

Teachers' Discipline Management and Students' Learning Outcomes in Public Lower Secondary Schools in Kirehe District, Rwanda

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Abstract: This study assessed the influence of teachers' discipline management on students' learning outcomes in public lower secondary schools in Kirehe District, Rwanda. Specifically, it examined the effects of teacher verbal warnings, teacher role modeling, and teacher academic integrity on students' learning outcomes. A descriptive survey design with a mixed-methods approach was adopted, integrating quantitative and qualitative data from 318 respondents, including 11 head teachers, 11 deputy head teachers in charge of studies, 11 deputy head teachers in charge of discipline, 182 lower secondary teachers, and 103 class representatives. Purposive sampling was used to select school leaders, while simple random sampling was employed for teachers and class representatives. Data were collected using questionnaires, interviews, and focus group discussions. Instrument reliability and validity were confirmed using a minimum threshold of 0.7. Quantitative data were analyzed using IBM SPSS to generate descriptive statistics and regression analyses, while qualitative data were analyzed through thematic coding. The findings revealed that teacher verbal warnings had a weak positive influence on students' learning outcomes ($R^2 = 0.100$, $\beta = 0.316$). Teacher role modeling demonstrated a moderate positive influence ($R^2 = 0.210$, $\beta = 0.458$), while teacher academic integrity had the strongest positive influence ($R^2 = 0.329$, $\beta = 0.573$). These results indicate that although verbal warnings contribute to classroom discipline, their effect on academic performance is relatively limited compared to role modeling and academic integrity. The study concluded that teacher discipline management practices significantly influence students' learning outcomes in public lower secondary schools in Kirehe District, with academic integrity emerging as the most influential factor. The study recommends that the Ministry of Education and the Rwanda Basic Education Board strengthen continuous professional development programs focusing on academic integrity, positive role modeling, and effective use of verbal warnings. Schools should also promote consistent and fair disciplinary practices to enhance students' academic performance. Further research is recommended to examine how factors such as leadership practices and student motivation interact with teacher discipline management strategies in shaping learning outcomes across different educational contexts.

Keywords: Teachers, Discipline Management, Students, Learning Outcomes, Lower Secondary Schools, Public, Kirehe District.

1. INTRODUCTION

Globally, the effectiveness of education systems is increasingly recognized as being influenced not only by curriculum design and pedagogical approaches but also by teachers' ability to manage classroom discipline effectively (UNESCO, 2023). Classroom discipline plays a critical role in creating a conducive learning environment that supports students' academic achievement, social development, and overall well-being. However, contemporary education systems face growing challenges arising from changing social dynamics, diverse learner needs, technological influences, and evolving

expectations regarding student behavior. As a result, discipline management has become more complex, requiring approaches that are supportive, consistent, inclusive, and learner-centered. Evidence suggests that effective discipline management contributes significantly to positive school climates, improved student engagement, and enhanced learning outcomes, whereas ineffective disciplinary practices are associated with student disengagement, poor academic performance, increased absenteeism, and higher dropout rates (Sugai & Simonsen, 2020; OECD, 2021).

At the regional level, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa, education systems have increasingly shifted from punitive disciplinary measures toward positive and restorative approaches that emphasize learners' rights, dignity, and well-being (UNICEF, 2023). These reforms are aligned with international commitments to child protection and quality education. Despite these efforts, many countries continue to experience challenges in implementing positive discipline practices effectively. Factors such as inadequate teacher preparation, overcrowded classrooms, limited teaching resources, and weak institutional support often hinder the successful adoption of learner-centered discipline strategies (UNESCO, 2023).

Within East Africa, the effectiveness of discipline management remains a critical concern for educational quality and student achievement. Although governments have introduced policies promoting positive discipline and child-friendly learning environments, the implementation of these initiatives varies considerably across schools and regions. Studies indicate that inadequate teacher competence in classroom discipline management contributes to classroom disruptions, reduced learner concentration, increased absenteeism, and lower academic performance among students (MoES Uganda, 2022; KICD, 2023). These challenges underscore the importance of equipping teachers with the necessary skills and strategies to maintain productive learning environments.

