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**Principals' Decision-Making Skills and Management of Student Discipline in Public Secondary Schools in Bomet County, Kenya**

By

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**Abstract**

Decision-making is an important set of skills that principals needed in the management of schools. These skills are particularly useful when dealing with student indiscipline. The study examined the relationship between principals' decision-making skills and their ability to manage student discipline among secondary schools in Bomet County, Kenya. The study was descriptive survey by design. The target population was 572, constituting of 5 Sub-County Education Directors, 189 principals and 189 deputy principals and 189 senior teachers. A sample size of 239 respondents, consisting of 78 principals, 78 deputy principals and 78 senior teachers proportionally distributed and all the 5 Sub-County Education Directors, was obtained using Yamane's formula. Simple random sampling and purposive sampling were utilised to select respondents. Data was then collected using a structured questionnaire and an interview schedule. Interview data was subjected to content analysis while quantitative data was analysed using SPSS version 24 to generate descriptive statistics. The results of the study revealed that principals' decision-making skills had a positive and significant effect on the management of student discipline in public secondary schools ( $\beta_4 = 0.261$ ,  $p = 0.005$ ). Therefore, key decision-making skills such as focusing on relevant details, working cohesively with teachers and students, reasoning, considering all available and relevant data, instincts, teamwork, emotional intelligence, brainstorming and organizational skills, among others, helped principals to better address student indiscipline problems in schools. It is therefore recommended that school administrators and teachers should enforce school policies consistently to promote positive student behaviour. School principals and teachers should be trained on how to enforce these policies and respond appropriately to disciplinary issues that arise in the schools. This will help create a positive learning environment and promote student discipline.

**Keywords:** Kenya, Bomet, School Principals, Decision-making Skills, Student Discipline

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**Introduction**

In the secondary school set-up, the principal is the chief human resource manager. As human resource managers, school principals play very important roles in maintaining discipline and the overall organizational performance of secondary schools. Globally, principals are recognized primarily as the overall resource managers of their schools. This role entails overseeing all aspects of the school management, acting as the point of contact with external interested parties, fostering school community relations, and instructional supervision (Chemutai, 2015). To undertake these HR roles, therefore, principals must have a wide variety of skills, including communication skills, organizational skills, technological skills, change management skills, interpersonal skills, ethical skills, among others (Stone *et al.*, 2023).

In many African countries, secondary school principals are directly involved in the proper management of instruction and student behaviour (Mbera, 2015). When interacting with other students, teachers, administrators, and members of the community, students are expected to uphold a high level of conduct. In order to be a responsible member of society, a student is expected to treat teachers with respect, follow the rules and regulations of the school, and conduct themselves in a well-behaved manner, especially when using school facilities. Inevitably, students will deviate from these standards of conduct. This frequently leads to a disciplinary issue that could impede the ability to effectively teach and learn. Students' behaviour must be controlled and an effective learning environment maintained by school principals, who are legally obligated to plan, organize, lead and supervise students' actions (Mbera, 2015). Despite the given responsibility to the principals, students' indiscipline cases in Bomet County schools are still high, hence the need for a study linking principals' human resource skills and management of student discipline.

**Statement of the Problem**

A study conducted in Bomet County, Chepalungu Sub-County, indicates that cases of student unrest have been on the rise (Kosgei, Sirmah & Tuei, 2017). Kosgei *et al.* note that despite various measures to curb student indiscipline, such as student engagements with the boards of management (BOMs), recurrent students' unrests are still witnessed. These scholars frame the issue of student indiscipline as a managerial problem. In their study, they found that students often cited exclusion in management decisions as a key contributor to student unrest in the Sub-County. Therefore, there was need to explore the correlation between principals' human resource skills and student discipline in Bomet County. This study thus sought to assess the influence of principals' human resource skills on the management of student discipline in Bomet County, Kenya. Specifically, this paper examines the relationship between principals' decision-making

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skills and their management of student indiscipline in secondary schools in Bomet County, Kenya.

### **Literature Review**

A study by Lambersky (2016) asserts that effective principals with strong decision-making skills play a critical role in managing student discipline, creating a positive school culture, and fostering an environment conducive to learning. The ability of principals to make informed decisions regarding student discipline is essential for maintaining order and ensuring the safety of both students and staff. With increasing instances of disciplinary issues in schools today, it becomes imperative for principals to possess the necessary skills to effectively handle these situations. Principals are not only responsible for academic achievement but also for shaping the overall school climate (Park, Lee & Cooc, 2019). They serve as visionary leaders who set high expectations, create clear guidelines, and maintain a safe environment that promotes learning and personal growth. The management of student discipline is an area where principals' decision-making skills are put to test regularly. It involves addressing various behavioural issues such as bullying, truancy, vandalism, or violence among students.

