

## Student Peer Counselling Behaviour Management Interventions and Discipline among Public Secondary School Students in Kiambu County, Kenya

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### ABSTRACT

*In Kenya's educational settings, maintaining effective teaching and learning relies on a well-structured discipline system within schools. However, the prevalence of indiscipline issues, encompassing fights, truancy, drug abuse, academic deterioration, and dropouts, poses significant challenges to the education system. Despite the government's recommendations for robust interventions to counter these issues, students persist in demonstrating behavioural problems. The study assessed the influence of student peer counseling interventions on discipline among public secondary school students in Kiambu County, Kenya. The study was anchored on Ecological Systems Theory (EST). Based on the correlational research design, the study targeted 227 deputy principals, 3,479 guidance and counseling teachers, and 89,065 students in Kiambu County. From these, the study sampled 23 deputy principals, 97 teachers, and 398 students using the simple random sampling technique. Data was collected using questionnaires, interview guides, and observation schedules. Piloting was conducted to assist in determining the accuracy, clarity, and suitability of the research instruments. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean, frequency, and percentages) and inferential statistics (Pearson correlation and multivariate regression analysis at a significance level of 0.05). Data from interviews and secondary data sources were subjected to content analysis procedures. The findings showed that there was a positive and significant correlation between student discipline and student peer counseling ( $r = 0.476$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Based on these findings, it was evident that student peer counseling and teacher counseling interventions indeed influence students' discipline in the study area. Interventions in these areas should thus be strengthened to holistically enhance students' discipline in the schools studied. The study suggested that in order to reach more students, schools should frequently hire and train peer counselors.*

**Keywords:** Behaviour Management Interventions; Discipline; Kiambu County, Kenya; Public Secondary School Students; Student Peer Counseling

### I. INTRODUCTION

The school environment, hereinafter also referred to as ecology, could have lasting effects on students' behaviours. Since students spend a considerable amount of time in school, they are likely to be influenced by the interactions they experience there. Indeed, studies have shown that teachers (Cortina & Fazel, 2015) and peers (Welsh & Little, 2018) have immense effects on the immediate as well as eventual behaviours of students. The school ecology could thus play a central role in reining in indiscipline among students. It is with this realization that school-based behaviour change interventions such as peer counseling are put in place.

Peer counseling plays a pivotal role in students' behaviours (Goodman-Scott et al., 2018; Pei-Boon et al., 2020; Welsh & Little, 2018; Williams et al., 2020; Arudo & Okeyo, 2008; Ambayo & Ngumi, 2016; Warui, 2018). Arudo and Okeyo (2008), in "Peer counseling experience among selected Kenyan secondary schools," found that peer counseling approaches to handling indiscipline issues in the schools studied contribute to enhanced discipline. Also, Ambayo and Ngumi (2016) elicited that although peer counseling had positive influences on students' academic performance, it did not seem to have direct influences on their social and emotional behaviour. This showed that peer counseling had a bidirectional effect on students' discipline in various parts of Kenya. It is thus pertinent to investigate the influence of peer counseling on students' discipline in Kiambu County, which was not the focus of the former studies. While Arudo and Okeyo (2008) looked at students' behaviour in Kenyan secondary schools generally, Ambayo and Ngumi (2016) focused on Nakuru Municipality, respectively. The two studies differed in scope, in addition to the fact that the study by Arudo and Okeyo (2008) is quite dated and may not shed light on the immediate effects of peer counseling on students' behaviour. This underlines the importance of studies aimed at bridging these knowledge gaps.

From the preceding discourse, it was evident that peer counseling influenced indiscipline among students. These interventions were either reinforced or challenged by support from school administration. However, most documented studies have not attempted to assess the relationship between these interventions and students' discipline in Kiambu County. This means that it remains difficult to understand the single or combined influences of these factors in the county. This underlines the importance of this current study.

## 1.2 Statement of the Problem

In Kenya's educational settings, maintaining effective teaching and learning relies on a well-structured discipline system within schools. However, the prevalence of indiscipline issues encompassing fights, truancy, drug abuse, academic deterioration, and dropouts poses significant challenges to the education system. The government has recommended robust interventions at the school level to control indiscipline. Nevertheless, students in Kiambu County continue to exhibit immense behavioural problems. The existing behaviour change interventions implemented in Kenyan schools have not effectively curbed the prevalence of student indiscipline. According to Mwaniki (2018), the three most serious, or rather common, cases of indiscipline are: sneaking from the school compound (11) (35.5%); drug abuse (7) (22.6%); and theft and vernacular speaking, each with a frequency of 3 or 9.8%. Furthermore, the study showed that before students engaged in unrest, they first showed a myriad of cases of indiscipline symptoms. It is therefore necessary to assess the effectiveness of the numerous behaviour-change interventions put in place.

The current study focused on the context of Kiambu County, which holds significant importance due to the concerning prevalence of deviant behaviours among secondary school students (Ndaita, 2016). Among the various drugs and substances abused by public secondary school students in Kiambu County, alcohol emerged as the most commonly used, with 40% of the students being users. Following closely, bhang was used by 18.5% of students, while cigarettes were smoked by the same percentage. Additionally, 15.4% of students chewed Khat, and only 3.1% of students reported using cocaine (Kiambi, 2018).

Empirical evidence has given mixed findings on the relationship between school-based behaviour change interventions and students' discipline. The present study investigated the influence of guidance and counseling, mentorship, and disciplinary action on students' discipline in public secondary schools in Kiambu County. The research aimed at filling the knowledge gaps and providing valuable insights for the development of effective strategies to tackle indiscipline among students in Kiambu County.