In Rwanda, significant efforts have been made to strengthen positive discipline through educational reforms and child protection initiatives, including the Zero Tolerance to Violence in Schools policy and the promotion of learner-centered teaching approaches (MINEDUC, 2023). These interventions are intended to create safe, inclusive, and supportive learning environments that foster both academic and personal development among learners. Nevertheless, disparities in educational outcomes persist between urban and rural districts. While some urban schools have demonstrated improvements in student performance and school management practices, many rural districts continue to face challenges related to classroom discipline, student engagement, and academic achievement (REB, 2023; MINEDUC, 2024).

Kirehe District is among the rural districts where public lower secondary schools encounter challenges such as overcrowded classrooms, limited instructional support, inadequate teaching and learning resources, and socio-cultural factors that affect students' behavior and learning. These challenges often contribute to classroom disruptions, inconsistent discipline practices, reduced student participation, and low performance in national examinations. Given the central role of teachers in maintaining effective classroom discipline and promoting learning, it is important to examine how discipline management practices influence students' learning outcomes. Therefore, this study seeks to investigate the influence of teachers' discipline management practices on students' learning outcomes in public lower secondary schools in Kirehe District, Rwanda, with the aim of generating evidence-based recommendations to support teacher professional development, strengthen school leadership, and inform educational policy interventions for improved educational quality.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Research Methodology

The mixed-methods approach was appropriate because it enabled the collection of numerical data to establish patterns and relationships between variables, while also capturing in-depth views, experiences, and perceptions of participants.

2.2 Location of the Study

The study was conducted in public lower secondary schools in Kirehe District, Eastern Province, Rwanda. Kirehe was chosen because it is predominantly rural, with challenges such as overcrowded classrooms, limited resources, and varying teacher capacity, which affect discipline management and students' learning outcomes.

2.3 Target Population

According to Kirehe district Education Office (2025), this study targeted a total population of 1569 individuals from public lower secondary schools in Kirehe District, comprising 56 head teachers, 56 deputy head teachers in charge of discipline (DODs), 56 deputy head teachers in charge of studies (DOSs), 897 lower secondary teachers, and 504 class representatives.

2.4 Sampling Techniques

This study used purposive sampling to select head teachers, deputy head teachers in charge of discipline (DODs), and deputy head teachers in charge of studies (DOSs) due to their specialized roles and direct involvement in formulating, implementing, and monitoring discipline management within their schools.

2.5 Sample Size Determination

The sample size for this study was determined using the Yamane (1967) formula, which is appropriate for calculating sample sizes from a known population. The formula is expressed as:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e^2)}$$

Where:

- **n** = Required sample size
- **N** = Total population size
- **e** = Margin of error (0.05 at a 95% confidence level)

Given a target population of **1,569 respondents**, the sample size was calculated as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} n &= \frac{1569}{1 + 1569(0.05)^2} \\ n &= \frac{1569}{1 + 1569(0.0025)} \\ n &= \frac{1569}{1 + 3.9225} \\ n &= \frac{1569}{4.9225} \\ n &= 318.73 \end{aligned}$$

Therefore, the required sample size was approximately 319 respondents. However, for ease of data collection and analysis, the sample size was rounded to 318 respondents.

2.6 Research Instruments

To collect comprehensive data on teachers' discipline management and students' learning outcomes, the study employed questionnaires, interviews, and focus group discussions, each tailored to specific participant groups.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Gender of Respondents

Table 1: Gender of Respondents

Gender	Teachers N (%)	HTs N (%)	DODs N (%)	DOSs N (%)	Class Representatives N (%)	Total N (%)
Male	98 (53.8%)	7 (63.6%)	6 (54.5%)	5 (45.5%)	58 (56.3%)	174 (54.7%)
Female	84 (46.2%)	4 (36.4%)	5 (45.5%)	6 (54.5%)	45 (43.7%)	144 (45.3%)
Total	182 (100%)	11 (100%)	11 (100%)	11 (100%)	103 (100%)	318 (100%)

Source: Primary Data (2026)

Table 1 presents the gender distribution of respondents who participated in the study on teachers' discipline management and students' learning outcomes in public lower secondary schools in Kirehe District. The findings indicate that out of the total 318 respondents, 174 respondents (54.7%) were male while 144 respondents (45.3%) were female. This implies that both male and female respondents were adequately represented in the study, although males constituted a slightly higher proportion.