When dealing with student discipline, principals are expected to analyse each situation carefully before taking appropriate action while considering factors such as fairness and equity in their decisions (Skovsmose, 2023). Furthermore, effective principals understand that managing student discipline goes beyond punishment; it encompasses preventive measures aimed at cultivating positive behaviour within the school community. By implementing proactive strategies like restorative justice practices or social-emotional learning programmes, they create an atmosphere in which students feel supported rather than oppressed. This approach fosters mutual respect between students and teachers while encouraging self-discipline among learners. Creating a positive school culture is another crucial aspect influenced by strong decision-making skills exhibited by principals. A supportive environment instils values such as empathy, tolerance, and inclusivity among students while promoting collaboration between teachers and parents alike (Bahri, 2019). Such an inclusive culture enhances overall academic performance by nurturing well-rounded individuals capable of thriving in diverse settings beyond their educational years.

Maintaining open lines of communication among administrators, teachers, parents/guardians, and students foster an inclusive atmosphere where all stakeholders can work collaboratively towards resolving disciplinary issues (De Royston & Madkins, 2020). This requires active listening on the part of principals as they gather information from multiple sources to gain a comprehensive understanding of each situation. In so doing, they can make informed decisions based on individual circumstances rather than adopting a one-size-fits-all approach. Principals who consistently apply established rules create clear boundaries within schools while simultaneously promoting fairness among students. Such consistency not only enhances accountability but also ensures that students understand what is expected of them behaviourally. By analysing disciplinary data such as incidents or patterns over time, principals can identify areas needing improvement and design targeted interventions accordingly (Anyon *et al.*, 2018). This evidence-based approach allows for tailored responses that address specific needs within their school community. Principals can foster such an atmosphere by promoting

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respectful interactions, encouraging student involvement in decision-making processes through student councils or peer mediation programmes, and implementing restorative justice practices when appropriate.

A study by Findlay (2015) found that primary school principals in Canada have a lot of leeway when it comes to disciplining pupils. The purpose of the study was to examine principals' principles when they make student discipline judgments within the legal restrictions of their administrative authority. As part of this qualitative technique, ten primary school administrators in Western Canada were interviewed in semi-structured in-depth interviews. The data was evaluated by segmenting into groups, trends, and subjects. Flexibility proved to be a critical component in making fair and reasonable disciplinary choices as part of a larger, more difficult circumstance or as a grey area for the principals. Supervisory pressure, parental and worker demands, and legal threats were all found to influence their decision-making. The flexibility to apply their own views of equality and justice to the regulations was accorded to the principles.

Sarafidou and Chatziioannidis (2017) investigated how teacher participation in decision-making influenced schools and teachers in Greece. The purpose of the study was to look into the extent of teachers' involvement in various decision-making domains in Greek primary schools, as well as the relationship between school and teacher characteristics. On a survey using self-administered questionnaires, teachers' actual and desired participation in three areas of decision-making was measured using a Likert-type scale.

The study also asked about perceived school climate and self-efficacy. The study polled a total of 143 Greek primary school teachers. When employing a multidimensional approach, there were significant levels of participation in decisions that affected students and teachers, but low levels of participation in administrative decisions. Due to the disparity between actual and anticipated levels of engagement, deprivation was evident across all decision-making domains. More instructors engaged in decision-making and fewer teachers being stripped of leadership roles in collaborative learning contexts. Teachers' efficacy and job satisfaction were substantially linked to their involvement in problem-solving decisions.

Tijani (2020) devised processes for teachers to engage in decision-making in Kwara State's secondary schools in Nigeria. This study focused on teachers' involvement in school decision-making techniques in secondary schools in Jimma Town. In the study, a descriptive survey method was adopted. More than 200 persons took part in the survey, including 157 teachers and 11 principals, as well as 28 PTAs, three educational officers, and three teachers' organization leaders. The schools, principals, and PTAs were chosen using a census. Teachers were chosen using a purposeful selection of educational office officials and personnel, rather than systematic random sampling. The data was collected through questionnaires, interviews, and observations. Percentages, a graded mean, and an independent sample t-test were used to examine the survey data. Material for qualitative analysis was gathered through interviews and document analysis. With the exception of student disciplinary problems and school building, where they contributed the most and least, secondary school teachers were found to be deficient in all areas of engagement in school decision-making. School leaders/principals and PTAs regarded teachers' participation in school decision-making to be ineffective.

Wambua, Kalai and Okoth (2017) evaluated the impact of principals including students in decision-making on school discipline in Kenyan secondary schools. Using a descriptive

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survey approach, a stratified proportional sample of 118 principals and 1534 student leaders was drawn from a target population of 354 secondary school administrators, 300 teachers, and 4602 student leaders. In their investigation, the researchers relied on questionnaire responses from principals and student leaders. With 101 principals and 1433 student leaders returning, the return rate was 85.6 percent for principals and 93.4 percent for student leaders. Cross-tabulations were used to see if the amount of involvement of principals in student decision-making affected the frequency of student indiscipline. In order to protect the well-being of all students, 94.1 percent of principals incorporated students in decision-making, albeit to varying degrees, according to the survey. This study left a gap as the principals involved the students in the decision-making process.