## 1.3 Objectives of the Study

To examine the influence of peer counseling behaviour management interventions on discipline among public secondary school students in Kiambu County, Kenya.

## 1.4 Hypotheses

H<sub>02</sub>: There is no statistically significant relationship between peer counseling behaviour management interventions and discipline among public secondary school students in Kiambu County, Kenya.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Goodman-Scott et al. (2018) carried out a study on aligning comprehensive school counseling programs and positive behavioural interventions and supports to maximize school counselors' efforts. The study established that when implemented, Positive Behavioural Interventions and Supports (PBIS) that had peer counseling components created a positive school climate and militated against indiscipline among students. This current study investigates the level to which the adoption of peer counseling interventions in Kenyan schools militates against indiscipline cases.

Pei-Boon et al. (2020) carried out a study on the psychometric properties of the sources of counseling self-efficacy in a sample of Malaysian secondary school counselors. 541 school counselors, including peer counselors, were studied. The study established that the application of divergent counseling practices had a multifactorial influence on students' discipline as well as other outputs, such as the efficacy of G&C in schools. This current study investigates the veracity of these findings in Kenya.

Welsh and Little (2018) carried out a study on "the school discipline dilemma." This was based on a comprehensive review of disparities and alternative approaches aimed at enhancing such discipline. The study established that indiscipline was attributable to different causes. There was thus a need for various approaches aimed at curbing indiscipline. These include the right policies and practices, such as teacher and peer counseling interventions. Though the former study was not focused on the relative contribution of all the interventions deployed,

it relates to this current study, which sets out to investigate the direct contribution of peer counseling to students' discipline.

Williams et al. (2020) carried out a study titled "The discipline gatekeeper: assistant principals' experiences with managing school discipline in urban middle schools". The study sought to establish the various interventions put in place by assistant principals to deal with indiscipline cases in schools. Based on the critical race theoretical framework, the study shows that various school discipline interventions for African American students, such as peer counseling and assorted G&C interventions, were employed. These played pivotal roles in checking indiscipline among the students studied. This current study assesses the level to which these findings apply in Kenya.

Arudo and Okeyo (2008) studied peer counseling experiences among selected Kenyan secondary schools. The findings point out that schools were faced with numerous challenges, such as large numbers of students and few trained teacher counselors. This put pressure on G&C programs, making it untenable for schools to rein in indiscipline cases. In this context, schools often deployed peer counseling approaches to handle some of these indiscipline issues in the schools studied. This study investigates the level to which the application of peer counseling programs by secondary schools in Kiambu County contributes to enhanced discipline.

Ambayo and Ngumi (2016) carried out a study on the influence of peer counseling on students' behaviour change in secondary schools in Nakuru Municipality. Based on the ex-post facto research design, data were collected from a sample of 14 teacher counselors, 31 peer counselors, and 131 students from 12 schools. The inclusion criterion for students was the consultation of peer counselors. The sample was obtained using stratified, purposive, and simple random sampling techniques. The findings show that though peer counseling had positive influences on students' academic performance, it did not seem to have direct influences on their social and emotional behaviour. This was attributable to the lack of enough financial resources aimed at strengthening it. In this context, this current study set out to find out the level to which strengthening peer counseling programs could enhance discipline among public secondary school students in Kiambu County.

A study by Warui (2018) investigated the status and challenges of guidance and counseling programs in discipline management in public secondary schools in Kiambu County, Kenya. The study was guided by social exchange theory and adopted a descriptive research design. Data was collected from a simple random sample of 240 students. The study found that there was a need to enhance peer counseling practices, among other measures. This current study sets out to find out the impact of peer counseling interventions on the behavioural outcomes of students.

## 2.1 Theoretical Framework

This study was based on the Ecological Systems Theory (EST) as advanced by Bronfenbrenner (1979; 1993) to explain how the environment of a person influences their behavioural outcomes. Bronfenbrenner adapted ecological systems theory from the physical sciences to human behaviour. Bronfenbrenner discussed the different system levels, as Bronfenbrenner (1979; 1993) shows five systems that influence the development of a person. These include the microsystem, whereby the person is exposed to a pattern of activities, roles, and interpersonal relations in a one-on-one setting such as home, school, peers, neighborhood, etc. The second system is the meso-system, which incorporates linkages occurring between numerous settings where the developing person is located, such as home and school.

The third system is the exo-system, which includes one or more social settings that do not involve the developing person as an active participant. In these settings, events occur that affect or are affected by what happens in the set containing the developing person. These could be the parental workplace, whereby an individual can be affected by the context in which the parent works through acquired values, among others. The last system is the macrosystem. This includes influences from culture, subculture, and other extended social structures (Bronfenbrenner, 1993). The last system is the chronosystem. In this one, the development of a person is affected over time by numerous influences that occur at school, home, or in the country at large.

According to the theory's critics, in order to effectively influence all the systems, a person must continuously be a part of the ecology. If the person relocates to a faraway place or another country, the systems change, leading to different development patterns (Feldman, 2003). In this current study, EST is relevant since the ecology in which an adolescent grows will affect his or her behaviour. In this regard, school-based behaviour change interventions will determine the discipline of students. Measures such as G&C, peer counseling, mentoring, and parental involvement within disciplinary processes in secondary schools would create an environment in which indiscipline among students can be checked.