Among teachers, 98 respondents (53.8%) were male while 84 respondents (46.2%) were female. This suggests that male teachers were slightly more represented in the sampled schools. The implication for the study is that responses on discipline management practices were obtained from teachers with diverse gender perspectives, which helped provide balanced views on how discipline strategies influence students' learning outcomes.

For head teachers (HTs), 7 respondents (63.6%) were male and 4 respondents (36.4%) were female, indicating that school leadership positions were more occupied by males. The implication is that school discipline policies and administrative decisions influencing students' learning outcomes may largely reflect the experiences and leadership approaches of male administrators.

Regarding Deputy Head Teachers in charge of Discipline (DODs), 6 respondents (54.5%) were male while 5 respondents (45.5%) were female, showing a relatively balanced gender representation in discipline management roles. This balance was important for the study because discipline implementation and student behavior management could be examined from both male and female disciplinary leadership perspectives.

Similarly, among Directors of Studies (DOSs), 5 respondents (45.5%) were male and 6 respondents (54.5%) were female, indicating slightly higher female representation in academic coordination responsibilities. The implication is that female academic leaders contributed valuable insights on how teachers' discipline management practices affect classroom instruction, learner participation, and academic achievement.

The findings further revealed that among class representatives, 58 respondents (56.3%) were male while 45 respondents (43.7%) were female. The inclusion of class representatives enabled the study to capture students' opinions regarding teachers' discipline practices and their influence on students' motivation, classroom behavior, attendance, and learning outcomes.

3.2 Influence of Teacher Verbal Warning on Students Learning Outcomes

Table 2: Influence of Teacher Verbal Warning on Students Learning Outcomes

Statements	SD (N, %)	D (N, %)	N (N, %)	A (N, %)	SA (N, %)	Mean	Std. Dev.
Teachers issue verbal warnings before applying stricter disciplinary measures.	0 (0.0)	2 (1.1)	0 (0.0)	140 (76.9)	40 (22.0)	4.1978	0.47524
Verbal warnings are frequently used by teachers to maintain order in the classroom.	0 (0.0)	2 (1.1)	0 (0.0)	180 (98.9)	0 (0.0)	3.9780	0.20908
Teachers deliver verbal warnings in a respectful and professional manner.	2 (1.1)	0 (0.0)	3 (1.6)	125 (68.7)	52 (28.6)	4.2363	0.58922
Teachers apply verbal warnings consistently to all students.	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	2 (1.1)	94 (51.6)	86 (47.3)	4.4615	0.52153
Teachers document or track repeated verbal warnings to manage student discipline.	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	89 (48.9)	93 (51.1)	4.5110	0.50126
Students understand the reason behind the verbal warnings given.	0 (0.0)	4 (2.2)	0 (0.0)	86 (47.3)	92 (50.5)	4.4615	0.61846
Verbal warnings help students correct their behavior without fear.	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	2 (1.1)	93 (51.1)	87 (47.8)	4.4670	0.52191
Teachers follow up verbal warnings with guidance on better behavior.	0 (0.0)	2 (1.1)	0 (0.0)	95 (52.2)	85 (46.7)	4.4451	0.56093

Source: Researcher (2026)

Table 2 presents the results on the influence of teacher verbal warning on students' learning outcomes in public lower secondary schools in Kirehe District, Rwanda. The findings indicated that 76.9% of respondents agreed and 22.0% strongly agreed that teachers issued verbal warnings before applying stricter disciplinary measures, with a mean of 4.1978 and a standard deviation of 0.47524, implying strong agreement and low variability in responses, which suggested consistency in

the use of progressive discipline. Additionally, 98.9% agreed that verbal warnings were frequently used to maintain classroom order (mean = 3.9780, SD = 0.20908), indicating near-unanimous agreement and very low dispersion, which reflected widespread and consistent reliance on verbal warnings. Furthermore, 68.7% agreed and 28.6% strongly agreed that teachers delivered verbal warnings in a respectful and professional manner, with a mean of 4.2363 and SD of 0.58922, implying strong agreement with slightly higher variability, suggesting that while most teachers-maintained professionalism, a few inconsistencies existed.