Kibet *et al.* (2019) examined principals' leadership in Kenyan secondary schools to determine how it affects student conduct. A descriptive survey approach was employed to obtain data that could be used to accurately depict how things are in Koibatek District schools. To convey the findings to school administrators, instructors, and students, descriptive statistical methodologies were used. The survey discovered that teachers, students and parents were all active in the management of their schools on a regular or irregular basis. Even though most pupils grasped their messages, they frequently had the final word on most subjects. According to the data, a strong correlation exists between principals' leadership styles and student discipline. In their position as school leaders, principals should include teachers, students, and other stakeholders in the decision-making process.

In Kenyan public secondary schools, Onyango, Raburu and Aloka (2016) investigated the impact of various disciplinary methods employed by principals on student behaviour. In order to strengthen discipline, the school system organized collaborative decision-making meetings. Administrators claim such meetings improved decision-making and allowed students to express their concerns. This study informed the current study on the decisions of principals on student discipline. In the Nyanza Region of Kenya, Yambo (2022) carried out a study to determine the impact of the principals' decision-making abilities on students' academic outcomes in public teachers' training institutions. Timetables for surveys and interviews were used to gather data. Statistical program for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21 was used for the descriptive statistical and inferential techniques that were used to analyse and interpret the data. According to the survey, 63 percent of students' academic success in public teacher training institutes in the Nyanza Region was influenced by their ability to make sound decisions. This study however addressed the decisions of college principals on student discipline leaving a gap on secondary school principals.

A study to identify the areas in which secondary school principals involve students in decision-making and to ascertain whether there are any appreciable differences between reported incidents of student lack of discipline based on the levels of student involvement in secondary schools was conducted (Wambua *et al.*, 2017). According to the research, 94.1% of principals involved students in decision-making to varied degrees for the wellbeing of their charges. As shown by fewer occurrences of arson, which may be linked to students' sense of responsibility and recognition, the occurrences of student misbehaviour in those schools were low. The study concluded that student discipline is greatly influenced by their engagement in decision-making.

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This study also had principals involving students in their decisions affecting their discipline leaving a gap intended to be filled by the current study.

### **Materials and Methods**

The study was undertaken in Bomet County, Kenya. Bomet County was selected since it has witnessed several cases of indiscipline cases. The study used a descriptive survey design that can handle both quantitative and qualitative data. The target population was 572 comprising of 5 sub-county education directors, 189 school principals, 189 deputy principals and 189 senior teachers. These were drawn from the five sub-counties of Sotik, Bomet, Bomet East, Chepalungu and Konoin. The researchers calculated the sample size for principals, deputy principals and senior teachers using Yamane (1967) formula. Thereafter, they used simple random sampling to select respondents. Therefore, the sample size was 239 respondents, comprising 78 principals, 78 deputy principals and 78 senior teachers proportionally distributed and all the 5 Sub County Education directors.

The research used both structured questionnaires and interview schedule as the main research instruments. Both qualitative and quantitative data analysis techniques were used. Qualitative data involved a process of data editing, coding, classification, and identifying key themes and sub-themes. Content analysis was used to analyse the responses from interview schedule. Therefore, themes were identified and assigned codes, followed by classification of themes. Themes were then integrated and coding helped in generating new ideas and gathering materials by topic, which helped in management of data. The quantitative data collected were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics with the help of Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), version 24. The descriptive statistics included percentages, frequencies, standard deviation and mean.

### **Presentation of Results and Discussion**

The study evaluated the influence of principals' decision-making skills on management of student discipline in public secondary schools in Bomet County, Kenya. The results were obtained from the principals, senior teachers' and the Sub-County Director of Education.

### **Principals' Responses on Decision-making Skills**

The study sought the views of school principals on the influence of their decision-making skills on management of student discipline in public secondary schools. The study findings were as presented in Table 1.

