

Effect of Teacher Support on Students' Discipline in Public Secondary School in Tharaka-Nithi County

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Abstract

Student indiscipline remains a persistent challenge in many public secondary schools in Tharaka-Nithi County, undermining academic progress, disrupting learning environments, and increasing the financial burden associated with repairing damaged school property. While multiple factors contribute to student behaviour, teacher support has increasingly been recognized as a critical determinant of learners' discipline and overall school adjustment. This study examined the effect of teacher support on students' discipline in public secondary schools in Tharaka-Nithi County. Guided by Invitational Theory, which emphasizes the role of supportive interpersonal relationships in shaping positive student outcomes, the study adopted a convergent parallel mixed-methods design. The target population comprised students, teachers, and principals from public secondary schools in the county, from which a sample was selected using stratified, systematic, and purposive sampling techniques. Data were collected using questionnaires for students and teachers and interview schedules for principals. The reliability coefficients for student and teacher questionnaires were 0.831 and 0.731, respectively, indicating high internal consistency. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and simple linear regression, while qualitative data were analyzed thematically. The findings revealed that teacher support had a statistically significant effect on students' discipline, indicating that learners who perceive their teachers as caring, approachable, fair, and academically supportive are more likely to exhibit positive behaviour and comply with school rules. The study concludes that strengthened teacher–student relationships play a vital role in fostering disciplined learning environments. It recommends that schools invest in teacher mentorship programmes, continuous professional development on positive discipline strategies, and policies that promote supportive and empathetic teacher–student interactions to enhance discipline in public secondary schools.

Keywords: *Teacher Support, Student Discipline, School Connectedness, Peer Networks, Invitational Education*

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1. Introduction

Students' discipline is a fundamental requirement for the effective functioning of secondary schools and for supporting learners' academic and social development. Education not only equips learners with knowledge and skills but also shapes their character, behaviour, and values (Faix & Mergenthaler, 2015). For schools to achieve these goals, learners must experience supportive relationships with teachers, since they play the most direct and consistent role in

guiding student behaviour. According to the American Psychological Association (2024), when students perceive that adults in school care about their academic progress and personal well-being, they are more likely to behave responsibly, respect regulations, and remain committed to learning.

Teacher support, defined as learners' perception that teachers are caring, approachable, fair, responsive, and genuinely invested in their well-being, is one of the strongest predictors of positive student behaviour (Ninković & Floric, 2022). Supportive teachers create classroom climates characterised by mutual respect, emotional safety, and clear behavioural expectations. Such environments reduce the likelihood of aggression, disobedience, bullying, drug abuse, and other forms of misconduct (McNeely, Nonnemaker & Blum, 2002). International studies consistently show that students who perceive higher teacher support report fewer disciplinary problems and demonstrate greater self-regulation and school engagement (CDC, 2024).

Globally, persistent indiscipline remains a challenge. Reports from OECD's PISA (2019) indicate that many learners feel disconnected from teachers and experience school as unsupportive, contributing to behavioural problems. In Kenya, despite the abolition of corporal punishment in 2001 (Republic of Kenya, 2001), schools continue to struggle with rising cases of indiscipline, prompting the need for positive, relationship-based behaviour management approaches. Previous research has often focused on broad school factors such as counselling, prefect systems, or school rules, yet limited attention has been given to teacher support as a direct behavioural influence.

The situation in Tharaka-Nithi County reflects this national concern. The region has experienced recurrent student unrest, including arson, walkouts, and destruction of property (Government of Kenya, 2019; Kariuki et al., 2018; Kimotho, Njoka, & Gitumu, 2019). These disruptions have negatively affected school stability and academic performance. Although schools have implemented various measures to curb indiscipline, the continued rise in behavioural disturbances suggests gaps in understanding the interpersonal factors shaping student conduct. Given teachers' central role in shaping school climate and daily student experiences, examining the extent to which teacher support influences student discipline is both timely and necessary.