### III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Research Design

This study was based on a correlational research design. This design aims at describing the relationship between variables and also helps in the testing of hypotheses (Best & Kahn, 2006). In this design, the researcher does not manipulate the variables nor decide who receives a treatment for events to happen (Cooper & Schindler, 2003). The correlational design was considered paramount in observational research as no variables were manipulated by the researcher. The correlational research design is important in explaining the interrelationships between study variables. The design was recognized as one of the appropriate designs for analyzing the nexus between peer counseling behaviour management interventions and students' discipline in public secondary schools in Kiambu County.

#### 3.2 Location of the Study

The study focused on public secondary schools in Kiambu County. The county is one of the five counties of the former central province of Kenya. It is one of the most populous sub-counties in Kenya. According to the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, it had a population of 2.418 million in the 2019 National Census (KNBS, 2019). The county is comprised of 13 sub-counties, namely: Kiambaa, Kikuyu, Gatundu North, Thika East, Gatundu South, Limuru, Githunguri, Juja, Kabete, Kiambu, Thika West, Lari, and Ruiru. With a total area of 2,449 km<sup>2</sup>, the main economic activities in the county are agricultural and commercial activities. The main crops grown are coffee, tea, and dairy. Small-scale farming is also common. Kiambu is also a largely commercial county with numerous small and medium enterprises. The county was chosen due to the fact that it is characterized by high levels of indiscipline, as shown by Kabiru et al. (2018), who argue that 22% of children in the county had behavioural problems, which is above the national average of 18%. Also, the literature on the relationship between school-based behaviour change interventions and discipline in the area is scant. This meant that making empirically informed recommendations on ways of dealing with indiscipline in the county remained an elusive goal.

#### 3.3 Target Population

Mugenda and Mugenda (2008) define the population for any study as all objects on the research site that are affected by the stated research problem. It is the portion of the study from which the researcher can practically select a representative sample. This current study targeted 227 public secondary schools in Kiambu County, with 227 deputy principals, 3,479 teachers, and 89,065 students in the county (Kiambu County Government, February 2021).

**Table 1**  
*Target Population*

Category	Target Population
Principals	227
Teachers	3,479
Students	89,065

**Source:** Kiambu County Government, 2021

#### 3.4 Sampling Technique and Sample Size

Martínez-Mesa et al. (2016) defined sampling as the process of selecting a number of individuals or objects from a population in such a way that the selected group contains elements representative of the characteristics found in the entire group. This study used a simple random sampling technique for each of the three categories, namely: students, principals, and teachers. To calculate the sample of teachers and students, the study used the simplified formula for calculating sample size as put forward by Yamane (1967).

The formula is as follows:

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

Where:

n = the sample size

N = the population size

e = sampling error (assumed at 0.1 for teachers & 0.05 for students)



For principals, a sample of 10% was obtained. This is informed by considerations for making it possible to reach them adequately through interviews. Furthermore, 10% is considered enough for a representative sample in descriptive studies (Kasomo, 2007). In this regard, the study sampled 23 principals, 97 teachers, and 398 students. The sample size was presented in Table 2.

**Table 2**

*Sample Size*

Category	Population	Sample	Sampling Procedure
Principals	227	23	$n_1 = N * 10\%$
Teachers	3,479	97	$n_2 = N / 1 + N * (0.1)^2$
Students	89,065	398	$n_3 = N / 1 + N * (0.05)^2$

### 3.5 Research Instrument

Data was collected using questionnaires, interview guides, and observation schedules.

### 3.6 Pilot Testing of Research Instruments

Pre-testing was conducted to assist in determining the accuracy, clarity, and suitability of the research instrument. 10% of the sample per category took place in the pilot study as follows: 10 teachers, 7 principals, and 10 students in Kiambu County. The sample of the pilot study was informed by Kothari (2004), who posits that 10% to 30% of the study sample is adequate for pilot studies. The participants of the pilot study were not included in the final study.

#### 3.6.1 Reliability of Research Instruments

Reliability measures the consistency of results from a study (Kabir, 2016). It aimed to find out if a test yields the same score in the first, second, or subsequent administrations. The data obtained from the pilot study was used to ascertain the appropriateness and relevancy of the questionnaire to the study. Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ), a reliability coefficient that varies from 0 to 1, whereby a value of 0.7 or less indicates unsatisfactory internal consistency reliability (Malhotra, 2004), was used to test the reliability of items in the questionnaires. The Cronbach alpha values obtained ranged between 0.71 and 0.83 for teachers' questionnaires and 0.74 and 0.89 for students' questionnaires. The reliability of the interviews was ensured through triangulation, in which data from questionnaires and observation schedules was compared to assess the consistency of the findings obtained.

#### 3.6.2 Validity of Research Instruments

Validity is the degree to which instruments reflect adequacy or appropriateness (Kabir, 2016). In this regard, research instruments are said to be valid when they actually measure the intended parameters. Validity was enhanced through the pilot study since the researcher was able to identify ambiguous questions. Content validity was ensured by the researcher by including as many questions as possible for each variable under investigation. Furthermore, the ease with which the respondents answered the research questions was also assessed. Any ambiguous questions were promptly corrected. The input of the university supervisors was also sought and incorporated into all instruments.

### 3.7 Data Collection Procedures

The researcher sought research approval from the university and a researcher permit from the National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation (NACOSTI) before data collection. The researcher then visited the study area and made appointments with the various targeted study participants for data collection. The first research instruments to be administered were the questionnaires. As such, the researcher visited the schools, sampled, and distributed the questionnaires to the teachers through the principals. The researcher also made appointments with the study participants for interviews. This was conducted concurrently with the distribution of the questionnaires. At the appointed time, the researcher visited each respondent and conducted the interviews. Due to limitations related to the COVID-19 pandemic, the interviews were conducted in a spacious room. The respondents were issued masks, kept social distance, and observed social distance. The whole exercise took four weeks.