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**Table 1: Principals' Responses on Decision-making Skills**

<b>Statements</b>	<b>SA F(%)</b>	<b>A F(%)</b>	<b>UD F(%)</b>	<b>D F(%)</b>	<b>SD F(%)</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Dev.</b>
I am always focus on relevant details which form basis for decisions making more quickly and effectively	53(73.1)	3(4.8)	4(5.1)	7(10.1)	5(6.9)	4.27	1.31
I work cohesively with teachers to make productive choices with long-term impact on students' discipline	29(40.3)	19(26.6)	9(12.2)	3(4.5)	12(16.4)	3.69	1.44
Reasoning is one of my main skills in decision-making concerning students' discipline	26(36.1)	7(9.3)	12(16.7)	21(29.6)	6(8.4)	3.35	1.43
I always consider all available and relevant points of data to guide my decision-making.	14(20)	29(40)	4(5.4)	19(26.3)	6(8.4)	3.37	1.29
I always associate my instincts with the potential actions I can take to see if my decision is logical and actionable	34(47.2)	25(34.6)	3(4.5)	1(0.9)	9(12.8)	4.02	1.30
Teamwork helps me with decision-making by showing me different perspectives	38(53.4)	9(12.8)	5(6.6)	6(7.8)	14(19.4)	3.73	1.61
My emotional intelligence guides my analysis of students' discipline and solutions	29(40)	30(42.1)	3(4.8)	3(3.6)	7(9.6)	3.99	1.20
I consider having weekly brainstorming sessions to maximize teachers and students' creativity in problem-solving	21(29.3)	35(48.1)	3(4.2)	5(6.6)	8(11.9)	3.76	1.27
I consider having weekly brainstorming	53(73.1)	3(4.8)	4(5.1)	7(10.1)	5(6.9)	3.57	0.92

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sessions to maximize teachers and students' creativity in problem-solving							
Organizational skills have helped me assign tasks to teachers concerning students' discipline	29(40.3)	19(26.6)	9(12.2)	3(4.5)	12(16.4)	3.53	.97

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**Source: Field Data 2023**

The study results in Table 1 show that majority, 56(77.9%), of the principals agreed that they always focused on relevant details that form the basis for decisions-making more quickly and effectively. On contrary, 12(17.0%) of the principals disagreed with this assertion. Further, based on the mean and standard deviation, the principals generally agreed that they always focused on relevant details that form the basis for decisions-making more quickly and effectively (Mean=4.27, standard deviation=1.31). This agreed with the study done by Stronge (2018), which noted that focusing on specific and relevant details that form basis for decision-making impacts school discipline.

The study further revealed that a majority, 48(66.9%), of the principals agreed that they worked cohesively with teachers to make productive decisions with long-term impact on students' discipline. However, 15(20.9%) of the principals disagreed with this statement. The mean and standard deviation revealed that the principals agreed that they worked cohesively with teachers to make productive decisions with long-term impact on students' discipline (Mean=3.69, standard deviation=1.44). This affirmed the view by Ansley, Houchins and Varjas (2019) that working cohesively with teachers to make good decisions brings about long-term impact on students' discipline. Additionally, 33(45.4%) of the participants agreed that reasoning was one of their main skills in decision-making concerning students' discipline. However, 27(38.0%) of the principals disagreed that reasoning is one of their main skills in decision-making concerning students' discipline.

Further, from the mean and standard deviation, the principals agreed generally that reasoning was one of their main skills in decision-making concerning students' discipline (Mean=3.35, standard deviation=1.43). This finding coincided with the study done by Rahman (2019) which revealed that reasoning is an important aspect of decision-making concerning student discipline. Moreover, most, 43(60.0%), of the principals agreed and 25(34.7%) disagreed that they always considered all available and relevant points of data to guide their decision-making in dealing with student discipline. Further, from the mean and standard deviation, the principals generally agreed that they always considered all available and relevant points of data to guide their decision-making in dealing with student discipline (Mean=3.37, standard deviation=1.29). The finding aligned with the study done by Wise and Jung (2019), which underscored that availability and relevance of information to guide decision-making is an essential factor in managing student discipline.



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A vast majority, 59(81.8%), of the principals agreed and 10(20.9%) disagreed that they always associated their instincts with the potential actions they could take to see if their decisions were logical and actionable. Additionally, the study results revealed that the principals agreed that they always associated their instincts with the potential actions they could take to see if their decision was logical and actionable (Mean=4.02, standard deviation=1.30). This agreed with the suggestion by Stevenson and Hicks (2016) that instincts can be helpful in identifying logical and decisive measures in students' discipline. Furthermore, 47(66.2%) of the participants agreed and 20(27.2%) disagreed that teamwork helped them see different perspectives in their decision-making concerning student discipline. The mean and standard deviation showed that, overall, the principals agreed that teamwork helped them see different perspectives in their decision-making concerning student discipline (Mean=3.73, standard deviation=1.61). This was in line with the view by Mladenovic, Martinov-Bennie and Bell (2019) that teamwork is instrumental in decision-making revolving student discipline.