1.1 Problem Statement

Student indiscipline remains a significant challenge in many public secondary schools in Tharaka-Nithi County, despite the adoption of various behaviour management strategies such as guidance and counselling, suspension, manual work, withdrawal of privileges, and engagement of student councils. Reports continue to show recurrent cases of unrest, destruction of school property, truancy, drug use, bullying, and general misconduct. These incidents disrupt learning, lower academic performance, and erode the overall school climate. The persistence of these disciplinary problems suggests that the current strategies may be insufficient or are not addressing the root causes of student misbehaviour. One critical yet underexplored factor that may influence students' discipline is the level of teacher support. Teachers interact with students daily and play a central role in shaping learners' emotional experiences, behavioural choices, and sense of belonging. Studies from other contexts show that when students perceive their teachers as caring, fair, approachable, and supportive, they are more likely to respect school rules, maintain self-control, and behave positively. However, in Kenya and particularly in Tharaka-Nithi County, there is limited empirical evidence on how teacher support specifically affects student discipline. Given the increasing cases of indiscipline in the county and the lack of focused research examining teacher-student relationships as a behavioural

influence, it is unclear whether the nature and quality of teacher support contribute to the prevailing discipline challenges. This study, therefore, sought to determine the effect of teacher support on students' discipline in public secondary schools in Tharaka-Nithi County, to generate evidence to inform school policies and strengthen behaviour management practices.

1.2 Significance of the Study

This study is significant because it provides insights into how teacher support influences students' discipline in public secondary schools in Tharaka-Nithi County. The findings will benefit the following stakeholders: The study will help students indirectly by showing how supportive teacher-student relationships contribute to improved behaviour, a positive classroom atmosphere, and reduced disciplinary conflicts. Understanding the importance of teacher support can lead to a more nurturing school environment where students feel valued, respected, and motivated to behave appropriately. Teachers will benefit from evidence on how their interactions, attitudes, and support practices influence student discipline. The findings may guide teachers in adopting supportive instructional and relational strategies that reduce discipline problems. Principals may also use the results to design professional development programmes that strengthen teacher-student relationships and promote consistent, positive discipline practices. Boards of Management (BoM) will use the findings to formulate policies that strengthen teacher support systems, such as mentorship programmes, teacher motivation initiatives, and structured classroom management approaches. Enhancing teacher support can contribute to a more orderly school climate and better behaviour among learners. The Ministry of Education may find the study useful in designing or refining national guidelines on discipline management. Evidence on the role of teacher support can inform non-punitive strategies aligned with positive discipline policies. This could help shift the focus from punitive measures to relationship-based approaches to discipline. Researchers will use the findings as a reference point for further studies on school discipline, teacher-student relationships, and psychosocial aspects of learning. The study contributes to existing literature by focusing specifically on the effect of teacher support on discipline within a Kenyan context.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Review

This study was guided by Invitational Theory, developed by Purkey and Novak (2008), which emphasizes the creation of a welcoming, respectful, and supportive school climate that nurtures positive student behaviour. The theory posits that schools become more attractive and engaging to learners when they intentionally strengthen five key elements: people, places, programs, policies, and processes. Together, these elements shape learners' experiences, sense of belonging, motivation, and ultimately their discipline. In the context of this study, the theory is particularly relevant because it provides a framework for understanding how teacher support, as a core relational component within the school environment, influences student discipline in public secondary schools in Tharaka-Nithi County.

Central to the Invitational Theory is the "people" component, which is directly linked to the study's main variable: teacher support. The theory asserts that when students perceive teachers as caring, approachable, and supportive both emotionally and academically, they feel valued, respected, and connected to the school community. Such positive teacher-student relationships enhance learners' sense of belonging and reduce the likelihood of indiscipline. This makes the "people" element the most critical in explaining how teacher support affects student conduct, as supportive teachers model desirable behaviour and provide guidance that encourages responsibility and self-discipline.

