

**INFLUENCE OF STUDENTS' MENTAL HEALTH AND SCHOOL CLIMATE ON  
UNREST AND COPING STRATEGIES IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN KISII  
COUNTY, KENYA**

**BY**

**FAITH KILEL**

**A THESIS SUBMITTED IN FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE  
DEGREE OF MASTER OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN EDUCATIONAL  
PSYCHOLOGY**

**SCHOOL OF EDUCATION**

**MASENO UNIVERSITY**

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## DECLARATION

### Declaration by the student

I hereby declare that this research thesis is my original work and has not been submitted for the award of certificate, diploma or degree in any other institution.

Signature..... Date.....

**Faith Kilel**

**PHD/ED/00010/017**

### Declaration by supervisors

This thesis has been submitted for examination with our approval as university supervisors.

Signature..... Date.....

**Prof. Lucas O. A. Othuon**

**Department of Educational Psychology**

**Maseno University**

Signature..... Date.....

**Dr. Eric K. Kabuka**

**Department of Educational Psychology**

**Maseno University**

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## **DEDICATION**

This work is dedicated to my dad Rev. Dr. David K. T. Kilel, my mum Mrs. Esther Kilel, my parents in-law; Mr. Ishmael Sang and Dr. Hellen Sang, my husband Davis Sang, my nephew Eugene and my daughter Shakinah Chepkirui Sang.

## ABSTRACT

School unrest is a concern worldwide today. Unrest in Kenyan secondary schools has been on the rise despite measures put in place to curb it. Kisii County has not been spared. Reports from Kisii County Educational Directorate indicate that in 2017 students in Kisii County secondary schools were arrested with jerry cans of petrol intending to burn down the school. In 2018, 5 students sustained minor injuries when 2 dormitories caught fire after students demonstrated due to bad diet while others destroyed the administration block, setting ablaze property belonging to 198 students and baying for the principals' blood. Further reports in 2021 indicate that there were: 7 cases of unrest compared to Migori County which had 2 cases, Bomet County which had 3 cases and Kericho County which had 5 cases. In addition, a Form Three student attacked two teachers while being punished for missing evening studies. Before the attack, the student had been asked to kneel as part of the disciplinary process. This study was to establish the influence of Students' mental health and school climate on student unrest in secondary schools in Kisii County, Kenya based on the following specific objectives; establish the influence of mental health variables on student unrest, determine the influence of school climate variables on student unrest, establish strategies students use to cope with mental health issues and to establish the mechanisms used by schools in addressing issues that lead to unrest. The study employed the Social Control Theory by Ivan Nye, the Strain theory by Robert Merton, and a conceptual framework that described how the variables interacted. Descriptive survey and correlational research designs were employed. The population comprised of 30,955 form 2 students, 350 deputy principals, and 350 class teachers. Yamane's formula was used to determine 395 students and a stratified random sampling technique was used to select 105 deputy principals and 105 class teachers. Questionnaires, an interview schedule, and a rating scale were used to collect data. 10% of the sample size was used for piloting. The reliability of the instruments was of R-values as follows .83, .78, and .79 respectively. The validity of the instruments was ascertained by experts. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics, while qualitative data was transcribed, put into various categories, and reported in an ongoing process. Findings from the study indicated that most students in schools had moderate type of depression. Students who had Cognitive depression were 96.2%, mood were 100% and 92.3% had motivation depression. The key strategies students used to address their mental health issues were reaching out to parents (89.1%) and seeing teachers for help (86.8%). The last strategy was seeing the school counselor (19.2%). Adhering to school rules was the most preferred mechanism schools used to address issues contributing to unrest (96%), the least approach was involving students in making school rules (0%). The study further found that the cognitive aspect of depression had a weak negative correlation ( $\rho = -.34, p = .047$ ): a weak positive correlation for academic stress ( $\rho = .11$ ) and a positive correlation for school learning environment ( $\rho = .05$ ); the cognitive aspect of depression significantly influenced unrest ( $\beta = 3.057, p = .047$ ) and learning environment ( $\beta = 2.039, p = .048$ ). The study concluded that the cognitive aspect had a statistically significant negative correlation: academic stress had a non-significant weak positive correlation and the learning environment had a positive correlation. The study recommended that schools should address issues that are likely to contribute to cognitive depression, and students to be encouraged to seek counseling services.

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## ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

<b>BAI</b>	Beck Anxiety Inventory
<b>BDI</b>	Beck Depression Inventory
<b>CBT</b>	Cognitive Behavior Therapy
<b>CDC</b>	Centre for Disease control
<b>CDI</b>	Children Depression Inventory
<b>GPA</b>	Grade Point Average
<b>HIV</b>	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
<b>MUSERC</b>	Maseno University Scientific and Ethics Review Committee
<b>OECD</b>	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
<b>PBIS</b>	Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports
<b>PHQ</b>	Patient Health Questionnaire
<b>PLWD</b>	People living with Disabilities
<b>SBHC</b>	School- based health centers
<b>SLE</b>	School Learning environment
<b>SNK</b>	Student-Newman- Keuls
<b>STR</b>	Student- teacher relationship
<b>TBMS</b>	Teacher Behavioral Management Strategies
<b>SPSS</b>	Statistical Package of Social Science
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>WHO</b>	World health Organization
<b>YRBS</b>	Youth Risk Behaviour Survey



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# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Introduction to the study

This chapter presents the background of the study, the problem statement, purpose of the study, objectives, research questions, assumptions, scope of the study, significance of the study, limitations, theoretical framework, conceptual framework and the definition of operational terms.

### 1.2 Background of the Study

Student unrest has been experienced in various parts of the world for many decades and has become a global concern. According to Okebe (2020), unrest is a state that discontinues the balance in an entity that causes disharmony and disruption of the state affairs. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (2015) postulated that unrest among students has aggravated to the extent that globally about 246 million students are affected by this peculiarity. According to the Youth Risk Behaviour Survey (YRBS) by Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), an average of 24% of students in the United States of America (USA) had been associated with physical fight at least a couple of times in a year (Eaton, Kann, Shanklin, Flint & Hawklins, 2016).

South Africa has the highest occurrence rate of unrest among students. Phandle (2021), asserts that the government has put in place mediation measures such as provision of a conducive learning environment, welcoming conversation and encouraging cooperative involvement between the administration and students. The appointment of a new school principal was rejected by the community in 2017, leaving the Klipspruit West Secondary School in South Johannesburg, South

Africa, unmanageable. This led to violence and turmoil. Community members even went so far as to assume control over the professional operation of the school by choosing on the principal, the location of book purchases, and the service providers to be employed. While the parents, teachers, and administration of the school were dealing with this upheaval, students loitered on the school grounds, gambled, used drugs there, gangsterism surfaced, racist acts were committed, students arrived late to class and left early, and teachers were insulted and physically assaulted Phandle (2021).

Unrest among students in Uganda has also been witnessed. Windows and doors were smashed by students from Bugema Adventist School, causing \$8 million (nearly \$4,000) in property damage. Students complained about the teacher's use of corporal punishment, increased fines for meal tickets from 500 USh to 2,000 USh (1 USD) and the quality of the food. Furthermore, they argued that the USh 5,000 fee at the school clinic was too high since these costs were already included in the regular tuition. Investigations also revealed allegations by students, including from Tanzania and Kenya, that they had been expelled from the school for failing to pay tuition. In this study, the term “unrest” was used specifically to refer to the actions and patterns of behavior of students in schools, such as violence, strikes, vandalism, arson, and other acts of violence and other disturbances (Republic of Kenya, 2019).

Evidence from the studies around the world have indicated that students suffer from mental health issues depression being one of them. According to Jill et.al. (2016), promoting youth mental health is a global concern and schools can play an important role in supporting students mental health and wellbeing by creating specific strategies that target their needs. Mental health is described by

the World Health Organization (WHO, 2005) as “a state of well-being” in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, copes with the normal stresses of life, works productively, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community”. When students fail to realize their potential, fail to work productively and fail to cope with their normal stresses, they are likely to become frustrated thus projecting their emotions and feelings by resorting to violence that leads to unrest.

Research has indicated a robust association between the intensity of depressive symptoms and behavioral issues such as aggression among students in schools (Consoli, Peyre, & Speranza, 2013). According to statistical data, a significant proportion of adolescents in the United States, specifically seven out of ten individuals aged between 13 and 17 years, experience symptoms of depression. These students reported experiencing emotions such as anger, sadness, fear, or stress during their time in school. Further, these students attributed their restlessness and agitation to these emotions. In a study conducted by AlAzzam, Abuhammad and Abdairahim (2021) among high school students in Jordan, showed that anxiety and depression were common among adolescents and associated with a higher risk of violence in school, disruptive behaviors and aggression.

Further, studies have indicated that increased feelings of isolation, indiscipline, poor behavior, and disruptive school and societal systems can all lead to discontent (Orben, Tomova, and Blakemore, 2020). According to research, half of all mental health difficulties begin to manifest by the age of 14 and affect about 20% of school children today (Ford, 2013). Additionally, research on adolescents shows that self-harm, suicide attempts, eating disorders, bipolar disorder, personality disorders, psychosis, addictive disorders, anxiety, and depression are all on the rise in this age

group. Unfortunately, these illnesses often go undiagnosed and untreated until later in life (Twenge, 2018; Burstein, 2019). Researchers Hecker, Hermenau and Salmen (2016) found evidence of aggressive behavior, conduct problems, and delinquent behavior among high school students in Tanzania. In their research, they found that aggression, conduct problems, anxiety disorders, and depression were associated with violence and abuse in students.