Further, majority of the principals, 59(82.1%), agreed that their emotional intelligence guided their analysis of and solutions to students' discipline issues. However, 10(13.2%) of the principals disagreed with this statement. Meanwhile, overall, the mean and standard deviation showed that the principals agreed with the statement their emotional intelligence guided their analysis of and solutions to students' discipline issues (Mean=3.99, standard deviation=1.20). This resonated with the study by Valente, Monteiro and Lourenço (2019), which posited that emotional intelligence aids in the analysis of students' discipline issues in order to identify the best solutions. In addition, most of the principals, 56(77.4%), agreed that they considered having weekly brainstorming sessions to maximize teachers and students' creativity in problem-solving. However, 13(18.5 %) of the principals disagreed with this statement. Further, the principals generally agreed with the statement that they considered having weekly brainstorming sessions to maximize teachers and students' creativity in problem-solving (Mean=3.76, standard deviation=1.27). This agreed with the statement by Abbood (2023) that occasional brainstorming sessions help to maximize teachers and students' creativity in problem-solving.

Further, 56(66.5%) of the respondents agreed as 12(12.7%) disagreed that time management had helped them stay organized during each stage of the decision-making process concerning student discipline. From mean and standard deviation, the principals generally agreed that time management had helped them stay organized during each stage of the decision-making process concerning student discipline (Mean, =3.57, Std. dev=0.92). This echoed the study by Dawson and Guare (2018), which indicated that time management enhances order during decision-making process.

Finally, 48(66.5%) of the participants agreed that organizational skills had helped them assign tasks to teachers concerning students' discipline. On the contrary, 12(16.7%) of the participants disagreed with this view. On this statement, the mean and standard deviation affirmed that organizational skills had helped the principals to assign tasks to teachers concerning students' discipline (Mean=3.5318, standard deviation=0.96772). This was in line with the study done by Doerschuk *et al.* (2016), which indicated that organizational skills help in delegation of tasks to enhance students' discipline.

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**Deputy Principals' Responses on Decision-making Skills**

The study sought the deputy principals' views concerning the influence of principals' decision-making skills on management of student discipline in public secondary schools. The study findings were as presented in Table 2.

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**Table 2: Deputy Principals' Responses on Decision-making Skills**

<b>Statements</b>	<b>SA F(%)</b>	<b>A F(%)</b>	<b>UN F(%)</b>	<b>D F(%)</b>	<b>SD F(%)</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Dev.</b>
I am always focus on relevant details which form basis for decisions making more quickly and effectively	54(78.6)	4(5.4)	4(5.4)	5(7.1)	2(3.6)	4.48	1.10
I work cohesively with teachers to make productive choices with long-term impact on students' discipline	26(37.9)	41(59.4)	1(0.9)	1(0.9)	1(0.9)	4.33	0.63
Reasoning is one of my main skills in decision-making concerning students' discipline	6(8.5)	40(57.6)	20(28.6)	2(2.2)	2(3.1)	3.66	0.79
I am always goal oriented in dealing with students' discipline in the school	17(24.6)	48(70.1)	1(0.9)	1(0.9)	2(3.6)	4.11	0.78
I always associate my instincts with the potential actions I can take to see if my decision is logical and actionable	39(55.8)	13(18.8)	16(23.7)	1(0.9)	1(0.9)	4.28	0.92
Teamwork helps me with decision-making by showing me different perspectives	11(16.1)	56(81.3)	1(0.9)	1(0.9)	1(0.9)	4.11	0.52
My emotional intelligence guides my analysis of students' discipline and solutions	27(39.7)	27(38.8)	14(19.6)	1(0.9)	1(0.9)	4.16	0.83
I consider having weekly brainstorming sessions to maximize teachers and students' creativity in problem-solving	23(33.9)	44(63.4)	1(0.9)	1(0.9)	1(0.9)	4.29	0.62
I consider having weekly brainstorming	8(12.1)	32(46.2)	8(12.1)	17(24.9)	3(4.6)	3.36	1.121

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sessions to maximize teachers and students' creativity in problem-solving							
Organizational skills have helped them assign tasks to teachers concerning students' discipline	3(4)	26(37.6)	28(41)	6(8.1)	6(9.2)	3.19	0.979

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Source: Field Data 2023

Table 2 shows that 58(84.0%) of the deputy principals agreed and 7(10.7%) disagreed that they always focused on relevant details to improve their decision-making on student discipline issues. Further, the study findings showed that the deputy principals always focused on relevant details to improve their decision-making on student discipline issues (Mean=4.48, Std. dev=1.10). This agreed with the recommendation by Stronge (2018) that focusing on relevant details can enhance decision-making outcomes on school discipline.

The findings further showed that 67(97.3%) of the deputy principals agreed that they worked cohesively with teachers to make productive choices with long-term impact on students' discipline. On the other hand, 2(1.8%) of the deputy principals disagreed with this statement. The mean and standard deviation for this item affirmed that the deputy principals worked cohesively with teachers to make productive choices with long-term impact on students' discipline (Mean=4.33, Std. dev=0.63). This concurred with the views from a study by Ansley *et al.* (2019) that working cohesively with teachers to make productive choices brings about long-term impact on students' discipline.