The “places” element, which concerns the physical school environment, complements the role of teacher support by shaping the context in which teacher–student interactions occur. A clean, safe, and inviting physical environment enhances teachers’ ability to guide and mentor learners effectively, while overcrowded or poorly maintained spaces may undermine these efforts and contribute to learner frustration or misconduct. Although secondary to the main construct of teacher support, this element demonstrates how the physical setting can strengthen or weaken the influence of supportive teacher behaviours on student discipline. School “policies” also play a significant role by shaping students’ perceptions of fairness, respect, and care. Invitational Theory suggests that positive, restorative, and consistently applied discipline policies foster trust and reinforce the supportive role of teachers. In contrast, punitive or inconsistently implemented rules may strain teacher–student relationships, leading to resentment and increased indiscipline. Therefore, policies provide the institutional backdrop against which teacher support operates to influence learners’ behavioural outcomes.

The “programs” dimension of the theory highlights the importance of both curricular and co-curricular activities. Effective programs increase student engagement and create additional avenues through which teachers can mentor learners, model positive behaviour, and offer support. When learning and co-curricular programs are inclusive, stimulating, and responsive to learner needs, they enhance the impact of teacher support by keeping learners positively engaged and reducing opportunities for misconduct.

Finally, the “processes” element, encompassing decision-making, communication, and day-to-day school functioning sustains the relational environment needed for effective teacher support. Transparent, democratic, and collaborative processes build trust between students and teachers, making learners more receptive to guidance and disciplinary measures. In this study, processes help explain how supportive teacher–student relationships are reinforced through daily institutional practices, thereby influencing overall student discipline.

2.2 Empirical Review

Teacher support is widely recognised as one of the strongest predictors of positive student behaviour and discipline in school environments. Research on school connectedness consistently shows that when students perceive teachers as caring, respectful, and attentive to their academic and emotional needs, they develop a strong sense of belonging that discourages engagement in disruptive or antisocial behaviour. School connectedness, therefore, becomes an important framework for understanding the effect of teacher support on student discipline. According to the CDC (2009), school connectedness is reflected in students’ feelings of acceptance, enthusiasm about attending school, positive relationships with teachers and peers, and active participation in school activities. Among its components, teacher support, peer relationships, commitment to education, and school environment, teacher support is the most central variable in shaping learners’ behaviour and discipline outcomes.

Teacher support refers to the emotional, academic, and interpersonal assistance that students receive from teachers and support staff. When teachers invest personal time in learners, demonstrate concern for their well-being, provide guidance, and respond to students’ needs with empathy, they create a climate that makes students feel valued. Literature shows that such supportive teacher–student relationships reduce the likelihood of indiscipline because students who feel respected are more motivated to comply with school rules and maintain positive behaviour. In this study, teacher support is the primary variable expected to directly influence students’ discipline in Tharaka-Nithi County.

Although peer relationships also contribute to school connectedness, they play a secondary role compared to teacher support. Positive peer networks characterised by cooperation, focus on schoolwork, and prosocial behaviour help reinforce the guidance provided by teachers. Witt, Doerfert, Ulmer, Burris, and Lan (2013) note that students who belong to constructive peer groups are more likely to complete assignments, participate in school activities, and maintain discipline. In the context of Tharaka-Nithi County, this study recognises that while peer influence matters, teacher support acts as the primary anchor that either counters or reinforces peer pressure.

Commitment to education is another dimension linked to student behaviour. When teachers encourage learner engagement, provide academic guidance, and create supportive classroom environments, students develop a stronger academic orientation and are less inclined to engage in indiscipline. Similarly, the school environment, including physical appearance, safety, and psychosocial climate, can shape discipline outcomes. Studies such as Kweon, Ellis, Lee, and Jacobs (2017) show that students in attractive and well-maintained schools tend to exhibit fewer behavioural problems. However, even in such environments, the effectiveness of discipline depends significantly on how teachers interact with learners.