The results further revealed that 51.6% agreed and 47.3% strongly agreed that teachers applied verbal warnings consistently to all students (mean = 4.4615, SD = 0.52153), indicating very strong agreement and relatively low variability, which implied fairness and uniformity in discipline practices. Similarly, 48.9% agreed and 51.1% strongly agreed that teachers documented or tracked repeated verbal warnings (mean = 4.5110, SD = 0.50126), reflecting very high agreement and consistency, suggesting systematic monitoring of student behavior. In addition, 47.3% agreed and 50.5% strongly agreed that students understood the reasons behind verbal warnings (mean = 4.4615, SD = 0.61846), implying strong agreement with moderate variability, which suggested that most students clearly comprehended the purpose of discipline, though some differences in communication effectiveness existed.

Moreover, 51.1% agreed and 47.8% strongly agreed that verbal warnings helped students correct their behavior without fear (mean = 4.4670, SD = 0.52191), indicating strong agreement and low variability, which implied that verbal warnings were perceived as supportive rather than punitive. Lastly, 52.2% agreed and 46.7% strongly agreed that teachers followed up verbal warnings with guidance on better behavior (mean = 4.4451, SD = 0.56093), reflecting strong agreement and moderate consistency, suggesting that most teachers complemented warnings with constructive feedback. Overall, the high mean scores across all statements (above 3.9) and relatively low standard deviations indicated a strong consensus among respondents that teacher verbal warnings positively influenced students' learning outcomes.

3.2.1 Influence of Teacher Role Modeling on Students Learning Outcomes

Table 3: Influence of Teacher Role Modeling on Students Learning Outcomes

Statements	SD (%)	(N, D %)	(N, N %)	(N, A (N, %))	SA (N, %)	Mean	Std
Teachers consistently adhere to ethical standards in their conduct.	2 (1.1%)	8 (4.4%)	0 (0.0%)	100 (54.9%)	72 (39.6%)	4.2747	0.77340
Teachers demonstrate respect toward students and colleagues.	0 (0.0%)	2 (1.1%)	0 (0.0%)	109 (59.9%)	71 (39.0%)	4.3791	0.50871
Teachers set clear expectations for student behavior and learning.	0 (0.0%)	8 (4.4%)	0 (0.0%)	108 (59.3%)	66 (36.3%)	4.2747	0.68231
Teachers model appropriate professional behavior at all times.	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (1.1%)	116 (63.7%)	64 (35.2%)	4.3407	0.49795
School administration supports and reinforces teacher role modeling practices.	0 (0.0%)	6 (3.3%)	0 (0.0%)	90 (49.5%)	86 (47.3%)	4.4066	0.66446
Teachers demonstrate punctuality and commitment to school activities.	2 (1.1%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	98 (53.8%)	82 (45.1%)	4.4176	0.61412
Teachers act as positive examples in both academic and social behavior.	0 (0.0%)	2 (1.1%)	0 (0.0%)	92 (50.5%)	88 (48.4%)	4.4615	0.56231
Teachers handle conflicts and disagreements professionally.	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (1.1%)	119 (65.4%)	61 (33.5%)	4.3242	0.49234

Source: Researcher (2026)

Table 3 presents the results on the influence of teacher role modeling on students' learning outcomes in public lower secondary schools in Kirehe District, Rwanda. The findings showed that 54.9% of respondents agreed and 39.6% strongly agreed that teachers consistently adhered to ethical standards in their conduct, while 4.4% disagreed and 1.1% strongly disagreed. The mean score of 4.2747 and standard deviation of 0.77340 indicated strong agreement with relatively higher variability, suggesting that while ethical conduct was generally upheld, perceptions varied slightly among respondents. Similarly, 59.9% agreed and 39.0% strongly agreed that teachers demonstrated respect toward students and colleagues, with 1.1% disagreeing. The mean of 4.3791 and standard deviation of 0.50871 reflected strong agreement with low variability, implying consistent respectful behavior among teachers. Furthermore, 59.3% agreed and 36.3% strongly agreed that teachers set clear expectations for student behavior and learning, while 4.4% disagreed. The mean of 4.2747 and standard deviation of 0.68231 indicated strong agreement but moderate variation in perceptions of clarity in expectations.