Further, 46(66.1%) of the deputy principals agreed that reasoning was one of their main skills in decision-making concerning students' discipline. However, 4(5.3%) of the deputy principals disagreed. From the mean and standard deviation, it was deduced that, for the deputy principals, reasoning was one of their main skills in decision-making concerning students' discipline (Mean=3.66, Std. dev=0.79). This finding coincided with those from a study by Rahman (2019), which underlined that reasoning is an important element in decision-making concerning student discipline.

The study findings also revealed that 65(94.7%) of the deputy principals agreed as 3(4.5%) disagreed that they always considered all available and relevant information to guide their decision-making concerning student discipline. The mean and standard deviation revealed that, overall, the deputy principals considered all available and relevant information to guide their decision-making on student discipline (Mean=4.11, Std. dev=0.78). In relation to this finding, Wise and Jung (2019) advise that information availability and relevance can enhance decision-making on student discipline.

The study findings revealed that 52(74.6%) of the deputy principals agreed and 2(1.8%) disagreed that they always used their instincts with the potential actions they could take to see if their decisions on student discipline were logical and actionable. Further, the mean and standard deviation affirmed that the deputy principals they always used their instincts with the potential

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actions they could take to see if their decisions on student discipline were logical and actionable (Mean=4.28, Std. dev=0.92). This agreed with the study done by Stevenson and Hicks (2016), which posited that instincts can be deemed potential for logical and decisive measures in students' discipline.

Table 2 also shows that 66(97.4%) of the deputy principals agreed that teamwork helped them to see different perspectives in their decision-making about student discipline. Further, the mean and standard deviation revealed that the deputy principals agreed that teamwork helped them to see different perspectives in their decision-making about student discipline (Mean=4.11, Std. dev=0.52). This concurred with the suggestion by Mladenovic *et al.* (2019) that teamwork helps in decision-making revolving student discipline. Moreover, the study findings showed that 54(78.5%) of the deputy principals agreed and 2(1.8%) disagreed that their emotional intelligence guided their analysis of and identification of and solutions to students' discipline issues. From the mean and standard deviation, it was deduced that the deputy principals' emotional intelligence guided their analysis of and identification of and solutions to students' discipline issues (Mean=4.16, Std. dev=0.83). This agreed with the study done by Valente *et al.* (2019), which posited that emotional intelligence aids in the analysis of students' discipline and solutions.

The study findings in Table 2 also show that 67(97.4%) of the deputy principals agreed that by using problem-solving skills, they had managed to reduce students' indiscipline cases in their schools. Meanwhile, 2(1.8%) of the deputy principals disagreed with this statement. Based on the mean and standard deviation, it was noted that the deputy principals, by using problem-solving skills, had managed to reduce students' indiscipline cases in their schools (Mean=4.11, Std. dev=0.52). This was in line with the view by Abbood (2023) that emotional intelligence can enhance problem-solving.

Further, 40(58.3%) of the deputy principals agreed the time management had helped them stay organized during each stage of their decision-making process concerning student discipline. However, 20(29.5%) of the respondents disagreed with this assertion. Analysis on mean and standard deviation revealed that, overall, the respondents were undecided on whether time management had helped them stay organized during each stage of the decision-making process concerning student discipline (Mean, =3.36, Std. dev=1.12). In relation to this finding, Dawson and Guare (2018) recommend that time management enhances an organized approach to decision-making processes.

Finally, Table 2 shows that 26(41.6%) of the respondents agreed that research skills had helped them to understand how to improve discipline among the students. However, 12(17.3%) of the respondents disagreed with this claim. As per the survey results, the participants were undecided, as shown by the mean and standard deviation, on whether research skills had helped them to understand how to improve discipline among the students (Mean, =3.1908, Std. dev=.97856). Doerschuk *et al.* (2016) aver that research skills can help educational administrators to better understand the nature of and find solutions to students' discipline issues.

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**Senior Teachers' Responses on Decision-making Skills**

The study sought the senior teachers' views concerning the influence of decision-making skills on management of student discipline in public secondary schools. The study findings were as presented in Table 3.

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**Table 3: Senior Teachers' Responses on Decision-making Skills**