Based on the mentioned studies, it is clear that mental health is an important part of students' welfare in school. However, studies on the association between mental health and unrest has received little research attention. It is on this basis that the current study sought to investigate the influence of depression (a mental health issue) on unrest in Kisii County secondary schools.

One of the main elements that can cause unrest among students in school is academic stress. High school students face many persistent pressures related to their environment and academic needs. According to previous research, academic stress can reduce academic achievement, reduce motivation and increase the risk of dropping out of school. The inability to control stress leads to aggressive behaviors that rock many schools around the world. For example, students have linked their aggressive behaviors to the stress they get because of the pressure to succeed academically and get excellent grades. In a survey of 15 to 16-year-old students by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), an average of 66% of respondents said they felt stressed because of their studies (OECD, 2017). The kind of curriculum students are exposed to, with several tests and exams, continuous teaching without breaks often lead to stress, which they often don't know how to cope with and thus leading to frustration (Republic of Kenya, 2019). These studies demonstrate that academic and educational achievement are a substantial source of

stress for students, but the impact of these factors on dissatisfaction has received little attention in the literature on unrest in secondary schools. It is on this basis that the current study sought to find out the influence of academic stress (as a mental health issue) on student unrest.

A student's emotional and behavioral health can be significantly influenced by school culture, character, and environment. High school is a unique time in a student's educational journey, where an increasing number of issues can help or hinder their academic, social-emotional, and behavioral success (Gordon, 2018). Harsh, aggressive, chaotic, or unpredictable school environments can damage a child's mental health, create stressful and adverse situations, and encourage unselfish behavior. (Cohen & Smerdon, 2019). The school climate is defined by Cohen, Pickeral, and McCloskey (2009) as “the quality and characteristics of school life” including the social and physical characteristics of the school that can favorably influence behavior, academic achievement, and the social and emotional development of students.

Based on the aforesaid statement, interpretation of culture mean rules and regulations set up in the schools and how the students interpret these regulations, interaction between students and teachers, and behavioral management strategies teachers use. If the rules and regulations are hostile, students' mental health and well-being will be disturbed which may not augur well and the end result is tension which may trigger unrest. According to research, positive aspects of the student-teacher relationship, can improve students' attitudes towards school by creating a greater sense of belonging and learning more effectively when characterized by warmth, respect, support and openness. While poor social functioning, increased difficulty with peers, anxiety and physical symptoms were associated with teacher dissatisfaction (Mameli, 2018).

Studies have demonstrated a link between high quality academic environments and effective behavior control tactics of teachers. In his research, Anand (2014) observed that public school students in India described instances of verbal and physical punishment, stating that “the teacher scolded them harshly and even slapped them if they violate the rules or do not follow the instructions of the teacher” (p. 231). Due to their cultural perspective, Indian parents may see upbringing and learning as the result of struggle and harsh discipline, which may explain why these practices are so common. The authoritarian role of teachers in Indian classrooms is noted in the literature where the teacher is described as a “meek dictator” (Kumar, 2015). As a result, many schools are places where students are discouraged and fear to challenge or confront the teacher, as the “teacher is never wrong” (Samvet, Vishal, & Vijay, 2021). This kind of frustration often leads to discontent among students and they will project their frustrations towards others or the schools by causing violence and unrest. For example, the unrest witnessed in India where students hurled stones and caused havoc because of the frustrations and discontent they had with their teachers (Anjun & Aijaz, 2014). The aforementioned studies looked at how the school climate in a region (India) influences violence. However, the present study looked at how school climate influenced unrest in secondary schools in Kisii County.

Students are now facing more mental health issues, particularly in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Students' school routines, academics, family relationships, and support networks underwent adjustments. The cognitive and behavioral strategies a person employs to deal with frustration are referred to as coping strategies (Mistrousi et al., 2013). A wide range of human emotions, perceptions, and experiences are taken into account while developing coping



mechanisms (Billah, Rutherford, Akhter and Tanjeela, 2023). According to Radicke et al., 2021, effective stress management and coping skills among young people can lower the incidence of mental health issues. In the majority of nations, social support from friends, family, and institutions as well as religious convictions were reported to be some of the ways students dealt with their mental health problems throughout the epidemic. As stated by Ayiro, Misigo & Dangili (2023), in their study among high school students in Kakamega county, students shared their problems with peers, and sought help from their parents, teachers and religious leaders. However, their findings also indicated that some students used avoidance as a coping strategy. The more the students perceived themselves to be stressed, the more they avoided addressing the problem. Other studies have equally found that students seek spiritual/religious support and engaging in physical exercises for their mental health issues. Based on these studies it is clear that students employ diverse coping strategies when dealing with their mental health challenges. Little attention has however been given to similar studies in Kisii County, thus the basis of this present study.

Schools have a responsibility to maintain peace and harmony and thus have put in place mechanisms to address issues that could lead to unrest. Different schools use different methods or mechanisms to ensure there is no violence in school. Results of study conducted by WHO (2019) examined the influence of strict school rules on student behavior. The findings revealed that the implementation of stringent school regulations had a beneficial effect on student conduct. The results of the study revealed that students who held the perception that the school rules were stringent exhibited reduced instances of disruptive behavior and demonstrated enhanced academic performance.

Further, findings from a study conducted by McCluskey (2018), demonstrated that the most optimal and efficacious strategies for addressing student unrest encompassed the cultivation of a positive school culture, the implementation of restorative justice practices, and the active engagement of students in school decision-making processes. These practices involved holding students accountable for their actions while also addressing the harm caused by their behavior. Instead of relying solely on punitive measures, restorative justice practices encourage students to take full responsibility for their actions and work to make amends and repair any harm caused. This approach promoted a sense of responsibility and accountability and was therefore effective in reducing incidents of unrest in schools. Implementing restorative justice practices, engaging students in decision-making, and creating a positive culture are considered the best approaches to addressing unrest in secondary schools.

Based on the studies mentioned, it is clear that different schools use different mechanisms to maintain peace in their environment. Little research attention however has been given to the mechanisms schools use to address unrest issues in Kisii county, thus the basis of this present study on establishing the mechanisms schools in Kisii county use to address unrest issues.

Secondary schools in Kenya have experienced significant amounts of unrest and strikes on a regular basis, which is a cause for great concern. It has led to the willful destruction of school property, resources, loss of school time and sometimes loss of life. Various commissions and task forces have been set up to investigate into the crisis (Sagini Report, 1991; Kirimi Commission, 1994; Republic of Kenya, 2001, Republic of Kenya, 2019). Studies have also been conducted to investigate the causes of unrest in schools. According to the National Crime and Research Center

(2017), unrest in schools is caused by poor communication between students and school authorities.

Atoyebi (2016) as well indicates that unrest is caused by poor diet, prefect factor and school work load. Additionally the Republic of Kenya (2019) asserts that unrest comes up as a result of examination pressure and a *flight-mode culture* in the minds of students, understood in the context of student collectivism as a group bound by shared interests and experiences in which the spread of student violence is an expression of solidarity, substance abuse, management styles, poor conflict resolution methods, inadequate facilities, under-staffing, fear of examination, failure to adjust to changes in school management and disciplinary measures meted on students. Further, Otundo (2021), postulates that unrest is caused by the long-term absence of the “authoritative person” residing at the school and the lack of effective guidance and counseling support services in secondary schools.

Arson attacks in schools have emerged as a contentious subject in secondary schools. This vice is always prevalent in term two, and the majority of schools affected are boarding schools. Hundreds of schools were closed in 2021 owing to arson cases, with at least 35 schools closed in October 2021. According to research, the fundamental causes of the return of student unrest and violence are the convergence of several factors that manifest themselves in second term for various reasons. Kisii County has not been spared with cases of unrest. In the year 2021, 7 schools were affected with unrest cases, students burned their dormitories injuring other students, an administration block was razed down, and teachers were attacked due to bad diet and lack of entertainment. In the previous studies, causes of unrest have been mentioned yet no study has looked at mental health

issues and school climate as possible causes of unrest in secondary schools, yet according to a survey conducted by Ontiri, Nyangena, and Gachohi (2017), 23% of students in Kisii County secondary schools reported indications of depression, which is a mental health issue. It is on this basis that the study sought to find out the influence of students' mental health and school climate on unrest in secondary schools in Kisii County.

### **1.3 Statement of the Problem**

Today, school unrest is a global concern. Kisii County is not immune. According to reports, in 2017, students in Kisii County secondary schools were arrested with jerry-cans of petrol with the intent of burning down the school, and in 2018, 5 students sustained minor injuries when two dormitories caught fire after students demonstrated due to a lack of food, while others destroyed the administration block and set ablaze property belonging to 198 students while baying for the principal's blood. While being reprimanded for missing evening classes, a form three student attacked two teachers. The student had been asked to kneel down as part of the disciplinary process prior to the attack. According to a survey conducted by Ontiri, Nyangena, and Gachohi (2017), 23% of the students in Kisii County had symptoms of depression. These mentioned studies and survey indicate the state of mental health and school climate of learners in Kisii county secondary schools and the coping strategies they use to handle their mental health issues, yet little research attention has been given to it. It is on this ground that the researcher sought to establish the influence of Students' mental health and school climate on student unrest in secondary schools in Kisii County, Kenya. In addition research has also found that students in Kisii county schools use adaptive coping strategies such as seeking support from peers, teachers or parents as well as maladaptive methods like alcohol and substance use.