### 3.8 Data Analysis

The raw data collected was sorted, coded, and analyzed. Analysis was done using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences). Descriptive statistics were used as measures of central tendency (mean), frequency, and

percentages. Data was also analyzed inferentially by using Pearson correlation to establish the linear relationship between the independent variable (peer counseling interventions) and the dependent study variable (students' discipline).

## IV. FINDINGS

### 4.1 Demographics of the Participants

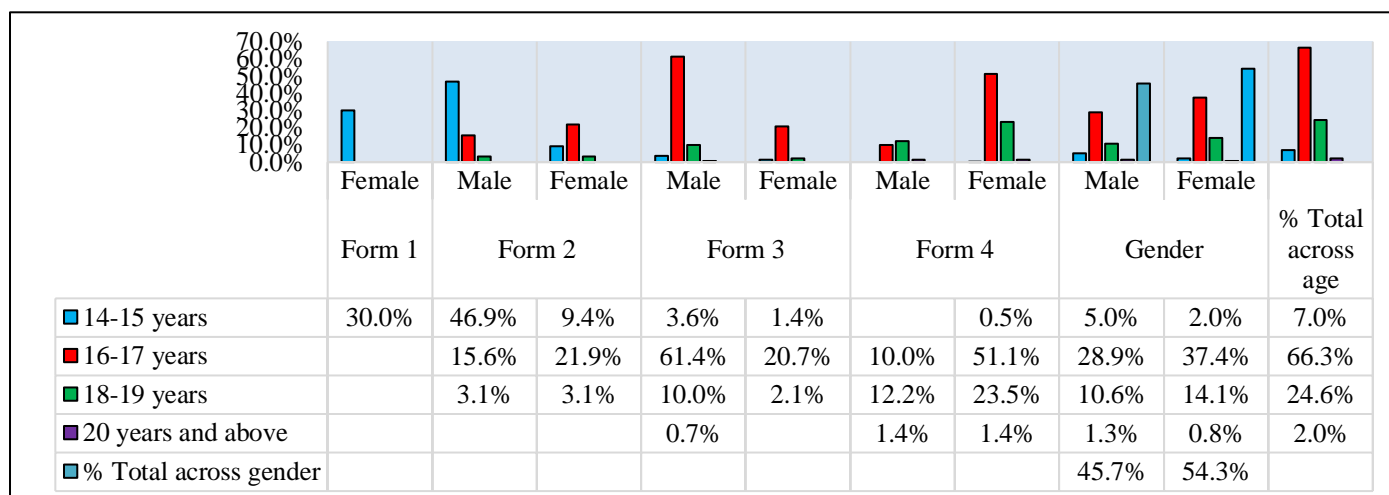
This section presents the return rate of the study participants as well as their social demographic characteristics. Data was collected using questionnaires and interviews with various respondents. Four hundred and ninety-nine (499) of the 518 respondents (96.3%) sampled participated in the study. From these, 18 out of 23 principals (78.3%) were interviewed. At the same time, 83 out of 97 teachers (85.6%) and 398 out of 398 students (100.0%) responded to the questionnaires. The response rate is shown in Table 3.

**Table 3**

*Return Rate*

Category	Sample	Responded	Response Rate
Principals	23	18	78.3
Teachers	97	83	85.6
Students	398	398	100.0
<b>Average</b>	<b>518</b>	<b>499</b>	<b>96.3</b>

The study went on to determine general information about the students and teachers. This was pivotal in gaining a comprehensive knowledge of the respondents that may have influenced the study's findings. Firstly, the respondents were asked to indicate their age. Figure 2 shows that 45.7% male students and 54.3% female students took part in the study. The findings show that most of the respondents were female. According to Curtin et al. (2016), this might be as a result of the fact that women are more likely than men to participate in surveys. However, both genders were well represented in the study, which could avert gender bias. Most of the students were in Form 3, were male, and were aged 16–17 (61.4%). These were followed by females in Form 4, who were also aged 16–17 (51.1%). The next important group were males who were aged 14–15 years in Form 2 (46.9%). Knäuper et al. (2016) suggest that questionnaire characteristics and the cognitive processes involved in answering questions have varied effects on older and younger respondents. The participation of respondents of various age groups could check for age bias. These findings also show that most of the students had been in school long enough to understand the subject under investigation.