Research conducted in developed countries consistently highlights the role of teacher support in promoting discipline. For instance, Bishop, Gelbwasser, Green, and Peterson (2004) found that low connectedness in American schools was linked to poor teacher–student relationships, unsafe environments, and weak classroom management, which contributed to indiscipline. Similarly, Rowe and Stewart (2009), in their study in Australia, reported that strengthening communication and relationships between teachers and students enhanced connectedness and reduced behavioural problems. The findings emphasise the need for whole-school efforts aimed at improving teacher–student interactions, a key gap that the present study addresses within the Kenyan context. Other scholars underscore the need for school-wide collaboration in fostering supportive school climates. Blum (2005) and Whitlock (2006) argue that when teachers, administrators, parents, and support staff work together to support learners, students feel valued, respected, and included in school processes. Such experiences enhance connectedness and improve discipline. However, these studies seldom assess the unique contribution of teacher support independently, leaving a gap in how teacher actions specifically influence discipline, a gap that the current study seeks to fill.

In addition, research focusing on adolescent development highlights that positive peer relationships enhance connectedness, but teacher support remains crucial in shaping how learners navigate peer influence. Hamm and Faircloth (2005) observed that teachers play an essential role in guiding students to form healthy peer networks, which in turn promote better behaviour and school engagement. This underscores the importance of teacher involvement in behavioural development, a central focus of this study. Globally, efforts to promote school connectedness have been recognised as essential for reducing bullying, victimisation, and other indiscipline cases, as noted in countries such as Australia, Finland, the United States, Germany, Bangladesh, and South Korea (Ahmed & Braithwaite, 2006; Ahmed, 2008). Similar initiatives have been applied even in conflict-affected regions such as Ukraine (Symeou et al., 2020). Despite these international developments, little empirical evidence exists on the effect of teacher support on student discipline in the rural Kenyan context, particularly in Tharaka-Nithi County.

The reviewed literature clearly shows that teacher support is a central determinant of student connectedness and discipline across diverse educational settings. However, most existing

studies are located in Western or urban contexts, and few focus specifically on the Kenyan rural secondary school environment. This gap justifies the current study, which examines the effect of teacher support on students' discipline in public secondary schools in Tharaka-Nithi County, while acknowledging but not overemphasising the complementary roles of peer relationships, school environment, and commitment to education.

3. Methodology

The study adopted a convergent-parallel research design, which enabled the simultaneous collection and analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitative data, collected through structured questionnaires administered to students and teachers, provided measurable insights into relationships among variables such as teacher support, peer networks, commitment to education, school environment, and student discipline. Qualitative data, collected through open-ended interviews with principals, offered a deeper understanding of the lived experiences, perceptions, and institutional practices influencing student discipline. The convergent-parallel design allowed the integration of both datasets during interpretation, ensuring triangulation, strengthening validity, and providing a comprehensive understanding of how school connectedness affects student discipline.

The study focused on Tharaka-Nithi County in Eastern Kenya, chosen due to its reported high levels of student indiscipline and low school engagement. The county is divided into five sub-counties: Maara, Meru South, Tharaka North, Tharaka South, and Igambang'ombe, and hosts 154 public secondary schools serving a total of 51,363 students. The region's recurring disciplinary challenges and low academic performance made it an appropriate context for examining the influence of school connectedness on student behaviour. The study involved two main sets of variables. The independent variable, school connectedness, was operationalized through four indicators: teacher support, peer networks, commitment to education, and the school environment. The dependent variable, students' discipline, was measured by instances of misbehaviour, suspensions, expulsions, strikes, and riots.

The study population comprised 51,363 students, 2,737 teachers, and 154 principals from all public secondary schools in Tharaka-Nithi County. This population reflected the full spectrum of stakeholders involved in the learning and disciplinary processes within the county's schools. A total of 640 respondents were selected using a combination of sampling techniques to ensure representativeness. A sample of 400 students was drawn using systematic random sampling with proportionate allocation across sub-counties, school types, class levels, and gender. From each of the 40 sampled schools, five teachers were randomly selected, yielding a sample of 200 teachers. All 40 principals from the sampled schools were purposively selected due to their unique positions as school administrators and their ability to provide authoritative insights. The final sample, therefore, included 400 students, 200 teachers, and 40 principals.