**Table 1: Unrest cases in various counties**

<b>County</b>	<b>No. of schools</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Kisii	7	20%
Migori	2	5%
Kericho	5	14%
Bomet	3	8%

**Source: Kisii, Migori, Kericho and Bomet Directorates of Education (2021)**

#### **1.4 Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to examine the influence of students` mental health and school climate on unrest and coping strategies in secondary schools in Kisii County, Kenya.

#### **1.5 Objectives of the Study**

Objectives of the study were to;

1. Establish the influence of mental health variables on unrest in secondary schools in Kisii County, Kenya.
  - i. Establish the influence of depression on unrest in secondary schools in Kisii County
  - ii. Determine the influence of academic stress on unrest in secondary schools in Kisii County
2. Determine the influence of school climate variables on unrest in secondary schools in Kisii County, Kenya.
  - i. Establish the influence of student-teacher relationship on unrest in secondary schools in Kisii County.
  - ii. Determine the influence of school learning environment on unrest in secondary schools in Kisii county.
  - iii. Establish the influence of teacher behavioral management strategies on unrest in schools in Kisii County.

3. Establish coping strategies used by students to address mental health issues in secondary schools in Kisii County, Kenya.
4. Establish mechanisms used by schools to address issues that contribute to student unrest in secondary schools in Kisii County, Kenya.

### **1.6 Research Questions**

1. What was the influence of mental health variables on unrest in secondary schools in Kisii County, Kenya?
  - i. What was the influence of depression on unrest in Secondary schools in Kisii County?
  - ii. What was the influence of academic stress on unrest in secondary schools in Kisii County?
2. What was the influence of school climate variables on unrest in secondary schools in Kisii County, Kenya?
  - i. What was the influence of student-teacher relationship on unrest in secondary schools in Kisii County?
  - ii. What was the influence of school learning environment on unrest in secondary schools in Kisii county?
  - iii. What was the influence of teacher behavioral management strategies on unrest in schools in Kisii County?
3. What coping strategies did students use to address their mental health issues in secondary schools in Kisii County, Kenya?

4. What mechanisms were used by schools to address issues contributing to unrest in secondary schools in Kisii County, Kenya?

### **1.7 Assumptions of the Study**

Assumptions guiding the study were:

1. Schools provided conducive learning environment as per the ministry's guidelines (safety policy, no discipline method used outside the guidelines e.g., corporal punishment, not more than 40 students in classroom)
2. There is a relationship between students' mental health, school climate and unrest
3. Responses from the respondents are independent of each other.
4. The sample is random and thus representative of the population

### **1.8 Scope of the Study**

The study was done in Kisii County, Kenya and it focused on the influence of students' mental health variables and school climate variables on unrest in secondary schools in Kisii County, Kenya. The study favored Form 2 students since it was presumed that they are in a transition year in the education system, marked by changes in curriculum, increased academic pressure and shifts in social dynamics. These transitions can affect students' mental health and their views of the school climate. The study also targeted deputy principals since they were tasked with both administrative and disciplinary issues and class teachers as they were the ones in close contact with these students.

The study also focused on mental health variables (depression and academic stress) as they are currently on the rise. WHO (2022) indicated that there was a 25% global increase of depression

related issues among the adolescents especially at the time of COVID-19 pandemic. School climate variables as well were issues that were experienced within the school environment thus very critical to the learner's success or failure in navigating school life.

### **1.9 Significance of the Study**

The findings of this study provided information to the school management on the importance of creating conducive environment in schools to minimize unrest. Ministry of Education may also benefit from the new knowledge on student unrest and the importance of mental health. Parents and school administrators might also know and understand the importance of helping students have better mental health, know the factors that are likely to cause unrest in schools and taking the necessary steps to address these issues and as a result minimize unrest in schools.

### **1.10 Limitations of the Study**

- 1.The study focused only on high schools in Kisii County. Therefore, the findings of this study were not generalized to other counties in Kenya.
- 2.In correlation studies, only the degree of relationships is considered hence no causation between the variables
- 3.The bigger the N value in correlation studies, the higher the chances of statistical significance.



## **1.11 Theoretical Framework**

The study employed two theories to help explain how students' mental health and school climate influenced unrest. The theories were: Social Control theory by Ivan Nye (1958) and Strain theory by Robert K. Merton (1938).

### **1.11.1 Social Control Theory (Ivan Nye, 1958)**

This theory emphasizes the role of socialization and social connection in preventing deviant behavior in individuals. Social control is classified into three types: direct control, indirect control, and internal control.

Direct control involves external constraints and punishments that discourage individuals from engaging in disruptive behavior. Examples include parental supervision, school rules, and law enforcement. By imposing consequences for violating social norms, individuals are deterred from engaging in disruptive acts due to the fear of punishment. Indirect control refers to the social bonds/ties and relationships individuals form with others in their community. Strong social ties act as a deterrent to deviant behavior. Meaningful relationships with teachers, family, friends, and community involvement contribute to these social bonds. Individuals with strong bonds are less likely to engage in unrest as they fear damaging or losing those relationships. While Internal control involves an individual's self-discipline, conscience, and internalized moral values. It is the ability to regulate one's behavior based on personal beliefs and values, independent of external constraints. Internal control is developed through effective socialization processes, where individuals internalize societal norms and values, leading to self-regulation. Those with strong internal control are more likely to refrain from disruptive behavior as they have a well-developed sense of right and wrong.

Schools can promote a positive school climate by fostering inclusive practices, promoting respectful communication, involving students in decision-making processes, and addressing issues of discrimination promptly and effectively. By creating a positive school climate, schools can enhance students' social bonds and indirectly influence their behavior by providing a supportive and nurturing environment.

### **1.11.2 Strain Theory (Robert Merton, 1938)**

Strain theory postulates that individuals engage in deviant behavior when they experience strain or stress due to a gap between societal goals and available means for achieving those goals. If an individual is unable to reach the culturally dominant aim (of success), it can be frustrating and lead to the individual breaking away into illegal escape routes or delinquency. In the context of schools, students are exposed to various societal goals, such as academic success, social acceptance, and personal achievement. Students suffering from mental health concerns such as depression, anxiety, or attention disorders may experience strain in a variety of ways, including academic stress and bad relationships with teachers or peers. Their mental health conditions can affect their cognitive abilities, emotional well-being, and social interactions.

The need to excel academically, while struggling with their mental health might lead to frustration. The available means for achieving these goals within the school environment include access to quality education, supportive teachers, a safe and inclusive climate, and mental health resources. When these goals are not achieved, one is likely to become frustrated, thus projecting their emotions by causing violence in school. The strain arises when they perceive a disconnect between

the societal goals of academic success and social acceptance and their available means to achieve them due to mental health challenges.

Strain can also arise from social isolation (a symptom of depression) which can be more common for individuals with mental health issues. This can lead the students to adopt aggressive behaviors as a coping mechanism. Aggressive actions may serve as a way for the students to assert themselves regain a sense of control, or protect their self-esteem in the face of academic and social challenges. This aggression, whether verbal or physical, can contribute to unrest within the school environment.

A positive school climate that values inclusivity, empathy, and mental health awareness can help alleviate the strain experienced by students with mental health issues. Supportive school environments can reduce the strain associated with social isolation by fostering a sense of belonging and acceptance that can bridge the gap between students' capabilities and societal goals, reducing academic-related strain.