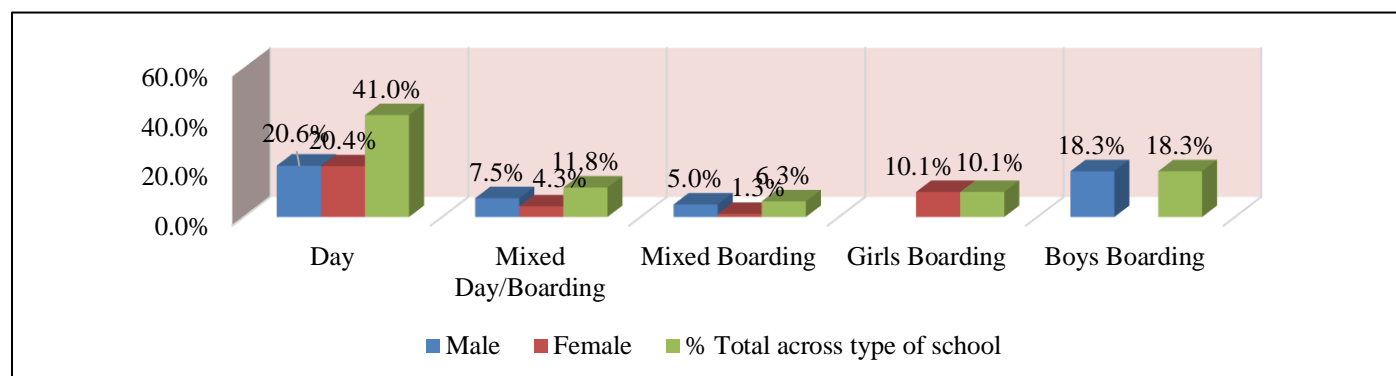


**Figure 1**

*Students' Gender, Age and Class*

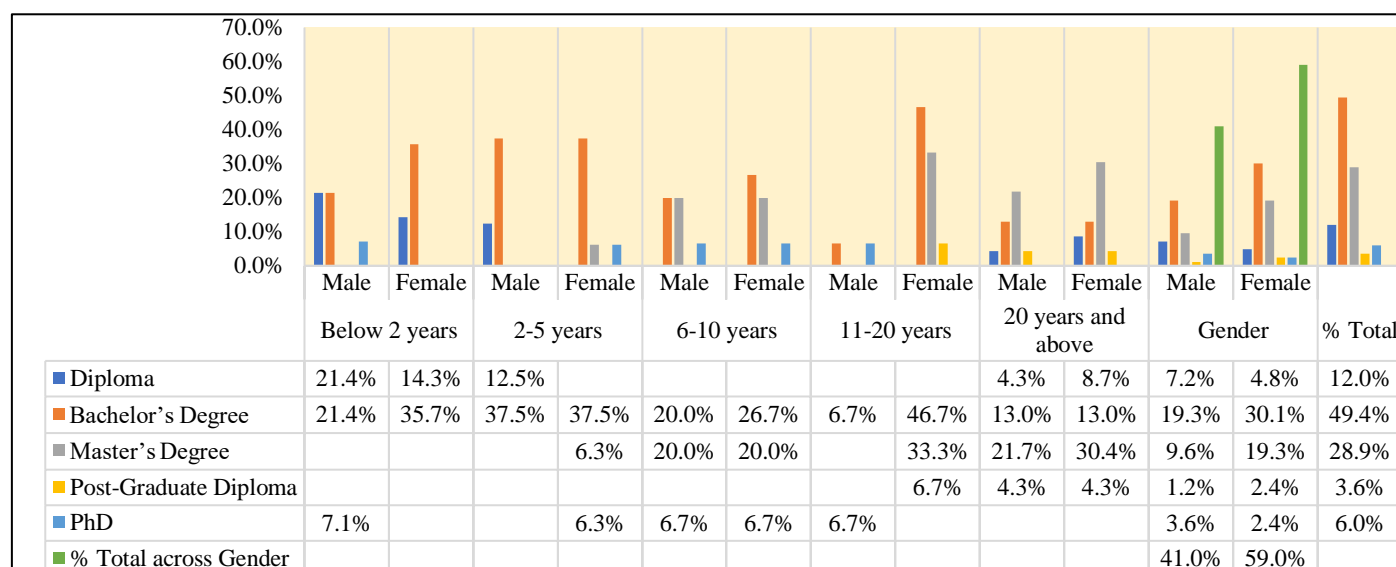
The study wanted to establish the type of school from which students came. The findings showed that most students were either male or female and from day schools at 20.6% and 20.4%, respectively. These were followed by

boys from boarding schools at 18.3% and girls from boarding schools at 10.1%. Males from mixed day and boarding as well as those from mixed boarding followed at 7.5% and 5%, respectively. These findings are presented in Figure 2.



**Figure 2**  
*Students' Gender and Type of School*

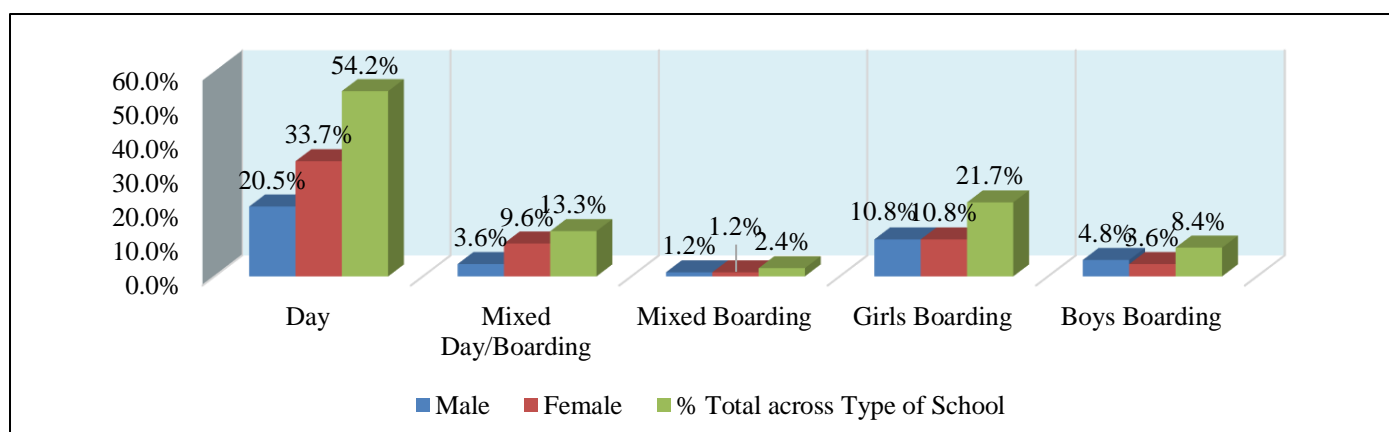
The study sought to establish the gender, academic qualifications, and working experience of teachers. The findings show that 41% of male teachers and 59% of female teachers participated. Seeing that most of the respondents were females, these findings agree with Curtin et al. (2016), who posit that females are more likely to participate in a study. Both genders were, however, well represented in the study, which could avert gender bias. The findings show that most of the teachers were female, had bachelor's degrees, and had worked for 11–20 years (46.7%). These were followed by both males and females who had bachelor's degrees and had worked for 2–5 years each, at 37.5%. All in all, the majority (49.4%) of the teachers had a bachelor's degree. About 28.9% had attained a master's degree, 12% had a diploma, 6% had a PhD, and 3.6% had a postgraduate diploma. This is indicative of the fact that the teachers had sufficient qualifications and could make significant contributions to the subject under investigation. In general, more educated people are more likely to participate in surveys than less educated people (Goyder, Warriner, & Miller, 2002). Most of the respondents had also worked long enough in public secondary schools and could make significant contributions to the subject under investigation. This is in line with Mathers et al. (2000), who posited that the duration of work could influence the ability of respondents to have a strong grasp of the subject under investigation.