Data was collected using questionnaires and interview guides. The student and teacher questionnaires included Likert-scale items assessing school connectedness components, teacher support, peer networks, commitment to education, and school environment, as well as items measuring students' discipline. Open-ended interviews with principals captured detailed, context-specific information on how school connectedness influenced discipline. Reliability testing yielded Cronbach's alpha coefficients of 0.831 for students and 0.731 for teachers, indicating high internal consistency. Validity was ensured through expert reviews and pilot testing in three comparable schools in Meru County. A pilot study was conducted with 30 students and 10 teachers from three public secondary schools in Meru County. The pilot assessed the reliability, validity, and clarity of the instruments, allowing refinement before the

main data collection. The choice of Meru County was justified by its proximity and socio-cultural similarity to Tharaka-Nithi County, ensuring the pilot results were relevant while avoiding contamination of the main study population. Data collection commenced after obtaining permits from the National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation (NACOSTI), the County Director of Education, and school principals. The researcher personally administered questionnaires to students and teachers and conducted interviews with principals, providing clear instructions and ensuring sufficient time for respondents to complete all items.

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, as well as inferential statistics such as Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), using IBM SPSS Statistics Version 27. Qualitative data from principal interviews were subjected to content analysis to identify emerging themes. Integration of quantitative and qualitative findings during interpretation enabled triangulation, enhancing the robustness and validity of conclusions. Logistical considerations included obtaining formal approval from NACOSTI, the County Director of Education, and school principals, and personally administering data collection to ensure accuracy. Ethical measures ensured voluntary participation, informed consent, confidentiality, and the right to withdraw from the study without consequences. Respondents' identities and institutional affiliations were kept anonymous, and all data were used solely for research purposes.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Effects of Teacher Support on Students' Discipline

This study examined how teacher support influences students' discipline in public secondary schools in Tharaka-Nithi County. Teacher support was conceptualized as the emotional guidance, encouragement, open communication, and respect that teachers extend to students, while students' discipline encompassed adherence to school rules, respect for authority, and self-regulation. Data from questionnaires, interviews, and descriptive and inferential analyses provided a comprehensive view of the relationship between these variables.

4.1.1 Students' Perceptions of Teacher Support

Table 1: Student rating on the teacher-support scale

Teacher Support	Mean	Std. Dev.
I have a teacher I can turn to when I have an emotional problem	4.60	.784
Teachers in my class believe I have the potential to do well.	4.38	.784
I have a teacher(s) that I could freely speak with when having a problem(s).	4.36	.657
Teachers at my school respect me.	4.04	.869
The support staff in this school are friendly to us.	4.04	.694
Most teachers at my school are interested in me.	3.99	1.004
Teachers at my school are not interested in people like me.	3.94	.917

Students reported generally high levels of teacher support. The most positively rated aspect was the availability of emotional support, with students indicating that they could turn to teachers when facing emotional challenges (mean = 4.60). Teachers' belief in students' potential to succeed also received a high rating (mean = 4.38), highlighting the motivational

role teachers play in shaping student self-efficacy. Open communication channels between students and teachers were similarly valued (mean = 4.36), suggesting that students perceive teachers as approachable and supportive. Lower ratings were observed for items relating to teachers’ general interest in students (mean = 3.99) and support staff friendliness (mean = 4.04), indicating areas where school personnel could strengthen relational support. Overall, aggregated scores showed that most students (mean = 29.4, SD = 2.5) perceived teacher support to be high, reflecting a strong foundation of teacher-student relationships that likely fosters trust, engagement, and a sense of belonging in the school environment.