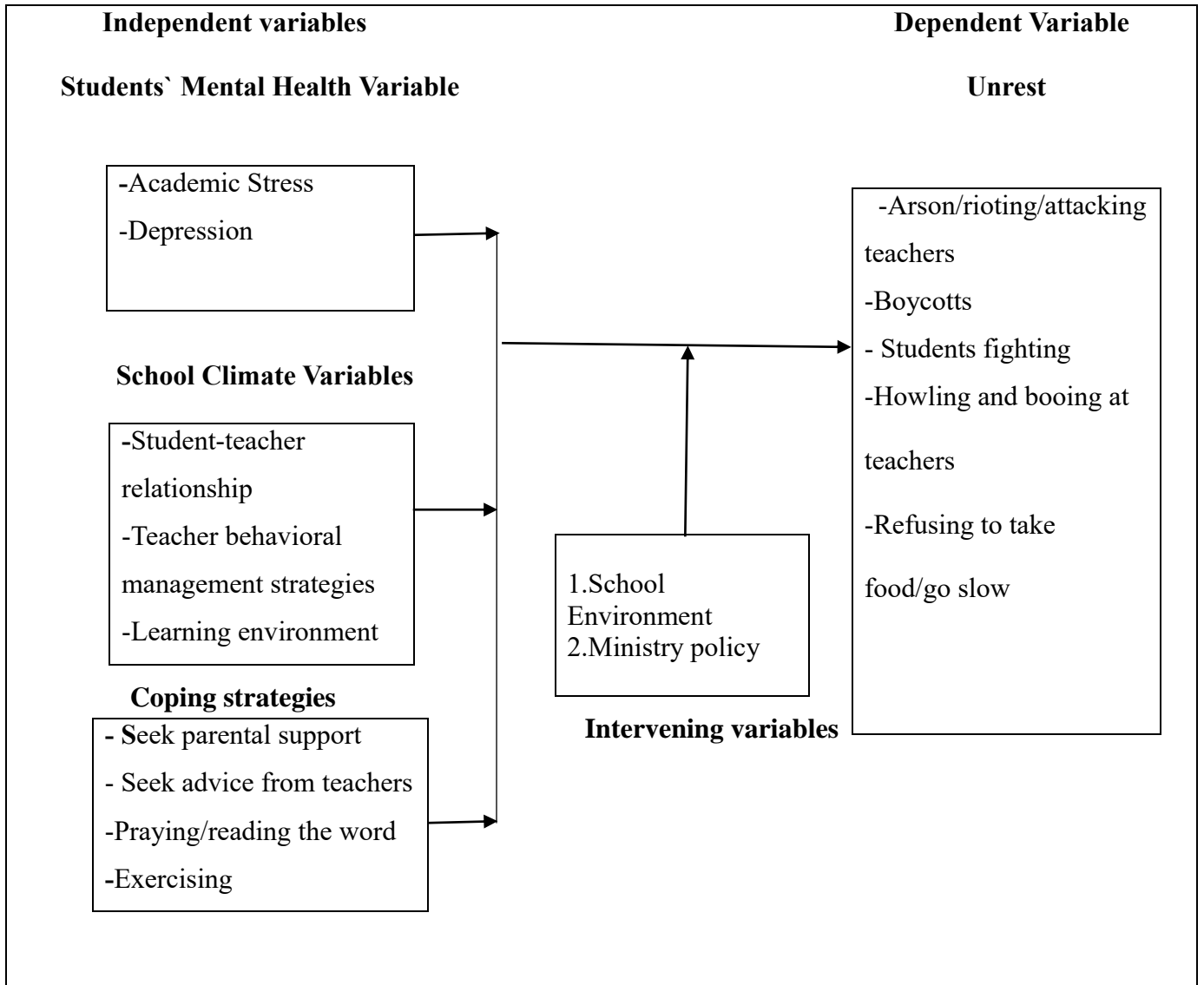
Strain theory also can help identify both adaptive and maladaptive coping mechanisms. Some individuals may engage in maladaptive behaviors like substance abuse or aggression in response to strain. Understanding these maladaptive behaviors allows for interventions to redirect them towards more adaptive coping strategies. This theory as well emphasizes the role of social support in helping individuals cope with stress. This can emanate from friends, family, and the school community at large. Recognizing the importance of a supportive social network can guide individuals in seeking and providing the help needed to manage their mental health issues.

The Strain Theory highlights how the strain resulting from mental health challenges and negative aspects of the school climate can lead to aggressive behaviors and potentially lead to unrest. It emphasizes the importance of identifying and addressing the sources of strain, promoting adaptive coping mechanisms, and recognizing the role of societal factors in mental health. By integrating strain theory into mental health approaches, students will be in a better position to understand and address the complexities of their mental health challenges.

These theories were important to the study since it helped in understanding factors that contribute to unrest, how mental health issues and school climate can contribute to unrest and also on the importance of coping strategies that can be used in handling mental health issues. This multidimensional approach can lead to more effective interventions to create a positive and supportive school environment. However, these theories do not bring out how depression and academic stress can influence unrest as well as how student-teacher relationship, teacher behavioral management strategies and school climate influence unrest in schools. For this reason, the researcher has used a conceptual framework to strengthen the theory in explaining how depression, academic stress, student-teacher relationship, teacher behavioral management strategies and school climate influences unrest in schools in Kisii County (refer to Figure 1).

## **1.12 Conceptual Framework**

This research was also based on a conceptual framework, as shown in Figure 1. The conceptual framework depicts the interaction of the independent variables (School Climate and Student's Mental Health) and the dependent variable (Student Unrest). It is clear that when students experience too much stress and depression, they are likely to develop mental health issues which may result in agitation, leading to unrest. In the same breath, the relationship existing among teachers and students, as well as the students and the school management is very critical in influencing school unrest. Likewise, school environment that is not conducive may lead to retaliation by the students leading to unrest. On the other end teachers need to be very cautious on the methods they use when correcting learners' mistakes. If those methods prove to be too harsh on them there are high chances of triggering unrest. The relationship between the independent and dependent variables is shown in Figure 1.



**Figure 1 Conceptual Framework showing the influence of students' mental health and school climate variables on unrest and coping strategies in secondary schools**

### **1.13 Operational Definition of Terms**

The following terms are defined as used in this study.

**Academic Stress** refers to the pressure students are exposed to as a result of academic expectations/goals set. This includes overloaded curriculum, exam anxiety and meeting deadlines on assignments given, reading for weekly and monthly tests.

**Cognitive Depression** refers to mental events that stem from maladaptive, faulty, or irrational cognitions in form of distorted thoughts, beliefs and judgment.

**Depression** refers to the psychological state of individuals marred with feelings of hopelessness, isolation, loneliness, helplessness and suicidal ideation.

**Influence** refers to the effect on the character, growth, or behavior of someone or something.

**Management** refers to the school administration (principal and deputy principals)

**Mental health** refers to the mental health and well-being of students. Depression and academic stress represented mental health in this research. An example is a case where a student is depressed due to academic workload which may lead to academic stress and depression.

**Mood Depression** refers to persistent feeling of sadness, emptiness, or hopelessness that lasts for an extended period of time, typically for at least two weeks or more.

**Motivation depression-** refers to the lack of enthusiasm/ impetus in participating in usual daily activities

**School climate** refers to the school environment in terms of relationship existing between the teachers, students and the school administration, this further includes the learning environment thus comprising of the size of classrooms and dormitories, sanitation, ventilation, diet, condition of toilets and safety. In this study this was represented by student- teacher relationships, teacher behavioral management strategies and school learning environment.

**Strategy** means actions taken to attain a certain goal. In this research it referred to the strategies or procedures used by school administration and teachers to remedy student's mistakes..

**Teacher behavioral management strategies** refers to the approaches teachers use to control and contain students' behavior.

**Teacher-Student relationship** means the type of interaction between teachers and students in a school setting.

**Unrest** refers to the state of instability in schools caused by the students. This may include refusing to take food/ go slow, students fighting, class/ assembly boycotts, shouting at the teachers/ howling/ booing and rioting/ attacking teachers/ breaking windows/ throwing of stones.



## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter discuss the literature on unrest, depression and academic stress as mental health variables, school climate variables (student-teacher relationship, teacher behavioral management techniques, school learning environment), the coping methods students use to handle mental health difficulties and the mechanisms schools use to address unrest issues.

#### **2.2 Influence of Mental Health Variables on Student Unrest in Secondary Schools**

##### **2.2.1 Depression and Unrest**

Student unrest is a worldwide phenomenon that has devastated many countries. It is defined as any sort of disruptive behavior, class boycott, disturbance, wanton destruction, or extreme danger performed by students (Etadon, 2013). Adeyemi (2019) as well-defined student unrest as student demonstrations that end in the destruction of lives and property as a result of protesting their demands. According to UNICEF, half of students aged 13 to 15 (around 150 million) worldwide have experienced classroom violence (UNICEF, 2017). Based on data from the US National Center for Education Statistics (2022), it was found that approximately 77% of public schools reported at least one occurrence of criminal activity during the 2019-20 academic year, resulting in a cumulative total of 1.4 million incidents. This corresponds to a prevalence of 29 occurrences per 1,000 students enrolled during the academic year of 2019-20. Based on the findings of the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), it was determined that 24% of students in the United States of America (USA) had engaged in multiple physical altercations within one year (Eaton et al., 2016).

According to Phandle (2021), South Africa exhibits the highest incidence of student unrest. In the year 2017, an outbreak of violence and social disorder occurred at Klipspruit West Secondary School in Johannesburg, South Africa. This was a result of the community's refusal to accept the appointment of a new school principal, leading to a state of ungovernability within the school. Community members took on the responsibility of assuming professional management of the school, making decisions regarding the appointment of the principal, procurement of books, and selection of service providers. While the parents, teachers, and school administration were addressing the aforementioned disruption, the students engaged in loitering, gambling, and drug use within the school premises. Consequently, this environment fostered the emergence of gangsterism, witnessed racist incidents, experienced chronic tardiness and early departures among students, and subjected teachers to verbal insults and physical assaults

Secondary schools in Kenya have experienced a significant amount of unrest. According to Kirioba (2014), the initial occurrence of school violence was documented in 1908 at Maseno School. The Republic of Kenya has experienced a surge in incidents of violence within the premises of public secondary educational institutions. According to Kirioba (2014), incidents of school violence during the period spanning from the 1990s to the 2000s led to the unfortunate loss of student lives, the deliberate destruction of educational institutions through arson, and extensive damage to school infrastructure. Consequently, the Ministry of Education has enacted several measures aimed at mitigating instances of school violence. Kenya has implemented various programs since 2008 to promote peaceful coexistence, recognizing the pivotal role of education as a foundation for this objective. In that year, the teaching of Life Skills Education (LSE) was made compulsory in public secondary schools in Kenya as a means to address conflicts (Abobo &

Orodho, 2014). Despite the various interventions, and mitigation measures taken to solve this problem, school violence persists, with an increase in reports of fights, sexual assault, corporal punishment, arson attacks, and verbal abuse, among other things.

