

# THE CHALLENGES FACING TEACHER COUNSELORS AND ADMINISTRATORS IN MANAGING STUDENT DISCIPLINE IN IRINGA MUNICIPAL SECONDARY SCHOOL

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**Abstract:** This study assessed the challenges facing teacher counselors and administrators in managing student discipline in Iringa Municipal Secondary School. The main objective was to examine the challenges facing teacher counselors and administrators in managing student discipline. This study was qualitative in nature and data was collected from teachers, teacher counselors, and students in Iringa Municipal Council whereby Tagamenda secondary school was taken as a case study. The study employed a purposive sampling technique to select respondents and data were analyzed through content data analysis. Findings revealed that among the challenges of managing students' discipline in secondary school were: some of the parents were defending their children; lack of professional counselors and facilities; interference by politicians; some students were attempting to harm their teachers and resistance from students. This study concludes that almost all cases where this study was carried out have seen that there are challenges facing teacher counselors and administrators in managing students' discipline in Iringa municipal council. All these challenges should be well addressed to manage school discipline.

**Keywords:** Counseling, Student Discipline, Teacher counsellor.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Guidance and counseling as a movement were started in America at the beginning of the 20th Century as a reaction to the change process in an industrialized society. Guidance and counseling (G&C) services were set up within the department of education in September 1968 when the recommendations made by Louis, a consultant sent over to Malta by the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), were taken up, Smut (1997). Globally, guidance and counseling services are essential elements in the discipline management of people in all societies. It could be difficult for any society to function well without the exercise of discipline.

Discipline in schools is one of the most pressing issues in education sector of the world today (Ofori & Achiaa, 2018). Every school requires discipline, for no group of people can work together successfully without establishing standards of good behavior, respect, and a desirable system of values that lead each person in the group to develop self-control and self-direction (Andegiorgis, 2019).

Studies in Tanzania show that secondary school students encounter social, academic, and psychological problems (Sima 1997). Currently, amidst the ever-growing number of secondary schools as directed by the Education and Training Policy of 1995 (URT 2005), a growing number of student indiscipline cases has been reported, calling for effective counseling services.

Indiscipline cases of secondary schools in Iringa Municipal Council have become a matter of concern in recent years. Sources from the District education office (2021) indicate that for the last two years over five schools have had major indiscipline cases and caused harm to the students, teachers, and parents.

Despite the use of counseling services and knowing the role it still wants to be known in helping to curb indiscipline in schools which is increasing. Some of the parts which require students' counseling strategies include assault, fighting, theft, vandalism, destruction of school property, harassment, riots, rape, and loss of lives. Thus, this study aims to examine the role of counseling services in managing students' discipline in Tanzania secondary schools

### **Statement of the problem**

Counselling holds a potential collective work to promote favorable learning and teaching environment for students leading to high performance (Gilman et al., 2009, Wamugunda *et al.*, 2019). The issue of discipline has become a matter of concern to many educational stakeholders today as indiscipline cases are occurring daily in secondary schools (Simeo & Tang, 2022). Despite the effort made by the ministry of education, to manage indiscipline cases in secondary schools as evidenced by insisting on the establishment of a guidance and counseling department in every secondary school instead of using punishment, suspensions, canning, and expelling from school, Indiscipline of varied nature continued in these schools. This study, therefore, intended to investigate the role of counseling services in managing students' discipline in secondary schools in Iringa Municipality.

### **The objective of the study**

The main objective of this study was to examine the challenges facing teacher counselors and administrators in managing students' discipline in secondary school.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

In this study, one theory had been reviewed to link the study

### **Cognitive Theory**

Cognitive Theory is the theory developed by Aaron Beck. This counseling theory focuses on how people's thinking can change feelings and behaviors. Unlike psychodynamic theory, therapy based on cognitive theory is brief and oriented toward problem-solving. Cognitive therapists focus more on their client's present situation and distorted thinking than on their past. Cognitive and behavioral therapy are often combined as one form of theory practiced by counselors and therapists. Cognitive behavioral therapy, or CBT.

The cognitive theory explains how the human brain can make more than one billion calculations per second, based on the information it gathers through perception, judgment, reasoning, and recognition to constantly create and adjust concepts of itself and the external world. This produces a sense of "knowing" or understanding within the individual.