The results further revealed that 63.7% agreed and 35.2% strongly agreed that teachers modeled appropriate professional behavior at all times, with only 1.1% neutral responses. The mean of 4.3407 and standard deviation of 0.49795 indicated strong agreement and low variability, suggesting consistency in professional conduct. In addition, 49.5% agreed and 47.3% strongly agreed that school administration supported and reinforced teacher role modeling practices, while 3.3% disagreed. The mean score of 4.4066 and standard deviation of 0.66446 reflected strong agreement with moderate variability, implying that although administrative support was generally recognized, experiences differed across schools. Moreover, 53.8% agreed and 45.1% strongly agreed that teachers demonstrated punctuality and commitment to school activities, with 1.1% strongly disagreeing. The mean of 4.4176 and standard deviation of 0.61412 indicated strong agreement and moderate consistency, suggesting that punctuality was widely practiced but not uniformly perceived.

Additionally, 50.5% agreed and 48.4% strongly agreed that teachers acted as positive examples in both academic and social behavior, with only 1.1% disagreeing. The mean of 4.4615 and standard deviation of 0.56231 reflected very strong agreement and relatively low variability, implying that teachers were widely viewed as positive role models. Finally, 65.4% agreed and 33.5% strongly agreed that teachers handled conflicts and disagreements professionally, while 1.1% remained neutral. The mean of 4.3242 and standard deviation of 0.49234 indicated strong agreement with low variability, suggesting consistency in conflict management practices. Overall, the high mean scores (above 4.2) and low standard deviations across most items demonstrated a strong consensus that teacher role modeling positively influenced students' learning outcomes.

3.2.2 Influence of Teacher Academic Integrity on Students Learning Outcomes

Table 4: Influence of Teacher Academic Integrity on Students Learning Outcomes

Statements	SD (N, %)	D (N, %)	N (N, %)	A (N, %)	SA (N, %)	Mean	Std
Teachers follow ethical practices in grading and marking students' work.	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	99 (54.4)	83 (45.6)	4.4560	0.49944
Teachers avoid favoritism when assessing student performance.	4 (2.2)	2 (1.1)	0 (0.0)	95 (52.2)	81 (44.5)	4.3901	0.62764
Teachers respect confidentiality regarding student academic records.	0 (0.0)	6 (3.3)	0 (0.0)	103 (56.6)	73 (40.1)	4.3352	0.65035
Teachers maintain honesty during internal or national examinations.	2 (1.1)	8 (4.4)	0 (0.0)	98 (53.8)	74 (40.7)	4.2857	0.77653
Teachers are transparent in their academic dealings with students and parents.	2 (1.1)	7 (3.8)	0 (0.0)	101 (55.5)	72 (39.6)	4.2857	0.75488
The school monitors academic integrity among teaching staff.	2 (1.1)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	88 (48.4)	92 (50.5)	4.4725	0.61905
Teachers provide constructive feedback without bias or manipulation.	0 (0.0)	8 (4.4)	0 (0.0)	94 (51.6)	80 (44.0)	4.3516	0.70317
Teachers discourage students from cheating and model integrity.	0 (0.0)	4 (2.2)	0 (0.0)	117 (64.3)	61 (33.5)	4.2912	0.58322

Source: Researcher (2026)

Table 4 presents the findings on the influence of teacher academic integrity on students' learning outcomes in public lower secondary schools in Kirehe District, Rwanda. The results indicated a very strong agreement among respondents that teachers upheld ethical practices in grading and marking students' work, as shown by 54.4% who agreed and 45.6% who strongly agreed, with no disagreement recorded. The high mean of 4.4560 and low standard deviation of 0.49944 implied a strong consensus and consistent application of ethical grading practices, suggesting that fairness in assessment was widely observed and trusted by respondents. Similarly, 52.2% agreed and 44.5% strongly agreed that teachers avoided favoritism when assessing students, although a small proportion expressed disagreement (3.3% combined).