**Figure 3**  
*Teachers Gender, Academic qualifications and working experience*

The teachers were asked to point out the schools from which they came. The findings show that most of the respondents were female and taught in day schools (33.7%). These were followed by males from day schools at 20.5%. Males and females from girls' boarding schools followed distantly, each at 10.8%. The next important group were females from mixed-day/boarding schools at 9.6%. The rest came from mixed-day/boarding and boys boarding

schools. These findings show that teachers came from all the various types of schools. As such, opinions regarding the various types of schools could be captured. These findings are presented in Figure 4.



**Figure 4**  
*Teachers' Gender and Type of School*

#### 4.2 Peer Counseling Interventions and Students' Discipline

The study sought to examine the influence of student peer counseling interventions on discipline among public secondary school students in Kiambu County, Kenya. This section presents the findings from Likert-scale statements, open-ended questions, and interviews. First and foremost, the students and teachers agreed ( $M = 4$ ) that peer counseling components create a positive school climate and reduce indiscipline among students. The findings were presented in Table 4. This aligns with Goodman-Scott et al. (2018), who argue that peer counseling components create a positive school climate. The fact that peer counseling components create a positive school climate and militate against indiscipline among students also agrees with Ambayo and Ngumi (2016), who elicit that peer counseling also has positive influences on students' academic performance.

**Table 4**  
*Peer Counseling Component, Positive School Climate and Indiscipline among Students*

Peer counseling component creates a positive school climate and reduces indiscipline among students.					
	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev.
Students	398	1.00	5.00	4	1.19
Teachers	83	1.00	5.00	4	3.46

The students and teachers agreed ( $M = 4$ ) that peer counseling interventions have direct influences on students' discipline. These findings also support the study by Ambayo and Ngumi (2016), who posit that strengthening peer counseling programs could enhance discipline among public secondary school students. Peer counseling interventions should thus be enhanced in schools to enhance discipline among students.

**Table 5**  
*Peer Counseling Interventions and Students' Discipline*

Peer counseling interventions have direct influences on students' discipline					
	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev.
Students	398	1.00	5.00	4	1.23
Teachers	83	1.00	5.00	4	0.86

The teachers further reiterated ( $M=4$ ) that integrating peer counselors had exponential as well as direct influences on students' discipline as shown in Table 6. These findings further corroborate the study by Ambayo and Ngumi (2016) who underlines the importance of peer counselors in influencing students' behavioural choices and their discipline by extension. These findings show that schools ought to enhance discipline in schools through enhanced integration of peer counselors.



**Table 6***Integrating Peer Counselors and Students' Discipline*

Integrating peer counselors has an exponential influence on students' discipline					
	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev.
Teachers	83	1.00	5.00	4	4.54

The students and teachers went on to agree to a high extent ( $M=4$ ) that expanding training facilities for offering peer counseling services in school could enhance the efficacy of peer counselling services. These findings are a pointer to the fact that the peer counselling indeed plays an important role as an intervention tool to stem student's indiscipline cases. These findings are supported by Arudo and Okeyo (2008) who suggest that it is a common practice for schools to use peer counseling especially where teacher counselors are inadequate.

**Table 7***Expanding Training Facilities for Offering Peer Counseling Services*

Expanding training facilities for offering peer counseling services in school could enhance the efficacy of peer counselling services					
	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev.
Students	398	1.00	5.00	4	1.11
Teachers	83	2.00	5.00	4	0.84

The students and teachers reiterated the need for strengthening peer counseling services in schools, which had positive influences on the discipline of students ( $M = 4$ ), as shown in Table 8. This corroborates the study by Ambayo and Ngumi (2016), who explained that strengthening peer counseling programs could enhance discipline among public secondary school students. It is thus important to strengthen peer counseling interventions in schools.