Through this theory, counselors and teacher counselors will be able to help their students in thinking. For example, a student who is addicted to alcohol and drug abuse can be directed to a good way of thinking as a result he or she will think properly and reasonably. Therefore, the theory is relevant to this study because it explains people's thinking capability and how they can change anytime.

### **Empirical literature review**

#### **Challenges Facing Counsellors and Administrators in Managing Students Discipline in Secondary School.**

Counseling students in Secondary Schools face different challenges such as the family, personal, and professional of the teacher counselor, method of counseling, environment and academic factors since most schools when indiscipline is committed by bright students mainly the punishment and counseling becomes different. There are institutions in society

that influence students' behavior. Likewise, political pronouncements made by prominent political leaders influence the behavior of students in schools and put them to practice by being violent whenever they want.

Kamore & Tiego, (2013) studied factors hindering the efficiency of guidance and counseling services in addressing school discipline in high schools in Kenya with a specific focus on secondary schools. The study revealed that guidance and counseling departments are ineffective in enhancing school discipline, it also revealed that teachers who were responsible for guidance and counseling were inadequately trained. Other challenges included a lack of facilities and financial support from school administration, conflict with school discipline policy, and lack of clear government policies to monitor guidance and counseling services in secondary schools.

Sahin (2016) revealed that participants stated that guidance and counseling would drastically improve if they could receive good training since detailed counseling is required for psychological counselors and supervisors of counselors should not be school principals. Sahin further alluded to the fact that the number of school counselors should be sufficient and there should be adequate and appropriate facilities. Inadequate training in guidance and counseling and lack of enough resources such as guidance and counseling room, negative attitudes of students to go for counseling, lack of policy framework on guidance and counseling, lack of incentives, too much workload for counselors leaving too little time for counseling are some of the challenges associated with the implementation of guidance and counseling (Cheruiyot, 2015).

### **3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **Research Approach**

The study employed qualitative approach which consists of gaining an understanding of meanings of humans to attach to events, close understanding of the research context, collection of qualitative data and more flexible structure to permit changes of research emphasis as the research progresses (Creswell, 2018).

On the other hand, Omari (2011) suggests that, in qualitative research there is keen interest in the context under which behaviours occur. The qualitative approach, therefore, was employed in this study because it enables getting the first-hand explanations, experience and views of the respondents, which also needs the use of interviews and focus discussion as methods of data collection.

This approach was appropriate due to the realization that, researcher is part of the research process. Thus, the study focused on the assessment of the challenges facing teacher counselors and administrators in managing students' discipline in secondary school in which a qualitative approach is good through employing interviews and document review to capture the study objective.

#### **Research Design**

This study used case study design. The case study design was selected since it allows an in-depth examination of one or a few cases, in contrast to a more superficial cross-sectional study of a large sample (Kothari, 2014). Also, the design sample size need not be since members of a group which are students in Secondary School to be studied are less heterogeneous. Also, the design is selected since the purpose of the case study design is to illuminate the specific and identify phenomena through how they are perceived by the actors in a situation. In the human sphere this normally translates into gathering 'deep' information and perceptions through qualitative methods such as interviews, discussions and participant observation. Case study design is appropriate in this study since it emphasizes the importance of personal perspective and interpretation.

#### **Area of the study, sample size, techniques and instruments of data collections**

The current study covered one secondary school from Iringa municipal council. The school was selected as a case study since the school consists of several indiscipline cases reported (source District Educational Officer, 2022) compared to other secondary schools within Iringa Municipality also one the school which is very far from human settlement, as a result, it led to the increase number of indiscipline cases.

The sample size for this study was 35 participants since this qualitative study and the sample size in qualitative studies are normally small and determining adequate sample size in qualitative researches judgment on the information to be collected because qualitative research does not involve statistical generalizations (Creswell 2018)

**Sample information and its distribution**

Participants	Sample size
Secondary students	26
Class teachers	6
Teacher Counsellor	1
Head of school	1
Head of the discipline department	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>

This study used Purposive (Judgmental) sampling. Purposive sampling was selected since it allows respondents to be chosen based on the researcher's judgment that they have desirable characteristics and variables to be studied (Kothari, 2014). Through this method the desirable characteristics will be first specified, then members of the population having the characteristics selected for research.