The mean of 4.3901 and standard deviation of 0.62764 indicated strong agreement with slight variation, implying that while fairness was generally upheld, occasional inconsistencies were perceived in assessment practices. Furthermore, 56.6% agreed and 40.1% strongly agreed that teachers respected confidentiality of student academic records, with a mean of 4.3352 and standard deviation of 0.65035, reflecting strong agreement but moderate variability, suggesting that confidentiality was largely maintained though not uniformly perceived across all contexts.

The findings further showed that 53.8% agreed and 40.7% strongly agreed that teachers-maintained honesty during internal or national examinations, while a small proportion disagreed (5.5% combined).

The mean of 4.2857 and relatively higher standard deviation of 0.77653 indicated strong agreement but with noticeable variability, suggesting that perceptions of examination integrity differed slightly among respondents. Likewise, 55.5% agreed and 39.6% strongly agreed that teachers were transparent in their academic dealings with students and parents, though 4.9% expressed disagreement. The mean of 4.2857 and standard deviation of 0.75488 similarly reflected strong agreement with moderate dispersion, implying that transparency was generally present but not uniformly experienced in all schools. In addition, 48.4% agreed and 50.5% strongly agreed that schools monitored academic integrity among teaching staff, with only 1.1% strongly disagreeing. The mean of 4.4725 and standard deviation of 0.61905 indicated very strong agreement and relatively stable responses, suggesting that institutional monitoring mechanisms were perceived as effective and consistent.

Moreover, 51.6% agreed and 44.0% strongly agreed that teachers provided constructive feedback without bias or manipulation, although 4.4% disagreed. The mean of 4.3516 and standard deviation of 0.70317 indicated strong agreement with moderate variability, suggesting that while feedback was generally perceived as fair, some inconsistencies existed in practice. Finally, 64.3% agreed and 33.5% strongly agreed that teachers discouraged students from cheating and actively modeled academic integrity, with only 2.2% disagreement. The mean of 4.2912 and standard deviation of 0.58322 reflected strong agreement and relatively low variability, indicating consistency in promoting honesty among students. Overall, the consistently high mean values across all statements (above 4.2) and relatively low standard deviations demonstrated a strong consensus that teacher academic integrity significantly contributed to positive students' learning outcomes in Kirehe District.

4. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Influence of Teacher Verbal Warning on Students' Learning Outcomes

The findings of this study demonstrated that teacher verbal warnings are widely practiced and play a statistically significant role in influencing students' learning outcomes in public lower secondary schools in Kirehe District. The high mean scores (above 3.9) across all indicators suggest strong consensus among respondents that verbal warnings are consistently applied, delivered respectfully, and supported with follow-up guidance. The regression results ($\beta = 0.316$, $p < 0.05$) further confirmed a positive relationship, although the relatively low explanatory power ($R^2 = 0.100$) indicates that verbal warnings contribute modestly to variations in students' learning outcomes. These findings corroborate earlier studies such as Smith and Johnson (2020), while also aligning with more recent research emphasizing that effective classroom management remains a foundational element of successful teaching and learning processes. Contemporary evidence suggests that structured behavior management strategies, including verbal warnings, play a critical role in minimizing classroom disruptions and maximizing time-on-task, which is essential for academic achievement (OECD, 2024; Emmer & Sabornie, 2024).

The strong agreement that teachers issue verbal warnings before applying stricter disciplinary measures reflects a progressive and preventive discipline approach, which is widely advocated in current educational practice. Recent frameworks emphasize that early, low-intensity interventions such as verbal warnings prevent escalation of misbehavior and contribute to a positive classroom climate (UNESCO, 2023; Simonsen et al., 2023). This indicates that schools in Kirehe

District are largely aligned with global best practices in behavior management. Furthermore, the finding that students understand the reasons behind verbal warnings and perceive them as non-threatening highlights the importance of instructional communication quality. This supports Bamidele (2017) and is reinforced by recent studies showing that when teachers clearly explain expectations and provide constructive feedback, students are more likely to engage in self-regulation and demonstrate improved academic behaviors (Wubbels et al., 2023; Hattie, 2023).