4.1.2 Teachers’ Perceptions of Teacher Support

Table 2: Teachers’ rating on the teacher-support scale

Teacher Support	Mean	Std. Dev.
I create time to interact with students outside the classroom	4.69	1.025
I have faith that my students can do well academically	4.41	.898
Students find it easy to approach me when they have personal problems to discuss	4.71	.767
I treat my students with respect.	4.38	.662
The support staff are friendly to students.	4.1	.793
I show great interest in most of my students.	4.61	.710
Most of my colleagues seem not to care about the lives of students outside the classroom	2.91	.923

Teachers largely corroborated students’ perceptions, reporting high engagement with students through interactions outside the classroom (mean = 4.69), belief in students’ academic potential (mean = 4.41), approachability for personal discussions (mean = 4.71), and respectful treatment of students (mean = 4.38). Teachers also emphasized their interest in students’ well-being (mean = 4.61), though they noted that some colleagues appeared less engaged with students’ lives outside the classroom (mean = 2.91). The alignment between student and teacher responses underscores the presence of positive teacher-student interactions across the sampled schools, while the minor discrepancies suggest the need for a cohesive school culture that promotes consistent support from all staff.

4.1.3 Behaviour Problems in Schools

Table 3: Students' Rating of behaviour problems in schools

Behaviour problems	Mean	Std. dev.
Fighting	1.93	1.232
Disrespecting school prefects	2.11	1.048
Strikes and unrest	1.22	.484
Disrespecting teachers or support staff	1.45	.649
Insulting teachers or support staff	1.58	.782
Vandalism	1.74	.955
Mass Protest	1.96	1.244
Bullying other students	1.84	1.052
Examination malpractice	1.89	.949
Drug abuse (including cigarettes)	2.17	1.180
Alcohol consumption	1.62	.787
Failure to do assigned duties	2.38	1.037
Noise-making in class	2.97	1.187
Theft of other students' property	2.61	1.387

Students generally reported moderate levels of behaviour problems, with noise-making in class (mean = 2.97), theft of other students' property (mean = 2.61), and failure to complete assigned duties (mean = 2.38) as the most common issues. Other notable problems included fighting (mean = 1.93), drug use (mean = 2.17), and disrespect toward school authorities (means ranging from 1.45 to 2.11). Teachers' responses mirrored students' perceptions, identifying noise-making (mean = 2.98), failure to complete duties (mean = 2.71), and theft (mean = 2.84) as major concerns. Additional issues, such as bullying (mean = 2.52) and assault on school prefects (mean = 2.49), were highlighted. Interviews with principals revealed that most indiscipline cases were minor, such as noise-making, incomplete assignments, and defiance of authority, although more serious problems, including strikes, riots, and substance abuse, occurred occasionally and were influenced by external factors. Overall, aggregated student scores on behaviour problems indicated that the majority perceived disciplinary issues to be average, with only a small proportion (5.9%) reporting high levels of indiscipline.

4.1.4 Teacher Support and Student Discipline

Table 4: Teacher support and student discipline

Teacher support	No. of students	Discipline Mean	Std. Deviation
Average	5	26.00	.000
High	294	28.36	8.810
Very high	93	24.84	9.076
Total	392	27.49	8.934

ANOVA Statistics	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	887.627	2	443.813	5.694	.004
Within Groups	30318.363	389	77.939		
Total	31205.990	391			

The analysis of variance demonstrated a significant relationship between perceived teacher support and students' discipline, $F(2, 389) = 5.694, p = .004$. Students who perceived very high teacher support exhibited the lowest mean discipline problems (mean = 24.84), followed by those with average support (mean = 26.0) and high support (mean = 28.36). This indicates that greater teacher support is associated with fewer behavioural problems. The findings suggest that teacher-student relationships characterized by trust, respect, and open communication promote better adherence to school rules and self-regulation. Qualitative data from principal interviews reinforced this conclusion, emphasizing that teacher support extends beyond academic guidance to include emotional and social mentorship, contributing to holistic student development. Principals noted that teachers and support staff who engage positively with students create an environment conducive to learning and discipline, while consistent staff collaboration enhances the overall school climate.