<b>Statement</b>	<b>SA F(%)</b>	<b>A F(%)</b>	<b>N F(%)</b>	<b>D F(%)</b>	<b>SD F(%)</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Dev</b>
I am always focus on relevant details which form basis for decisions making more quickly and effectively	9(12.7)	3(4.6)	44(62.4)	17(24.9)	3(4.6)	2.80	.77
I work cohesively with teachers to make productive choices with long-term impact on students' discipline	12(17.3)	29(41.6)	18(25.4)	17(24.3)	3(4.6)	3.18	.98
Reasoning is one of my main skills in decision-making concerning students' discipline	12(16.8)	32(45.7)	17(24.9)	9(12.7)	6(8.1)	3.34	1.06
I am are always goal oriented in dealing with student discipline in the school	2(3.5)	9(13.3)	26(37.0)	25(36.4)	6(8.7)	2.68	0.96
I always associate my instincts with the potential actions I can take to see if my decision is logical and actionable	3(4.6)	9(13.3)	14(20.2)	26(37.0)	17(24.9)	2.35	1.13
Teamwork helps me with decision-making by showing me different perspectives	3(4.6)	38(53.8)	20(28.9)	6(8.7)	3(4.6)	3.46	.87
My emotional intelligence guides my analysis of students discipline and solutions	38(53.8)	26(37.0)	29(41.6)	6(8.7)	3(4.6)	3.37	.91
Using problem-solving skills, I have managed to reduce students' indiscipline cases in the school.	3(4.6)	23(33.5)	26(37.0)	3(4.6)	12(16.8)	3.13	1.176

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I consider having weekly brainstorming sessions to maximize teachers and students’ creativity in problem-solving	3(4.6)	49(69.9)	6(8.7)	6(8.7)	3(4.6)	3.70	.895
Organizational skills have helped them assign tasks to teachers concerning students’ discipline	6(8.1)	6(9.2)	42(60.7)	9(12.7)	9(12.7)	2.80	.937

Source: Field Data 2023

Table 3 shows that, of the senior teachers, 12(16.7%) agreed and 20(28.9%) disagreed that they always focused on relevant details to find the basis for effective and fast decision-making on student discipline. From the mean and standard deviation, it was deduced that the senior teachers disagreed that they always focused on relevant details to find the basis for effective and fast decision-making on student discipline (Mean=2.80, standard deviation=0.77). This disagreed with the advice given by Stronge (2018) that focusing on relevant details can enhance effective decision-making on school discipline issues. The findings also show that 41(58.9%) of the respondents agreed and 20(28.3%) disagreed that they worked cohesively with teachers to make productive choices with long-term impact on students’ discipline. Further, the mean and standard deviation indicated that the respondents were neutral on the statement that they worked cohesively with teachers to make productive choices with long-term impact on students’ discipline (Mean=3.18, standard deviation=0.98). In relation to this finding, Ansley *et al.* (2019) advice that working cohesively with teachers to make productive choices brings about long-term impact on students’ discipline.

Further, the study found that 44(62.5%) of the senior teachers agreed that reasoning was one of their main skills applied in their decision-making concerning students’ discipline. However, 15(20.8%) of the respondents disagreed with this assertion. For this item, the mean and standard deviation suggested that, overall, the respondents were neutral on the statement that reasoning was one of their main skills in their decision-making concerning students’ discipline (Mean=3.34, standard deviation=1.069). This finding related with the suggestion by Rahman (2019) that reasoning is an important element in decision-making concerning student discipline. The study also showed that 11(16.8%) of the senior teachers agreed and 31(45.1%) disagreed that they always considered all available and relevant points of data to guide their decision-making on student discipline. Further, the mean and standard deviation showed that the respondents disagreed with the statement that they always considered all available and relevant points of data to guide their decision-making on student discipline (Mean=2.68, standard deviation=0.967). This finding was associated with the view by Wise and Jung (2019) that availability and relevance of data in guiding decision-making is an essential factor when dealing with student discipline in schools.

Table 3 further indicates that 12(17.3%) of the participants agreed as 43(61.9%) disagreed that they applied their analytical skills in dealing with students’ discipline. Further, based on the mean and standard deviation, it was shown that the respondents disagreed with the



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statement that they applied their analytical skills in dealing with students' discipline (Mean=2.35, standard deviation=1.13). This varied with the advice by Stevenson and Hicks (2016) that analytical skills can enhance the effectiveness of approaches for dealing with students' discipline. Furthermore, 41(54.2%) of the senior teachers agreed that teamwork helped them find different perspectives in their decision-making regarding student discipline. However, 9(12.7%) of the respondents disagreed with this assertion. From the mean and standard deviation, it was shown that the respondents were neutral on the statement that that teamwork helped them find different perspectives in their decision-making regarding student discipline (Mean=3.46, standard deviation=0.87). Mladenovic *et al.* (2019) aver that teamwork helps in with decision-making concerning student discipline.

In addition, 64(90.8%) of the respondents agreed and 9(12.7%) disagreed that their emotional intelligence guided their analysis of and solutions to students' discipline issues. Based on the mean and standard deviation, it was noted that, overall, the senior teachers were neutral on the statement that their emotional intelligence guided their analysis of and solutions to students' discipline issues (Mean=3.37, standard deviation=0.91). In relation to this finding, Valente *et al.* (2019) advice that emotional intelligence aids in analysis and better understanding and of and solutions to students' discipline problems.