In purposive sampling, the respondents for the sample are selected deliberately by the researcher depending on the data he/she intends to collect from them (Cohen et al., 2007). Through this technique 26 students from different classes starting from one to six, six class teachers, one head of school, one head of the discipline department, and one teacher counselor were included.

Semi-structured interviews were used for six class teachers, one teacher counselor, one head of the discipline department, and head of the school. Researchers employed face-to-face interviews to bring together information from respondents using note-taking and a tape recorder whereby each respondent was interviewed. The strength of this technique given by Kothari (2004) is the fact that it is the only method for studying abstract and intangible personal factors such as attitudes, feelings, and reactions that cannot be observed. It also allows a researcher to get first-hand information, by assuming that the best person to narrate any event is the one who has been personally involved in it.

Document analysis is a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents both printed and electronic material. Like other analytical methods in qualitative research, document analysis requires that data be examined and interpreted to elicit meaning, gain understanding and develop empirical knowledge (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

The researcher used this method to collect data from minutes of discipline meetings and school black books which are used to record indiscipline cases and how they have been handled. Thereafter, the results were presented using explanations and direct quotations from the participants to validate the information obtained and analyzed thematically using content analysis following the set research questions.

#### 4. PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

The main aim of the qualitative study approach was to do an in-depth investigation of the assessment of the challenges facing counselors and administrators in managing students' discipline in secondary school whereby Iringa Municipality was taken as a case study area. The study was guided by one objective which is; to explore the challenges facing teacher counselors and administrators in managing students' discipline in secondary school.

##### **Challenges facing teacher counselors and administrators in managing students' discipline.**

The second objective was to identify the challenges facing teacher counselors and administrators in managing students' discipline. To answer this objective; information was collected through an interview whereby the teacher counselor, head of school, class teachers, and head of the discipline department were consulted. Findings revealed that teacher counselors, class teachers, the head of the discipline department, and the head of school are facing challenges in various ways, including lack of counseling facilities and absence of professional counselor, Poor cooperation from parents (some of the parents are not responding positively by either being in students side or not attending the meeting), Politics interference whereby political leaders like wards representatives and villages chairman they are not ready to see their citizens torched through different punishment and resistance of some students who are not ready to be punished and sometimes to take revenge for their teachers.

#### 4.1.1 Lack of facilities and professional counselor

Among the challenges described was the lack of facilities and professional counselors who could provide counseling professionally. Findings revealed that; Teachers were mostly involved in providing counseling to students. Quoting one of the teachers during the interviews reported:

"In this school, we lack professional counselors. Most counseling work is done by teachers in this school. Also, we do not have a special room for counseling sessions as the results students lose confidence when they see such kind of environment." (Form Five Class Teacher, 2022).

Another teacher replied:

"It's hard to help students because when you want to have a session with students it will force you to use staff room or discipline office, hence confidentiality will disappear." (Form one class teacher Tagamenda, 2022)

The same question was posed to the teacher counsellor and the findings revealed that; information obtained from teachers are the same as those from teacher counselor. During the interview with the teacher counselor, he stated that:

"In helping students through counseling I lack professional counseling skills instead, I use the knowledge I got from educational psychology during my study, also there is no room special for counseling as well as books for review." (Teacher counselor Tagamenda, 2022).

These findings indicate that facilities are absent for counseling such as special rooms, and books for making reviews as well as lack of professional counselors.

#### 4.1.2 Politics interference

Through an interview with the head of the school, it was confirmed that interference by politicians when students were punished was among the challenges faced by the school management. Ward representatives and parents were so bitter being on the side of their children. In addition, the study found that some of the students run away when they realize they will be punished after making a mistake and students are not accepting the mistakes they made. This was bad behaviour and disappointed school staff and management at large. Despite these challenges, school management was handling all challenges received during school operations. A quotation from the head of the school insisted that:

"Despite maintaining students and school discipline as you see, we have some challenges which we try to resolve. Among the big challenges is political interference from ward representatives as well as parents. All these behaviors distort our school development. As a school, we try our level best to resolve these challenges" (Head of school, 2022).

On the side of the head of the discipline, the department replied:

"Some political leaders are a disaster in the process of managing students' discipline because of their political interest they decide to stand on the students' and parents' side. One day I had a call from a certain political leader who asked me if I wanted to continue with my job. I have to listen to what he wants." (Head of discipline department Tagamenda, 2022).