4.2 Summary of Key Findings

The study established that teacher support significantly influences students' discipline. Students who felt emotionally supported, believed in, and were able to communicate freely with their teachers were less likely to engage in disruptive behaviours. Both students and teachers reported generally high levels of support, although minor gaps in staff interest and support staff friendliness were noted. Behaviour problems were predominantly minor, with noise-making, incomplete assignments, and theft being most prevalent. ANOVA results confirmed that higher perceived teacher support is associated with lower levels of student indiscipline, highlighting the critical role of positive teacher-student relationships in fostering disciplined, responsible, and engaged learners.

5. Conclusion

The study established that teacher support significantly influences student discipline in public secondary schools in Tharaka-Nithi County. Students who perceived their teachers as approachable, supportive, and confident in their potential reported fewer disciplinary problems compared to those who felt less supported. Key aspects of teacher support emotional guidance, respect, belief in students' abilities, and open communication, were particularly associated with lower instances of indiscipline. Both students and teachers affirmed the presence of positive

teacher-student relationships, although minor gaps were noted regarding colleagues' engagement with students outside the classroom and the friendliness of support staff.

Additionally, peer networks and commitment to education emerged as critical factors in shaping student behaviour. Positive peer relationships and shared academic goals foster a sense of belonging, motivation, and accountability, while negative peer influences can prompt disengagement and misconduct. The physical environment of the school also contributed to discipline outcomes; a clean, safe, and well-maintained school environment promoted responsibility and respect, whereas neglected spaces were associated with disorder. Overall, the findings underscore that student discipline is influenced by a combination of teacher support, peer interactions, commitment to learning, and the school environment, highlighting the holistic nature of school connectedness.

Drawing on Invitation Theory, this study concludes that teacher support is central to fostering responsible student behaviour. Teachers who are caring, approachable, and respectful cultivate an environment where students feel valued, capable, and motivated to adhere to school rules. Positive teacher-student relationships, grounded in trust and mutual respect, reduce instances of indiscipline and promote self-regulation. Peer networks and commitment to education act as additional invitations, reinforcing a culture of inclusion, motivation, and shared responsibility. Moreover, the school's physical environment and overall connectedness significantly impact students' perceptions of care and respect, which in turn influence their behaviour. These findings affirm that student discipline reflects the extent to which learners feel welcomed, affirmed, and supported in their schools, emphasizing the importance of holistic approaches to school management and climate.

6. Recommendations

6.1 Policy Recommendations

Educational policies should allocate resources to professional development programs that enhance teachers' communication, relationship-building, and emotional support skills. These programs will equip teachers to foster strong teacher-student connections and create more supportive learning environments.

6.2 School Management Recommendations

Schools should implement peer support programs, including mentoring, cooperative learning, or buddy systems, to promote positive peer interactions and a sense of belonging.

Schools should maintain a clean, safe, and visually appealing environment, involving students in upkeep and celebrating achievements, to foster pride, responsibility, and respect.

Schools should actively cultivate a positive and inclusive climate by promoting respect, recognition of positive behaviour, and addressing bullying and exclusion, thereby enhancing school connectedness and discipline.

6.3 Recommendations for Principals, Teachers, and Students

Principals should lead in creating a positive school climate, support professional development for teachers, and ensure a well-maintained and safe school environment.

Teachers should engage actively with students, listen to concerns, provide emotional support, and participate in professional development to strengthen relationships and communication skills.

Students should participate in peer support programs, cooperative learning activities, and maintain school facilities, thereby contributing to a positive, inclusive, and disciplined school environment.

6.4 Suggestions for Further Research

Future studies could explore the influence of cultural and contextual factors on school connectedness and student discipline, examining how cultural norms, socioeconomic conditions, and school climate interact to shape students' behaviour. Such research would provide valuable insights for tailoring interventions to diverse educational settings.

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