Additionally, 25(38.1%) of the participants agreed that using problem-solving skills, they had managed to reduce students' indiscipline cases in their schools. On contrary, 15(22.8%) of the participants disagreed with this statement. The mean and standard deviation suggested that the respondents were neutral on the view that they had managed to reduce students' indiscipline cases in their schools using problem-solving skills (Mean=3.13, standard deviation=1.17). This finding was related to the statement made by Abbood (2023) that occasional brainstorming sessions helps in maximizing teachers and students' creativity in problem-solving.

Furthermore, 52(73.9%) agreed that time management had helped them stay organized during each stage of the decision-making process concerning student discipline. However, 9(12.7%) of the respondents disagreed. The mean and standard deviation suggested that the respondents agreed with the statement that time management had helped them stay organized during each stage of the decision-making process concerning student discipline (Mean=3.70, standard deviation=0.89). This echoed the finding by Dawson and Guare (2018) that time management facilitates a more organized approach to decision-making insofar as student discipline is concerned. Finally, 12(17.3%) of the senior teachers agreed as 18(25.4%) disagreed that research skills had helped them to understand how to improve discipline among the students. Further, based on the mean and standard deviation, it was noted that the respondents generally disagreed that research skills had helped them to understand how to improve discipline among students in their schools (Mean=2.80, standard deviation=0.937). In relation to this finding, Doerschuk *et al.* (2016) suggest that research skills are instrumental in defining effective strategies to enhance students' discipline in schools.

### **Interview Schedule Results for Decision Making Skills**

The study findings from interviews underscored the fact that discipline is a vital component of any educational setting. Indiscipline takes many forms and is a major disruptor of learning. According to research one Sub-County Director of Education:

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Some of the most concerning forms of indiscipline include stealing, disrespect, drug and substance abuse, truancy, lateness to school, cultism, insulting classmates and teachers, violence, dishonesty, disobedience to authority figures, and vandalism (KII 03).

The causes of indiscipline mentioned by the interviewees included peer group influence, bad company within and outside of the school, lack of discipline at home and school, irresponsible parents and guardians, influence of TV and video games, poor teacher-student relationships, and failure of the school to effectively enforce school rules and regulations. Indiscipline negatively affects students' learning outcomes and development. Therefore, it is important for teachers and parents to work together to inculcate good discipline among learners. In secondary schools, particularly those located in urban areas, it can be difficult to maintain an environment conducive to learning due to various external factors.

As pointed out by the key informants, discipline management in secondary schools is a complex issue that involves different stakeholders, including principals, counsellors, students, and parents. The Sub-County Directors of Education identified various factors responsible for variances in discipline issues across schools in Bomet County. They noted that students with disabilities in secondary schools' experience higher suspension rates compared to their non-disabled peers. The key informants also noted that behaviour problems such as absenteeism, classroom discipline, and weapons possession are more common in urban schools. Further, teachers' preconceived notions about students in urban schools, particularly those with emotional disabilities, lead to low expectations and placement in special education programmes.

From the interviews, intervention strategies to decrease discipline issues include addressing the root causes of behaviour problems and providing support to students. The interviewees also noted that it is important to acknowledge the complexity of the issue of student discipline and the need for collaboration among stakeholders to address it effectively. It is also important to recognize the impact of preconceived notions and biases on students' experiences and outcomes. Finally, it is crucial to discuss intervention strategies that focus on addressing the root causes of behaviour problems and providing support to students.

### **Hypothesis Test Results**

It had been hypothesized stated that principals' decision-making skills have no significant influence on management of student discipline in public secondary schools in Bomet County, Kenya. However, the regression results indicated that there was a positive and significant influence of principals' decision-making skills on management of student discipline in public secondary school, with a beta coefficient of 0.261 and significance of  $p=0.005$ . Therefore, the study rejected the null hypothesis.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The study results showed that majority of the respondents always focus on relevant details that formed the basis for their quick and effective decision-making. Further, majority of the respondents worked cohesively with teachers to make productive choices with long-term impact

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on students' discipline. The principals also agreed that reasoning is one of their main skills in decision-making concerning students' discipline. Additionally, majority of the principals always consider all available and relevant points of data to guide my decision-making. Majority also always associate their instincts with the potential actions they can take to see if their decisions are logical and actionable. Additionally, for majority of the principals, teamwork helps them see different perspectives during decision-making concerning student discipline. Further, majority of them consider their emotional intelligence a useful guide in analysing students' discipline issues and devising solutions. They also regard having weekly brainstorming sessions to maximize teachers and students' creativity in problem-solving. Further, time management had helped them stay organized during each stage of the decision-making process concerning student discipline. Finally, organizational skills had helped them assign tasks to teachers concerning students' discipline. Based on these conclusions, it is recommended that school administrators and teachers should enforce school policies consistently to promote positive student behaviour. School principals and teachers should be trained on how to enforce these policies and respond appropriately to disciplinary issues that arise in the schools. This will help create a positive learning environment and promote student discipline.

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