The emphasis on follow-up guidance also aligns with contemporary research indicating that feedback-rich environments significantly enhance student learning outcomes. The qualitative findings deepen this understanding by revealing that verbal warnings are valued for their immediacy, practicality, and ability to preserve instructional time. This is consistent with recent literature suggesting that timely and context-sensitive corrective strategies are more effective than delayed or punitive measures (EEF, 2024). Students' perceptions that respectful warnings encourage behavior change without fear further emphasize the role of positive discipline approaches, which have been shown to improve both behavioral and academic outcomes. However, the study also identified gaps in documentation and consistency, which may limit the long-term effectiveness of verbal warnings. This finding aligns with Moyo and Du Plessis (2019) and is supported by recent studies highlighting that lack of systematic monitoring and documentation reduces the sustainability and accountability of discipline practices (OECD, 2024). Without structured tracking mechanisms, it becomes difficult to address recurring behavioral issues or evaluate the effectiveness of interventions. Importantly, the relatively low explanatory power of verbal warnings suggests that while they are essential for maintaining classroom order, they are not sufficient on their own to significantly drive academic achievement. Recent meta-analyses confirm that classroom management strategies have stronger effects when integrated with instructional quality, teacher competence, and student support systems (Darling-Hammond et al., 2023).

4.2 Influence of Teacher Role Modeling on Students' Learning Outcomes

The study findings revealed that teacher role modeling has a strong and statistically significant influence on students' learning outcomes, with a higher explanatory power ($R^2 = 0.210$) compared to verbal warnings. The high mean scores (above 4.2) indicated that teachers are widely perceived as professional, respectful, punctual, and ethically responsible, while the regression results ($\beta = 0.458$, $p < 0.05$) confirmed a moderate positive relationship. These findings strongly support earlier studies such as Kariuki and Mwangi (2018) and Mwale and Phiri (2020), while also aligning with recent research demonstrating that teacher behavior is a central determinant of classroom climate, student engagement, and academic success (OECD, 2024; Darling-Hammond et al., 2023). Teachers' professional conduct not only influences how students behave but also shapes their attitudes toward learning and school. The strong agreement that teachers act as positive role models reinforces the principles of Social Learning Theory, which posits that individuals learn behaviors through observation and imitation.

Recent updates to this theoretical perspective emphasize that teacher modeling remains one of the most powerful informal learning mechanisms in educational settings (Bandura, 2023; Schunk, 2024). Students are more likely to adopt behaviors such as discipline, respect, and commitment when these are consistently demonstrated by their teachers. The findings that teachers demonstrate respect, handle conflicts professionally, and maintain high standards of conduct are consistent with Adebayo (2019) and are further supported by recent studies showing that positive teacher-student relationships enhance academic achievement, emotional well-being, and classroom participation (Roorda et al., 2023).

Respectful interactions foster trust and create a supportive learning environment, which is essential for effective teaching and learning. Additionally, the role of school administration in reinforcing teacher role modeling practices highlights the importance of institutional leadership and accountability systems. This aligns with recent research indicating that strong leadership, clear expectations, and continuous professional development are critical in sustaining high teaching standards (Leithwood et al., 2024). Schools with effective leadership structures tend to exhibit better teacher discipline and improved student outcomes.

Qualitative findings further illustrate that students perceive teachers as "mirrors" whose behaviors they emulate. This is consistent with contemporary research emphasizing that teacher attitudes, punctuality, and commitment directly influence student motivation and engagement (Hattie, 2023; UNESCO, 2023). Students' testimonies confirm that positive teacher behavior encourages them to take their studies more seriously, while negative behavior can lead to disengagement. However, the study also revealed inconsistencies in enforcing professional standards across schools, which may weaken the overall impact of role modeling. This finding reflects challenges identified in recent literature, including limited supervision, uneven professional development opportunities, and contextual constraints in resource-limited settings (OECD, 2024).