Students in secondary schools are at the adolescence stage. Adolescence has been defined as a time of great emotional turmoil and transition (Scherf, Behrmann, & Dahl, 2017). A journey from childhood to adulthood that entails significant physical, psychological, cognitive, and social changes that can be traumatic for adolescents (Blakemore & Choudhury, 2018). This period is stressful and is typically a period at risk of the onset of several mental distress including depression. The WHO (2019) estimates that globally 10%–20% of children and adolescents are affected by mental health problems. The term depression refers to a wide range of emotional lows, ranging from sadness, mood disorder, poor dietary habits, violent behavior, drugs and substance abuse, diminished interest or pleasure, feelings of guilt or diminished self-esteem, fatigue, pessimistic thoughts about the future, contemplation of death or suicide, disturbances in sleep patterns, impaired concentration among students and alcohol consumption among students (WHO, 2019). A sad person should be able to recover to their normal emotional stability in a reasonable amount of time. In cases where the said individual remains in such a state for prolonged periods, a diagnosis of depression should be made (WHO, 2019). The World Health Organization (WHO) has identified depressive disorders as the fourth most prevalent health issue globally and the second leading cause of disability among humans in the year 2020 (WHO, 2020).

Research has indicated a robust association between the intensity of depressive symptoms and behavioral issues such as aggression among students in schools (Consoli et.al., 2013). According to statistical data, a significant proportion of adolescents in the United States, specifically seven out of ten individuals aged between 13 and 17 years, experience symptoms of depression. These students reported experiencing emotions such as anger, sadness, fear, or stress during their time in

school. Further, these students attributed their restlessness and agitation to these emotions. In another study conducted by AlAzzam et.al., (2021) among high school students in Jordan, results indicated that depression among adolescents was associated with disruptive behaviors, aggression, and violence in school.

Depression can be classified into different dimensions, with cognitive functioning being one of them. This phenomenon refers to the inclination to perceive and interpret various occurrences in life through a pessimistic lens. It is widely believed that this factor plays a significant role in the development of depression. In a study conducted by Iverson and Iverson (2022), in the US, on the phenomenon of perceived cognitive impairment among high school students, results indicated that the participants (38%) had significant challenges in their ability to concentrate, remember information, and make decisions, which were attributed to various physical, mental, or emotional issues. The study further indicated that these students who had cognitive impairment issues reported being frustrated with school life in general and lost motivation to learn and this led them to cause disruptions in school by boycotting classes. In contrast, students who engaged in regular exercises exhibited a significantly reduced likelihood of encountering cognitive impairment. The study's findings also indicated that there was a correlation between perceived cognitive impairment in students and various factors such as experiencing feelings of unsafety or threat within the school environment, achieving significantly low grades, experiencing inadequate sleep, and engaging in illicit drug use. These factors and grounds for restlessness and agitations among students in school.

Findings from another study conducted by Hecker et.al., (2016) in Tanzania among secondary school students, indicated that students who had symptoms of depression were violent in school

and had incidences of delinquent behavior, aggression, and conduct problems. This shows that when students are depressed, they project their emotions by causing chaos in school which leads to unrest cases.

According to a study conducted by Abela and Hankin (2016), cognitive vulnerability is a risk factor for depression in both Canadian and Chinese adolescents, and individuals will express their cognitive vulnerability according to their cultures/ environments. In their study, which involved 372 Canadian adolescents and 335 Chinese adolescents, the authors found that cognitive vulnerability was significantly associated with depressive symptoms in both Canadian and Chinese adolescents. For example, among Canadian adolescents, a negative outlook on themselves was the strongest predictor of depressive symptoms, while among Chinese adolescents, hopelessness was the strongest predictor. These depressive symptoms were associated with frustrations among students which led to aggressive behaviors in schools.

According to the statistics from the Centers for Disease Control (2022), high levels of depression (a mental health issue) encouraged adolescents/ young people in the United States to act out in violent ways. Students resorted to violent assaults, stabbing, and shooting others because they felt isolated and they did not fit in or were not accepted by their peers in the school. The study further stated that depressed individuals were openly hostile and had anger attacks (CDC,2022). In a sample of Finnish students aged 13–17, agitation and aggression in school were associated with self-reported depression (concentration difficulties, poorer social relationships, self-learning, poorer academic performance, and worse reading and writing outcomes (Fröjd et al., 2018).

Therefore, it is not surprising that young people with depression, are likely to cause chaos in school, as shown in a 15-year longitudinal study of Swedish adolescents (Alaie et.al., 2019).

The increasing incidences of depression among adolescent students are a global public concern (Thapar, Collishaw & Pine, 2014). Results in a study conducted by Modabber et.al. (2017) in Rasht, Northern Iran, with a sample size of 4,020 students showed that students had high levels of depressive symptoms (34%). The research findings additionally indicated that 28% of the student participants exhibited symptoms of mild depression, while 5.7% experienced symptoms of moderate depression. Furthermore, a small proportion of 0.3% of the students reported experiencing severe depression. These students had walked out of school while complaining that nobody listened to their grievances. This is similar to a study conducted by Rushton, Forcier, and Schectman, (2013), who found out that individuals who had mild and moderate depression portrayed disruptive behaviors and aggression while those who had major depressive symptoms had potential arson attacks.

A study done in South India, Karnataka state, showed that depression was 79.2% among 308 students who undertook the study. The most common type of depression in the study was moderate (41.2%) in nature, 26.6% of students had mild depression and 11.4% had severe depression (Balaji, Varghese, Mithra, Nair & Kumar 2019). Additionally, a study conducted among 13–19-year-olds in Trivandrum (India) indicated moderate depression as the most common type of depression. In another study done in Sweden among students aged between 16 to 17 years old, results showed that the incidences of moderate depression were 10.3% (Kumar, Mohan & Ranjith, 2015). In yet another study conducted in Biratnagar City, Nepal the results showed that 73% of high school

students had depression, with moderate at 59% and severe depression at 14% (Hagquist & Andrich 2017).

Results from a study done in al-Qassim region-Saudi Arabia by Alharbi, Alsuhaibani, Almarshad & Alyahya (2019) among 1245 secondary school students using Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-9) tool, revealed that 26.0% of the students were not depressed, 34% of the students were mildly depressed, 24.6% of the students were moderately depressed, whereas 10.4% of the students had moderately severe depression and 5.0% of the students were severely depressed. The participants who were engaged in the study were between 13 -19 years of age. 55.7% of the respondents were aged between 17-18. In another study that was conducted among 1219 secondary school students in Rajkot City, India using binary logistic regression analysis, the findings indicated that 31.99% of the students suffered from symptoms of depression. Some of the predictive factors of depression mentioned in the study were inadequate food, academic pressures, negative thoughts, and parental pressure. Poor teacher-student relations and also with classmates were connected with depression. These factors were reported to lead to agitation among the students and sometimes cause violence (Patel. et.al., 2023).

In another cross-sectional descriptive study design done by Nalugya-Sserunjogi et.al (2016) in Mukono district-Uganda, 519 students in 4 secondary schools were assessed for depression by use of the Children Depression Inventory (CDI). Results from the assessment indicated that 21% of the respondents had evidence of depression symptoms. Some of the factors that cause depression among these students were self-esteem issues. The students felt they were not good enough and did not feel they belonged in the school community. The study reported that these feelings of

isolation led the students to show their emotions by being aggressive and causing chaos in school so that they could be heard.

The findings of a study done in Homabay County- Kenya, by Nyayieka, Nyagwencha, and Nzyuko, (2020) among 783 adolescents who were also assessed for symptoms of depression and anxiety by use of the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI-II) and Beck Anxiety Inventory (BAI), indicated that 57.5% of the adolescents had depression. Results from the study indicated that there was an association between depression and aggression/ violence in schools (Nyanyieka et.al., 2020). These percentages are high and if these students are not assisted and helped, they will carry their depressive symptoms into their adult lives, and thus their functions as human beings will not be optimal.

Based on the mentioned studies it is clear that depression can contribute to various forms of unrest, such as aggression, violation of school rules, truancy, or social withdrawal. Students who experience depression may have difficulty managing their emotions, resulting in outbursts of anger or frustration that can lead to disruptive behavior. Depression can also affect students' motivation, engagement, and academic performance, which may contribute to a sense of frustration and unrest. Students with depression struggle to focus on their studies, complete assignments, or interact positively with peers and teachers, which can further exacerbate feelings of distress and discontent.

The studies discussed provide valuable insights into the association between depression and disruptive behaviors among students. These findings are important and highlights the significance of addressing mental health in educational setting. However, it's important to interpret the findings of these studies with caution considering their limitations. Some of these limitations include proof



of causation of depression on unrest, biasness due to self-reported data from students, different cultural context and varied sample sizes, thus findings cannot be generalized.

