as truancy and aggressive behaviour, these practices undermine academic integrity, participation of students in learning activities and

educational achievements.The results of interviews corroborated the above findings. One Head of School said: *"Drug abuse, lateness to school and classes are among the disciplinary issues of students. Those who take drugs usually can't concentrate during lessons, can't attend school regularly and their academic performance drops drastically. In order to handle these students, one has to provide continuous guidance and supervision." (Head of School 5)*

Another participant associated examination cheating and substance abuse with peer influence, inadequate preparation and lack of parental supervision. It means that the mentioned misconduct requires appropriate disciplinary actions and preventive measures.

As a matter of fact, the findings are consistent with Instructional Leadership Theory. The theory emphasizes the need to create the environment conducive to learning and promote responsible behaviour of students. The school leaders should improve guidance and counseling, promote academic integrity, implement substance-abuse prevention programs and collaborate with parents in order to address the factors that contribute to the mentioned behaviours.

6. Other Forms of Student Indiscipline

Table 4.3 shows other forms of student indiscipline, including lesson skipping reported by 8 respondents (8.5%); classroom disturbances and noise-making reported by 5 respondents (5.3%); and vandalism, stealing, improper dressing and sexual offences reported by 4 respondents (4.3%). Peer influence and family-related challenges were also identified as possible factors.

The results of interviews confirmed the above data. As the following quotation demonstrates: *"In addition to absenteeism and fighting, there are cases when the students run away from lessons. There are even those who leave the school without permission or avoid some lessons. This kind of behavior negatively impacts academic performance and requires monitoring from the teaching staff and administration." (Head of School 3)*

The participants reported that classroom disturbances interfered with learning, while vandalism damaged school property and increased the costs of its maintenance. It means that even less frequently reported behaviors could disrupt school discipline and create unfavorable learning environment.

It should be noted that the findings are consistent with Kılıç and Künü (2022). They identified classroom misconduct, vandalism and absenteeism as disciplinary concerns. At the same time, the findings are also consistent with Instructional Leadership Theory emphasizing the need to maintain a safe learning environment. In such a way, the school leaders should improve classroom supervision, enforce school regulations consistently and collaborate with teachers and parents in order to prevent misconduct.

7. CONCLUSION

The study concludes that student indiscipline in public secondary schools in Chalinze District Council takes various forms including lesson skipping, classroom disturbances, noise-making, vandalism, stealing, improper dressing and sexual offenses. Even though these forms of indiscipline were less frequently reported than truancy and aggressive behaviour, they disturbed teaching and learning, violated compliance with school regulations and even caused damage to school property. The findings suggest that peer influence and family-related challenges may be the factors that contribute to student misconduct. Effective management of student indiscipline requires consistent classroom supervision, enforcement of school regulations, guidance and counseling as well as collaboration between school leaders, teachers and parents.

8. RECOMMENDATION

The school leaders in Chalinze District Council should improve the prevention and management of student indiscipline by improving classroom supervision, consistent enforcement of school regulations, providing guidance and counseling and collaborating with parents in order to address the misconduct associated with peer influence and family-related challenges.

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