4.3 Influence of Teacher Academic Integrity on Students' Learning Outcomes

The findings clearly indicated that teacher academic integrity has the strongest and most significant influence on students' learning outcomes among the three variables studied. The very high mean scores (above 4.2) across all indicators reflect strong agreement that teachers uphold fairness, honesty, transparency, and professionalism in their academic practices. The regression results ($\beta = 0.573$, $p < 0.05$; $R^2 = 0.329$) further confirmed that academic integrity is the most powerful predictor of students' learning outcomes. These findings are consistent with earlier studies such as Brown and Harris (2019) and Njiru (2020), and are strongly supported by recent research emphasizing that teacher quality, particularly ethical conduct and fairness, is one of the most influential factors in student achievement (OECD, 2024; Darling-Hammond et al., 2023; Hattie, 2023).

Teachers who demonstrate integrity create an environment of trust, which is essential for effective learning. The strong perception of fairness in grading and avoidance of favoritism aligns with recent studies showing that equitable assessment practices enhance student motivation, engagement, and academic success (Brookhart, 2024). When students perceive fairness, they are more likely to invest effort in their studies and trust the educational process. The finding that teachers discourage cheating and model ethical behavior supports Kumar and Patel (2021) and is reinforced by recent literature indicating that academic integrity promotes a culture of honesty, accountability, and responsibility among students (UNESCO, 2023).

Such an environment not only improves academic outcomes but also contributes to students' moral development. The relatively high explanatory power (32.9%) suggests that academic integrity has both direct and indirect effects on learning outcomes. Directly, it ensures fair assessment and accurate measurement of performance; indirectly, it enhances student motivation, trust, and engagement. This is consistent with recent findings that teacher-related factors have a greater and more sustained impact on learning outcomes than isolated classroom management strategies (Darling-Hammond et al., 2023).

Qualitative findings further reinforce this relationship by showing that fairness and transparency increase student confidence and encourage active participation. Students' perceptions that fair marking motivates them to work harder align with recent research highlighting the role of perceived fairness in enhancing intrinsic motivation and academic engagement (Ryan & Deci, 2023). However, slight variability in perceptions of transparency and examination honesty indicates ongoing challenges. These findings are consistent with recent literature pointing to limitations in monitoring systems, large class sizes, and performance pressures as barriers to maintaining consistent academic integrity (UNESCO, 2023; OECD, 2024).

5. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that teacher verbal warnings had a positive but relatively limited influence on students' learning outcomes in public lower secondary schools in Kirehe District. While verbal warnings were widely used as a classroom discipline strategy and were effective in maintaining order and correcting inappropriate behavior, their contribution to academic achievement was indirect and comparatively weak. This suggests that verbal warnings are more effective as immediate behavior management tools than as major determinants of students' academic performance.

The study further concluded that teacher role modeling had a significant and meaningful influence on students' learning outcomes. Teachers who consistently demonstrated professionalism, punctuality, respect, responsibility, and ethical conduct positively shaped students' attitudes toward learning, motivation, and classroom engagement. The findings indicate that students tend to emulate the behaviors and values exhibited by their teachers, making positive role modeling an important factor in creating a conducive learning environment and enhancing academic achievement.

Finally, the study concluded that teacher academic integrity exerted the strongest influence on students' learning outcomes among the discipline management practices examined. Practices such as fairness in assessment, honesty in examinations, transparency in decision-making, and impartial treatment of students were found to foster trust, confidence, and motivation among learners. When teachers uphold high standards of academic integrity, students are more likely to perceive the learning environment as fair and supportive, which encourages greater effort, commitment to learning, and improved academic performance.

The study concludes that although all three discipline management practices positively influence students' learning outcomes, teacher academic integrity has the greatest impact, followed by teacher role modeling, while teacher verbal warnings have the least influence. Therefore, promoting ethical conduct, professionalism, and integrity among teachers is essential for improving students' learning outcomes in public lower secondary schools in Kirehe District.

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