In Kenya, the effects of mental health issues such as depression among students is a topic that has not been largely explored and only a few applicable studies have been done. Prior studies have centered on mental health issues among adolescents in marginalized people like People living with Disabilities (PLWD) (Okello, Onen & Musisi, 2017) and persons living with human immune deficiency virus (HIV) infection (Musisi & Kinyanda, 2019). Additionally, studies on mental health concerns among students in secondary school have mostly looked at the effects of students mental health on academic achievement and these studies have been done in different regions globally. Little research attention however has been given to the influence of depression as a mental health issue on unrest yet the mental health and well-being of students is very crucial.

When students are not mentally stable and are psychologically disturbed they speak up by projecting their emotions through violence and riots in school and this is a cry for help. Students from Kisii County secondary schools suffer from depressive symptoms as indicated by a survey done by Ontiri et.al., (2017), yet not much research has been done to determine its influence on unrest in schools. It is on this basis that this present study sought to establish the influence of depression on unrest in secondary schools in Kisii County, Kenya.

### **2.2.2 Academic Stress and Unrest**

Students in the secondary face a wide range of ongoing stressors related to academic demands. Previous research indicates that academic-related stress can reduce academic achievement, decrease motivation, and increase the risk of school dropout. The longer-term impacts, which include reduced likelihood of sustainable employment, cost Governments billions of dollars each year. This narrative review presents the most recent research concerning the impact of academic-related stress, including a discussion of the impact of this stress on unrest in secondary schools.

The idea of attending school may have introduced the concept of stress accidentally while trying to give a chance to young people to imitate the current world settings. According to Reddy (2018), both the mental and physical demands of studying will often increase proportionally to the learner's progress. Bataineh (2013), asserts that students go through a variety of tussles in their day-to-day life which relates to their academic pressures such as completing assignments on time, pressure to get good grades, consequences of failing exams, and societal expectations, and so on. Having this kind of pressure for extended periods may lead to academic stress.

Academic stress is caused by excessive demands in the academic environment. As a result, students are not able to control their academic activities thus decreasing their motivation and ability to direct themselves (Liu, 2015). Based on this opinion, it can be concluded that academic stress is a condition where students feel a massive academic burden due to the limited adaptive sources to deal with it. When experiencing academic stress, students become helpless, some of them find it difficult to adjust to the academic rhythm and perform self-actualization and as a result project their inadequacies by causing chaos and mayhem in school.

According to Thakkar (2018), academic stress is a mental suffering that comes about because one fails in their academic performance or the anticipation of failing among students. The cause of this suffering as described by Bernstein, Penner, Stewart, and Roy (2013) is known as a ‘Stressor’ which often threatens to interrupt an individual’s daily functioning. Mishra (2017) asserts that academic stress (pressure to do well, fear of exams, and the classroom surroundings) is the cause of agitation among learners in school. Jiang, Gao, Wu and Guo (2022) are all in agreement that academic pressure and poor performance is the major cause of stress among students which has led to students retaliating because of the demand to produce good results.

Rawson (2019) postulated that students undergo high academic stress at certain times such as when doing exams, competing in class, and understanding large volumes of syllabus in a short time. According to Fairbrother (2013), stressors experienced by students encompassed a multitude of factors, such as a high volume of assignments, inter-student competition, and suboptimal student-teacher relationships. According to Erkutlu and Chafra (2016), the academic environment for students can become highly stressful and frustrating due to the pressure to perform well in examinations or tests and the limited time allocated for them which often causes chaos. One of the primary consequences of stress is its influence on the psychological processes, subsequently impacting the mental well-being of students and thus projecting their emotions and dissatisfaction through violence and strikes.

Research findings indicate that students who encounter academic stress exhibit certain characteristics, including a pessimistic outlook on the learning environment, a perception of heavy

workload, diminished interest in their subjects of study, inconsistent attendance, limited engagement in classroom activities, and a sense of futility in academic pursuits, leading to feelings of agitation and restlessness (Akabay & Akabay, 2016). In a study conducted by Chewen, Munyua and Ogoma (2018), the results indicated that students in the Eldoret-East sub-county, experienced restlessness and agitation due to the many academic demands in school. Similarly, in a study conducted by Shaunessy-Dedrick, Suldo, Roth, and Fefer (2015), the results showed that students felt frustrated because of the academic demands and pressures, which led them to grumble and become agitated in school.

According to a study by Bouchrika (2020), a significant proportion of students in the United States, specifically 31%, reported that the pressure from final and midterm exams made them restless and sometimes made them retaliate. The third highest factor contributing to students' academic experience was the class and workload, accounting for 23% of the overall impact. Homework, on the other hand, ranked fourth with a 13% influence. These factors have been identified to cause agitation among students and sometimes even violence in school.

Results from a study conducted by Subramani and Venkatachalam (2019) among a sample of 198 high school students from three high schools located in Salem, Tamil Nadu, India showed that academic environment was consistently identified as a significant contributor to academic stress, which in turn resulted in instances of violence among students within the school. The five primary sources of academic stress identified in this study were parental expectations, fear of failure in exams, comparison with others, grade competition with other students, and an excessive number of tests. All of which led to students' agitation and disruptive behavior.

Aafreen et al., (2018) posit that a multitude of factors contribute to the experience of stress among students. These factors include challenging assignments, unfavorable timing (as exemplified by the circumstances faced by both students and instructors during the pandemic, particularly in the context of online learning), teacher bias, and demanding syllabi. In addition, students will probably encounter multiple stressors that will challenge their capacity to adapt to their environment thus becoming frustrated and causing disruptive behaviors (Aafreen et al., 2018). Consequently, the accumulation of pressure may have detrimental effects on the overall well-being of students, frequently resulting in frustration among learners and subsequently leading to a state of disorder.

Recent research has revealed a correlation between mental health and academic performance. Suldo, Gormley, DuPaul, and Anderson-Butcher (2014) posited that there exists a reciprocal relationship between mental health and academic outcomes, whereby mental health influences academic performance, and in turn, academic performance impacts mental well-being. Fundamentally, alterations in one domain have the potential to forecast alterations in the other. Hence, it is crucial to closely observe the psychological well-being of students in light of the continuously evolving academic pressures, as these modifications can potentially lead to adverse mental health outcomes for students (Suldo et al., 2014).

The aforementioned studies highlight the adverse effects of academic stress on students' unrest in secondary schools. Limited research, however, has been conducted on the repercussions of academic stress on unrest among secondary school students in sub-Saharan Africa, with a particular focus on Kenya. Prior research has indicated that students experience significant academic pressure within educational settings, primarily attributable to the demanding workload

associated with the curriculum and the accompanying performance expectations. These studies have examined the correlation between academic stress, including factors such as exams and workload, and its influence on strikes and unrest in schools. Additionally, they have explored the association between academic stress and incidents of violence within school settings, both globally and specifically in Kenya. However, there is a limited amount of research available regarding the influence of academic stress on unrest in secondary schools. Therefore, this study aims to address this research gap.

## **2.3 Influence of School Climate Variables on Unrest in Secondary Schools.**

### **2.3.1 Student-teacher relationship on unrest**

Each individual can identify a teacher who had a significant impact on their life, as well as one who caused temporary distress. What is the rationale behind this? The centrality of the teacher-student relationship is fundamental to the practice of teaching. Teachers play a crucial role in the field of education as they assist students in attaining their objectives. On average, students typically allocate approximately 6 to 8 hours per day attending educational institutions over 180 days within a given year. Hence, it is unsurprising that educators wield a significant degree of influence over their students (Munna & Kalam, 2021). The aforementioned influence has the potential to exert a substantial effect on the educational setting, subsequently influencing a student's academic performance.

The teacher-student relationship is one of the factors that promotes students learning. Positive interaction creates a peaceful environment, but negative interaction leads to instability. A teacher's positive relationship helps to promote student's academic growth. Teachers who emphasize the

positive aspects of students rather than the negative aspects help the students to be more forthcoming with positive behavior (Agyekum, 2019)

There are various perspectives regarding teacher-student interactions. According to Ravitch (2013), institutions educate students to become responsible citizens with well-developed mindsets. Education intends to produce researchers, scientists, engineers, and many other experts to solve global problems. Students' academic outcomes cannot be achieved if the foundation that holds or bonds them is broken. Social relationships define students' intellectual functioning. Responsiveness can be ascertained when students familiarize themselves with their teachers and the institution's code of conduct (Cazden, 2015). Institutions create learning environments for students to build effective interpersonal relationships with their teachers. Cazden (2015) added that the teacher-student relationship is one of the significant factors in the learning environment. Research conducted by Krana et al. (2017) revealed that students develop positive relationships with their teachers when respect is exchanged between teachers and students. Whereas negative behavior affects both teachers and students. A deviant student stands the risk of expulsion if the student's actions destabilize the school, teachers, and students.

Further, Krana et al. (2017), postulate that students who disrespect authority may be either sanctioned, expelled, or charged. The consequences of this are revolt and strike. Positive teacher-student relationships lead to lasting peace, but negative relationships create a hostile environment for both teachers and students. High school students are expected to respect school rules and regulations. However, when students disobey school rules, teachers will intervene to ensure the

students are brought to book and when they do so it may not auger well will the students thus bringing about violence.

According to Boynton and Boynton (2015), a crucial factor in cultivating a conducive learning environment is the establishment of a positive rapport between teachers and their students. Zins and Elias (2017), support this by asserting that student progress, school engagement, and academic motivation are significantly influenced by this particular factor. The teacher-student relationship plays a crucial role in facilitating the teaching and learning process. In addition to imparting knowledge, an educator engages in active communication and collaboration with their students.