**Table 8***Strengthening Peer Counseling Services and Discipline of Students*

Strengthening peer counseling services in schools has positive influences on the discipline of students.					
	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev.
Students	398	1.00	5.00	4	1.03
Teachers	83	2.00	5.00	4	0.82

As shown in Table 9, the teachers and students agreed to a high extent ( $M = 4$ ) that strong peer counseling interventions enhanced students ability to focus on academic performance. These findings showed that the teachers appreciate the role peer counseling plays in addressing students' indiscipline cases. Agi (2013), in a study focused on 14 schools in Port Harcourt, Nigeria, established that policies on G&C practices enhance discipline and academic performance. These findings show that counseling interventions such as peer counseling, among others, should also be reinforced in Kenyan schools.

**Table 9***Strong Peer Counseling and Academic Performance*

Strong peer counseling interventions enhance students to focus on academic performance					
	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev.
Students	398	1.00	5.00	4	1.14
Teachers	83	2.00	5.00	4	0.86

The findings also show that schools are faced with numerous challenges, such as large numbers of students and few trained teacher counselors. This put pressure on G&C programs, making it untenable for schools to rein in indiscipline cases. It is thus evident that schools were often faced with a lack of adequately trained counselors, a situation that was also identified by Arudo and Okeyo (2008). In this context, schools often deploy peer counseling approaches to handle some of these indiscipline issues.

The students stated that peer counseling interventions had a positive effect on students' discipline. They said that peer counseling helps students attain both short- and long-term goals. One of the respondents affirmed this by saying:

*It has helped in changing students' behaviour by helping them to make self-discovery and align their behaviour with society's expectations* (Respondent 4, Kiambu County, May 2022).

Peer counseling was also lauded because students tend to relate better with fellow students than teachers, which makes it easier to be helped. This means that more emphasis should be given to peer counseling, as pointed out by one of the respondents:

*In schools where there is counselling teacher shortage, more students need to be trained to be peer counsellors* (Respondent 5, Kiambu County, May 2022).

When asked, *"In what other ways do peer counseling interventions contribute to students' discipline in your school?"* The teachers noted that peer counselors are frequently more perceptive and compassionate than teacher counselors because they are the first to notice when a fellow student is anxious or sad and because they frequently confide in one another about their current concerns, anxieties, and troubling circumstances. Another important role of peer counselors is to promotion of discipline by encouraging good academic participation and achievement among fellow students. Chireshe (2013) concurs with this finding, stating that peer counselors help other students with problem solving and problems of study and listening skills.

The aforesaid findings contributed to the recognition given to peer counseling in addressing students' discipline issues as supported by the teachers. The respondent noted that teachers are required to train more students to take up peer counseling responsibility. As a result, teachers are often obligated to conduct regular meetings during life skills lessons so as to meet these demands. This has been very instrumental in helping students realize that they don't come from the same background, and therefore, a conducive environment characterized by high discipline needs to be created for all to enable learning, which is in line with the Ecological Systems Theory (EST) as advanced by Bronfenbrenner (1979; 1993), which shows that the environment of a person influences their behavioural outcomes.

Peer counseling motivates students and urges them to work hard. It also helps them manage personal problems by providing them with a shoulder to lean on. This plays pivotal roles in boosting the self-esteem of students as well as dealing with behavioural problems. These findings were supported by one of the respondents, who said:

*Peer counseling plays an important role in the lives of students. It helps t helps them deal with personal problems. For those with behavioural problems, peers can also help them have a positive outlook to life* (Respondent 6, Kiambu County, May 2022).

### 4.3 Students' Discipline

The respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with the following statements regarding students' discipline: The findings were presented in the following sections: First and foremost, the students agreed to a high extent ( $M = 4$ ) that school-based behaviour change interventions have enhanced participation in school programs, as presented in Table 10. This could contribute to enhanced discipline, as shown by the GOK (2016) report.

**Table 10**

*School Behaviour Change Interventions and Participation in School Programs*

School behaviour change interventions have enhanced participation in school programs					
	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev.
Students	398	1.00	5.00	4	1.37
Teachers	83	1.00	5.00	4	0.99

As presented in Table 11, the students and teachers also agreed to a high extent ( $M = 4$ ) that there was a reduction in absenteeism due to school-based behaviour change interventions. This was an indicator of enhanced discipline among students, in line with the study by Nyongesa et al. (2016) that shows that absenteeism is a measure of indiscipline.

**Table 11***Reduction in Absenteeism Due to School Behaviour Change Interventions*

There is a reduction in absenteeism due to school behaviour change interventions					
	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev.
Students	398	1.00	5.00	4	1.18
Teachers	83	1.00	5.00	4	1.11

The teachers and students also agreed to a high extent ( $M = 4$ ) that there is a reduction in drug and substance abuse in our schools due to school preventive interventions. These findings were presented in Table 12. The high standard deviation in teachers' responses (4.52) shows that their opinions were very diverse. Another study by Magai and Malik (2018) on "Emotional and Behavioural Problems in Children and Adolescents in Central Kenya in Kiambu County" shows that substance use is a challenge facing students in the county. The findings of this current study are significant since they show the contribution of guidance and counseling towards enhancing student discipline in the county.

**Table 12***Reduction in Drug and Substance Abuse Due to School Behaviour Change Interventions*

There is a reduction in drug and substance abuse in our schools due to school-based preventive interventions					
	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev.
Students	398	1.00	5.00	4	1.32
Teachers	83	1.00	4.00	4	4.52

The teachers and students agreed that behavioural interventions had led to a reduction in unsafe sexual behaviours and abortions in our schools ( $M = 4$ ), as shown in Table 13. Kiambu County was faced with high incidences of indiscipline cases and risk-taking behaviours such as drug and substance abuse, truancy, gang behaviour, and early sexual debut (Magai & Malik, 2018). Reduction in these vices was thus a pointer to enhanced behavioural outcomes.