#### Poor cooperation from parents

Given poor cooperation from parents as a challenge facing when managing school discipline, the teachers, consulted again evidenced that parents had poor cooperation with teachers on shaping students. Based on these challenges it was difficult to transform students from bad and misbehaving behavior to good students. Again, during the interview one of the class teachers witnessed that:

"In shaping our students in this school, we are faced with several challenges, one of them is lack of cooperation from their parents who do not support, do not work with us to address challenges facing their children. This discourages good intention of teachers on addressing bad behavior of students" (Form four Class Teacher, 2022).

Another class teacher replied:

“Some parents are playing a major role in destroying our students' behavior because of their choice of being on the students' side as well as not responding when they have been called. For example, one parent asked me loudly if I wanted to sleep with his daughter when we were in conversation helping his daughter, I was disappointed.” (Form five Class Teacher Tagamenda, 2022).

#### 4.1.3 Resistance of students.

Resistance from students was another challenge revealed from this study; some students were attempting to harm their teachers when they were given punishment and this related to some students not carrying out the punishments given to them. In addition, the study found that some of the students run away when they realize they will be punished after making a mistake and students are not accepting the mistakes they made. This was bad behavior and disappointed school staff and management at large. A quotation from the head of the school insisted that:

“Despite managing students' discipline as you see, we have some challenges which we try to resolve. Among the big challenges is political interference from ward representatives as well as parents. In addition, we have challenges from students who refuse to accept punishments and implement them. All these behaviors distort our school development. As a school, we try our level best to resolve these challenges” (Head of school Tagamenda, 2022).

## 5. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

### Challenges facing teacher counselors and administrators in managing students' discipline.

Given challenges, the study found that among the challenges some of the parents were defending their children, they did not show collaboration with teachers to manage students' discipline. Parents argued that their children were behaving well at home as well as at school. Thus demanding bad behavior was new information and they were not able to accept it. Likewise, the lack of professional counselors who could provide counseling professionally was a big challenge; most counselors were teachers who had not enough skills and knowledge of counseling. Teachers used their experience on counseling students. There was a need for training professionals on counseling students. Another challenge was interference from politician's lies among the discouraging factors to teachers for maintaining proper student discipline. When students have punished the representatives and parents were so bitter with the teachers. In addition, students were attempting to harm their teachers when they were given punishment, some of the students ran away when they realized they would be punished after making a mistake and others were not accepting the mistakes they made.

The findings are also related to Kamore and Tiego, (2013) who studied factors hindering the efficiency of guidance and counseling services in addressing school discipline in high schools in Kenya with a specific focus on secondary schools. The study revealed that guidance and counseling departments are ineffective in enhancing school discipline, it also revealed that teachers who were responsible for guidance and counseling were inadequately trained. Other challenges included a lack of facilities and financial support from school administration, conflict with school discipline policy, and lack of clear government policies to monitor guidance and counseling services in secondary schools.

These findings in this study are similar to Van Niekerk (1996) who argued that among the challenges in maintaining discipline is the applicability of punitive measures in place to maintain discipline without using corporal punishment. Some of the students were not ready to accept the given punishments by teachers. This resulted in a misunderstanding between school management and students as a result; the students were removed from school. Punishment was used sparingly only after several warnings and reprimands had been explored to no avail. In this regard, it should be noted that there are challenges that hinder the effectiveness of maintaining school discipline.

## 6. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that counseling services are used in managing students' discipline in sampled secondary schools. Nevertheless, there is an absence of professional counselors and counseling facilities apart from counseling being the best strategy for managing students' discipline. Moreover, there are challenges like some of the parents defending their children, resistance from students, and politicians' interference. Additionally, there is a situation whereby counseling services are provided unwillingly.

## 7. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is in light of the study findings; the researcher recommends the following to be taken on board to maintain student's discipline: -

- i. Given challenges in managing students' discipline as encountered in this study such as some of the parents defending their children; lack of collaboration with teachers, and lack of professional counselors and counseling facilities to mention a few school management and government should address these challenges for better school performance and developments
- ii. This study was conducted in Iringa Municipal including one ward and school without considering other schools within and other councils in the regions. To get a big picture the same study can involve other district councils in the region.
- iii. The study was qualitative in nature. Therefore, this study can be done as a quantitative study using a survey research approach and explanatory research design.
- iv. This study is considered secondary school only; others can be done by involving primary school and other educational institutions.

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