The establishment of a positive student-teacher relationship within the classroom setting entails fostering a mutually beneficial relationship characterized by trust and respect between the teacher and student. The nature of this relationship entails a process of familiarizing oneself with students on a deeper level, fostering their personal growth and development daily, cultivating enhanced social-emotional abilities, and empowering students to feel self-assured as they engage in academic challenges (Positive teacher-student relationships have cascading benefits, 2021). According to Boynton et.al., (2015), if students perceive a lack of value or respect from their teachers, they are likely to exhibit resistance towards rules and procedures, as well as a lack of trust and receptiveness towards the teachers' instructions which in turn makes them to retaliate against their teachers.

A study was conducted by OECD (2017) in the USA, using data from the Program for International Student Assessment 2000. The findings revealed that within the 43 countries examined,



approximately 25% of students reported experiencing a diminished sense of belonging in school, while approximately 20% of students reported low levels of participation and attachment to their teachers. These experiences cultivated adverse emotions of aggression and isolation, which resulted in disruptive behaviors among the learners. This demonstrates the significance of fostering a sense of belonging within the school environment and having a positive relationship with the teachers.

Another study was conducted by Meehan and Hughes (2018) involving 887 high school students in the US on the relationship between high school students' perceptions of teacher caring and their academic engagement and achievement. The findings from the study showed that students who perceived their teachers as caring had higher levels of academic achievement. These students paid attention in class, participated in class discussions, completed their homework on time, and studied for their exams. The study also found that the relationship between teachers' care and academic achievement was due to the students' perceptions of independent support from their teachers. This suggests that when teachers are perceived as caring, students may feel more supported in their independence, which in turn may increase their academic achievement. This helped in enhancing peace in school and issues of agitation and disgruntlement among learners were minimal.

A study by Van den Berg and Cillessen (2015) on the relationship between teacher strictness and peer victimization among elementary and middle school students, indicated that students experienced victimization due to the strictness of teachers. Specifically, students who were regarded by their teachers as low in academic ability. The researchers surveyed 1181 students in 24 classrooms in the Netherlands. The study further suggested that strict teachers may

unintentionally create an environment in which lower-ability students are more likely to be excluded or victimized by their peers. These students reported that this alienation and victimization caused them to be aggressive in school and resort to violence to be 'seen'.

The quality of relationships between teachers and students is influenced by the nature of their interactions. Teachers are prone to have more adverse relationships with students who experience peer rejection or demonstrate lower levels of academic and behavioral competence. Regrettably, this interaction not only has implications for the teacher-student relationship but also has ramifications for the student's social standing among peers. Such negative interactions can potentially influence other interpersonal dynamics within the classroom such as deviant behavior and restlessness (Jerome & Pianta, 2018). To rectify this situation, educators must demonstrate heightened awareness of their interactions and the impact they wield on students.

Educators must possess an understanding that the establishment of positive relationships has the potential to forecast successful adaptation to the school environment. Furthermore, such relationships can act as a protective element for children who face a heightened likelihood of experiencing unfavorable academic and developmental consequences (Lander, 2019). Investing time in cultivating positive relationships with students can yield significant impacts on their educational experiences, encompassing both their academic performance and their overall engagement within and beyond the confines of the classroom.

Enhancing the student-teacher relationship holds significant implications for the academic, psychological, and social growth of students, thereby yielding enduring benefits. Exclusively

focusing on enhancing students' relationships with their teachers is insufficient to yield improvements in academic performance. Nevertheless, students who cultivate strong, constructive, and encouraging bonds with their teachers are more likely to achieve higher levels of academic success compared to students who experience greater discord in their teacher-student relationships. According to Donahue et al. (2013), the implementation of teaching strategies that exhibit care toward students and promote the development of interpersonal skills among students can result in a decrease in instances of student rejection. In contrast, aggressive students who cultivate positive relationships with their teachers are more inclined to garner acceptance from their peers compared to their aggressive counterparts who lack such positive relationships with teachers. These findings imply that improving the relationships between teachers and students can have positive and cumulative impacts on various aspects of classroom dynamics.

According to Klem and Connell (2014), educators who establish strong connections with their students have observed a decrease in school avoidance, as well as an increase in self-directedness, cooperation, positive behavior, and overall engagement in the learning process. The enduring influence of teacher-student relationships is evident in their quality. In particular, students who experienced greater conflict with their teachers demonstrated diminished academic performance and an increased incidence of behavioral issues, such as disciplinary concerns.

Teacher-student relationship has been in existence since time immemorial. Across the globe, teachers are expected to relate with their students positively. Educators create lifelong learners and learners' goals cannot be achieved if there is enmity between teachers and students. Students who develop positive relationships with their teachers can overcome many challenges in school which will help them have minimal cases of disruptive behaviors. The studies mentioned address

important aspects of the school climate, such as students' sense of belonging, teacher care, and teacher strictness, which are significant areas of research in education. However, these studies have been done in different regions thus may not be generalized to all locations. Also, these studies have not discussed how the school climate factors influence the possibilities of unrest in schools. This present study however, sought to establish the influence of school climate on unrest in secondary schools in Kisii County, Kenya.

### **2.3.2. Teacher behavioral management strategies and unrest**

The occurrence of disruptive student behaviors has been attributed to various teacher behaviors, including the implementation of punitive disciplinary strategies, the provision of unclear student expectations and consequences, and the failure to accommodate individual student differences (Lewis & Sugai, 2014). The occurrence of behavioral issues within a classroom setting has been observed to have a detrimental impact on the overall stress levels experienced by both educators and students. Furthermore, such disruptive behaviors have been found to impede the smooth progression of instructional activities and give rise to conflicts that hinder the learning process.

Disruptive behaviors, when present, have the potential to alter the classroom dynamic by diverting attention away from the academic tasks at hand and toward the distractions they introduce. Merrett and Wheldall (2016) have identified a range of disruptive behaviors commonly observed in the classroom, including inattentiveness, generating noise, causing distress or disturbance to others, and noncompliance with teacher instructions. According to Parsonson (2015), some of the ways teachers may employ to contain behavior disturbance may include mass punishment with the hope that peer pressure will result in behavior change, overreacting by creating mountains out of small

mistakes, picking on one or two students and blaming them for any little thing that can occur, frequent comments to the class that are accompanied by negative terms and excessive authoritarian climate.

Behavior management is perhaps the most difficult aspect of teaching for the majority of the teachers and experiencing problems in this area can cause some to leave teaching altogether. The purpose of behavior management is to help individuals learn effective and acceptable alternative ways of behaving so that they can overcome difficulties in their lives. It is based on the belief that if people with maladaptive behaviors are taught better ways of dealing with their issues, they will most likely change their bad behavior (Kinai, 2013).

Strategies for behavior management and modification in educational settings may encompass interventions at the school-wide, classroom-based, or individual child-focused levels. Various strategies can be employed by teachers to manage student behavior in the classroom. Punitive measures, for instance, involve the use of punishment or reprimands to address misbehavior. This may include the application of threats and warnings, physical actions such as slapping or caning, assigning detention or additional tasks, as well as non-verbal cues like mentioning a student's name as a warning sign. On the other hand, relational and supportive measures aim to foster positive behavior by utilizing rewards and praise, providing effective feedback, offering guidance and counseling, and assisting students in developing self-regulation skills and cultivating positive self-esteem (Woodcock & Reupert, 2017).

Research findings in a study by Downs et.al., (2019), indicated that the use of reprimands in school as a behavior management mechanism was linked with disruptive behavior among students. Students protested that the reprimands were too much and humiliating. Another research study by Smart and Igo (2014) on teacher-behavior management strategies using a grounded theory approach. Results of the study indicated that students boycotted their morning preps because the teacher on duty had used corporal punishment. This goes to show that the mechanisms teachers use to modify behavior can elicit chaos and disruption in school.

In a study conducted by Johansen, Little, and Akin-Little (2013), on contextualizing problem behavior within New Zealand schools. Results showed that classroom mismanagement was frequently or occasionally identified as a contributing factor to problematic/disruptive classroom behavior. A notable issue was the observation that a significant number of these educators had received limited prior training in behavior management during their pre-service education. Furthermore, some individuals held the belief that in-service professional development programs were either not advantageous or not frequently provided. This presents a challenge for educators in effectively addressing disruptive behaviors within the school setting, as they may resort to employing strategies, they deem suitable in the given circumstances. Regrettably, certain techniques and methods employed in the educational context have the potential to inflict more harm upon learners which has often led to chaos in schools.

Suleman, Aslam, Ali, Hussain, and Ambreen (2013) conducted a study in the Karak district in Pakistan. The purpose of the study was to find out the techniques used by secondary school teachers in managing the behavior of secondary school students. The results of the study showed

that teachers used corporal punishment to manage disruptive and aggressive students and also imposed a special fine by compelling them to finish their homework/ assignments on time. The findings also indicated that students who were compelled to finish their assignments became aggressive and retaliated against the decision to be fined by the teachers.