**Table 13***Reduction in Drug and Substance Abuse in Schools Due to School Preventive Interventions*

Behavioural interventions have led to a reduction in unsafe sexual behaviours and abortions in our schools					
	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev.
Students	398	1.00	5.00	4	1.36
Teachers	83	1.00	5.00	4	0.89

The students and teachers went on to state that there is a reduction in fighting in schools due to the disciplinary interventions ( $M=4$ ). Magai and Malik (2018) showed the immense discipline challenges facing students in Kiambu County. Reduction in fighting incidences could show the success of school-based preventive interventions.

**Table 14***Reduction in Reduction in Fighting in Schools Due to School Preventive*

There is a reduction in fighting in our schools due to the disciplinary interventions					
	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev.
Students	398	1.00	5.00	4	1.28
Teachers	83	1.00	5.00	4	0.88

The students and teachers agreed to a high extent ( $M=4$ ) that there is a reduction of bullying of others among students due to the school intervention measures. These findings were presented in Table 15. The gravity of indiscipline cases in Kiambu County were identified by Ndaita (2016) who shows high levels of drug use, sneaking out of school, bullying and rudeness among others despite the fact that the schools deployed various discipline

management interventions. The reduction in bullying incidences was thus a gain in checking indiscipline in the county through behaviour change interventions.

**Table 15**

*Reduction in Reduction in Bullying in Schools Due to School-Based Preventive Interventions*

There is a reduction of bullying of others among students due to the school based-preventive measures					
	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev.
Students	398	1.00	5.00	4	1.17
Teachers	83	1.00	5.00	4	0.82

Furthermore, to a high extent ( $M = 4$ ), the students and teachers observed that behaviour change strategies had led to a reduction in the destruction of school property, as shown in Table 16. Strikes and destruction of school property were identified by Nyongesa et al. (2016) as major indiscipline challenges facing schools. The findings of this study are a pointer to the fact that school preventive interventions are bearing the expected fruits.

**Table 16**

*Behaviour Change Strategies Have Led Reduction of Destruction of School Property*

Behaviour change strategies have led reduction of destruction of school property					
	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev.
Students	398	1.00	5.00	4	1.26
Teachers	83	1.00	5.00	4	0.90

The findings from interviews show that the various school-based measures put in place to check indiscipline have resulted in positive discipline outcomes among the students studied. These findings agreed with the study by Williams et al. (2019), who posit that there was “a positive link between disciplinary actions and behavioural outcomes among students.” Students responded positively to interventions put in place to check their discipline, and this created a conducive learning environment in the schools. In support of this, one of the respondents said:

*There were improvements in student discipline. Some of our colleagues who were previously faced with discipline challenges were now well behaved and were performing well in school due to the interventions put in place by schools to enhance discipline* (Respondent 17, Kiambu County, May 2022).

The findings further showed that the students' discipline was changing positively due to the discipline interventions put in place in the schools, further supporting the findings by Williams et al. (2019). As such, it was pertinent to reinforce disciplinary actions in the schools since this had positive implications for the discipline of the students. In support of this, one of the respondents said:

*Our students were recording good disciplinary outcomes due to the various measures put in place in our schools to check disciplinary challenges. Students who had improvements in discipline started performing well in examinations. In a nutshell, it can be concluded that interventions to enhance discipline among students* (Respondent 8, Kiambu County, May 2022).

#### 4.4 Pearson Correlation

The research hypothesis which was tested in this study was as follows:

**H<sub>02</sub>: There is no statistically significant relationship between student peer counseling interventions and discipline among public secondary school students in Kiambu County, Kenya.**

**Table 17**

*Correlation between Student Peer Counseling Interventions and Discipline*

		Students Discipline Scores
Peer Counselling Scores	Pearson Correlation	.476**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000
	R <sup>2</sup>	0.227
	N	481

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

The findings showed that there was a positive and significant correlation between student peer counseling and discipline ( $r = 0.476$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). The null hypothesis was thus rejected. These findings corroborate those by Arudo and Okeyo (2008), who suggest that it is common practice for schools to use peer counseling, especially where teacher counselors are inadequate.

## V. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

### 5.1 Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to assess the influence of peer counseling behaviour change interventions on students' discipline in public secondary schools in Kiambu County. The findings showed that there was a positive and significant correlation between student discipline and teacher counseling interventions, student peer counseling, mentorship interventions, and school discipline actions. All the variables, with or without the moderating influence of other factors, could also statistically and significantly predict students' discipline in public secondary schools in Kiambu County.

Based on these findings, it was evident that school discipline actions, mentorship interventions, student peer counseling, and teacher counseling interventions indeed influence students' discipline in the study area. Although indiscipline among students could emanate from influences in the school environment as envisaged by problem behaviour theory, interventions in the same environment reined in such indiscipline. This was in line with the ecological systems theory, which postulates that the environment of a person influences their behavioural outcomes. As explained by the personal construct theory, constant exposure to G&C in schools through peer and G&C teachers, mentorship, and school disciplinary actions could influence the behavioural choices of students as well as indiscipline levels due to changes in the value systems of students. Interventions around these school-based behaviour change interventions should thus be strengthened to holistically enhance students discipline in the schools studied.

### 5.2 Recommendations

The study's recommendations align with its objectives. It suggests that schools should regularly recruit and provide training for peer counselors to expand their reach among students. Additionally, the study advises that schools consider implementing policies to reward peer counselors when necessary, as this could serve as an incentive for more students to engage in peer counseling programs.

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