A study conducted by Owusu-Addo (2022) on effective classroom management strategies used by high school teachers in Ghana, showed that teachers used a variety of management strategies such as setting clear expectations for behavior, establishing rules and routines, providing positive reinforcement, and using corrective feedback. These strategies were deemed effective in managing student behavior in the classroom and the learners. The study as well identified factors that influenced the teachers' use of these management strategies. These included: their beliefs and attitudes towards student behavior, their experiences with classroom management, and the cultural and contextual factors of their school environments. The findings of the study indicated that students felt respected and understood when teachers used positive corrective feedback and thus had no behavioral issues that would lead to disruption of the learning process.

In a separate investigation, Majani (2020) conducted a study examining the methodologies employed by educators in the management of disruptive behaviors using a qualitative thematic analysis approach. The results of the study revealed that educators who made minimal efforts to promote suitable classroom conduct often used punitive and reactive strategies, such as canning as a means to address students who exhibited disruptive behavior. These strategies lead the students to engage in retaliatory behavior, resulting in widespread disorder and chaos within the educational institutions.

Despite the abundance of literature available to inform the implementation of evidence-based classroom and behavior management strategies aimed at improving student behavior, it is frequently observed that teachers possess insufficient knowledge or training in this area. This deficiency in understanding and skills hampers their ability to effectively manage learner behavior and mitigate problem behaviors within the school setting (Moore & Woodcock, 2017). The presence of disruptive behaviors within a classroom setting can hinder the learning process for all students. Therefore, it is crucial to provide teachers with the necessary support to effectively implement management strategies. The issue is significant within high school environments, where the occurrence of suspensions or expulsions is most prevalent as a means of addressing disruptive behaviors, which can ultimately lead to a state of disorder and unrest (Flannery, Fenning, McGrath, Kato, & McIntosh, 2014).

Of all the strategies employed to curb disruptive behaviors, research shows little evidence that supports the use of punitive and authoritarian strategies (Sullivan, Johnson, Owen & Conway, 2014). Instead, scholars recommend strategies that are democratic and focused on fostering learners' self-regulation and meaningful student-teacher interactions (Mahvar, Farahani, & Aryankhesal, 2018; Woodcock & Reupert, 2017). This is however not the case with some teachers in schools as seen in the studies mentioned. Most teachers will prefer punitive measures with the hope of managing maladaptive behaviors among learners.

To facilitate desirable student behavior, educational institutions must develop and effectively communicate a set of rules and procedures (Sayeski & Brown, 2018). The absence of clearly posted rules can pose challenges for students in adhering to teachers' expectations regarding rule



compliance. Based on the research conducted by Harlacher and Rodriguez (2018), it is recommended that both schools and classrooms should implement a minimum of three to five behavioral expectations that are framed positively, as part of the Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) approach.

The establishment and enforcement of consistent and transparent rules can effectively mitigate instances of student problem behaviors resulting from inconsistencies. Unclear regulations and anticipated outcomes may create circumstances wherein students are inclined to participate in disruptive conduct. While the mentioned studies focused on behavior modification techniques used by teachers in schools, the present study went further to seek to establish how the behavioral management strategies used by teachers influenced unrest in secondary schools in Kenya, specifically Kisii County.

### **2.3.3. School learning environment and unrest**

The objectives of education within educational institutions have experienced significant transformations over the previous century. Numerous factors within educational institutions contribute to the manifestation of diverse behaviors. According to Gamage, Dehideniya, & Ekanayake (2021), educational institutions possess social frameworks that have the potential to either facilitate or restrict interactions and impact the behavior of students.

Uba-Mbibi (2015) noted that a peaceful or safer environment is an environment free from war, violence, disorder, or conflicts. In the words of Jayeioba and Atanda (2017), a safe learning environment is all necessary instructional facilities that could aid learning. A safe learning environment is a significant factor in the effective teaching and learning process. Indeed, teacher,

learner, subject matter, and learning resources would be counter-productive in an unsafe and insecure environment. The position of a safe learning environment is emphasized by Ameh (2015) that it is imperative that educational stakeholders foster a safe and secure school environment to facilitate increased learner environment, retention, and completion and hence attainment and quality education.

Additionally, Ajala (2019), argues that the presence of a particular context in which an individual is situated and how they react to it at a specific moment can either enhance or impede a child's skills, capacities, or potential. The presence of a nurturing and secure educational setting, encompassing physical, social, and psychological aspects, has a significant impact on students' cognitive processes, direct encounters, emotional well-being, and overall state of health. Moreover, such an environment has the potential to foster a sense of affection and curiosity, promote tranquility, and facilitate harmonious coexistence among individuals, thereby facilitating effective learning for social progress and transformation (Atanda, 2016 & Gbadamosi, 2017). On the contrary, an environment that is flawed due to inadequate planning and ineffective management poses a hindrance to effective learning. Learners in such environments will not have an opportunity to realize their potential and work productively due to the disruptions they encounter in such environments (Ajala, 2019).

School learning environments could be dysfunctional, and destructive, and at the same time if well managed it can be a catalyst for creativity and productivity (Benedict, 2013). It is necessary therefore for stakeholders in education such as school administrators to recognize both the constructive and destructive potential of a school environment. In a study conducted by Cheryan, Ziegler, Plaut & Meltzoff, (2014), findings indicated that there was a decrease in school attendance

by the students because of poor air quality or ventilation in their classrooms which caused irritation and aggressive behaviors that led to unrest in school. Adebayo (2016) reported in his study in Oyo state-Nigeria that angry secondary school students set classrooms ablaze as a result of mass failure and poor school management.

A study conducted by Ngwokabuenui (2015) among students in Cameroon secondary schools indicated that overcrowded classrooms, an uncondusive school environment, unenforceable school rules and regulations, poor teaching, and poor leadership by school administrators were the main causes of disruptive behaviors among learners in school. The state of indiscipline caused by these factors led the students to cause chaos and unrest.

In another study conducted by Ajayi and Akinsanya (2016) on the impact of school facilities, and resource utilization in secondary schools in Ogun State, Nigeria, results showed that students expressed dissatisfaction by causing chaos and boycotting classes because of the state of the classrooms that were characterized with open roof and broken chairs and tables, insufficient teachers, inadequate social amenities like boreholes for water, lighting (electricity), and inadequate provision of stationary and facilities. Additionally, results from a study conducted by Gbadamosi (2017) in Oyo State, Nigeria indicated that the most common cause of students' unrest was a poor learning environment which was largely characterized by few classrooms which led to congestion, lack of instructional materials and a non-functional library.

In a separate investigation conducted by Kuperminc, Leadbeater, Emmons, and Blatt (2013) regarding the perception of the school environment and social adjustment issues among junior

school students in Malaysia, it was found that both the overall school climate and the specific classroom climate exerted an impact on students' behavioral misconduct and conduct.

Phandle (2021) study examining violence and unrest in South Africa, specifically at the Klipspruit West Secondary School located in the southern region of Johannesburg, effectively demonstrates the correlation between the school environment and the indiscipline exhibited by students within the school. The community's rejection of the appointment of a new school principal has resulted in a state of ungovernability within the school. The active involvement of community members extended to assuming control over the administrative functions of the school, including the selection of the principal, procurement of books, and engagement of service providers. During this period of unrest, various stakeholders including parents, teachers, and school administrators were involved. Meanwhile, the students engaged in activities such as loitering, gambling, and drug use within the school premises. Additionally, instances of gangsterism, racist actions, tardiness, early departure, as well as verbal insults, and physical assaults toward teachers were observed. This observation demonstrates that the lack of a supportive educational setting and a disorganized environment can result in disorder and discord.

Research findings from the mentioned studies have shown the impact of a negative school climate, which is marred with issues such as poor classroom conditions, poor management techniques, lack of adequate resources, inadequate social amenities, and congestion in school. These factors have led to students' retaliation, boycotting schools, and indiscipline cases such as joining gangsterism which has caused unrest and violence in schools. These studies have been carried out in different parts of the world (South Africa, Nigeria, Ghana) and employed different methodologies. The

present study, however, sought to establish the influence of school climate on unrest in secondary schools specifically in Kisii County, Kenya using both descriptive and correlational designs.

#### **2.4 Coping Strategies Students use to adapt to Mental Health issues in Secondary Schools**

With the increasing global recognition of the significance of mental health in health and development initiatives, there has been a heightened emphasis on addressing the mental well-being of adolescents. It is crucial to recognize that adolescence is marked by significant physical and social growth, during which the foundational skills necessary for a successful transition into adulthood are established (Dray et al., 2017).

According to a study conducted by Wesselhoeft, Sorensen, Heilervang, and Bilenberg (2013), a significant proportion of school-aged adolescents, ranging from 10% to 20%, encounter mental health difficulties on a global scale. In the sub-Saharan African region, it has been observed that adolescents and young individuals make up approximately 30-35% of the total population. Within this demographic, it has been reported that a significant proportion, specifically 14%, experience psychological distress, as indicated by WHO (2018).

Coping strategies encompass a range of cognitive, psychological, and behavioral approaches that individuals employ to effectively manage or mitigate the impact of stressful events and external stressors. According to Parker (1999), empirical evidence suggests that certain coping strategies have the potential to mitigate stress and foster favorable psychological outcomes, while others have the propensity to intensify stress and engender adverse psychological consequences. The significance of coping strategies in addressing mental health challenges has been emphasized by Steiner-Hofbauer and Holzinger (2020). This is due to the potential impact on students' academic

achievement and overall well-being, as highlighted by Schiller et al. (2018). According to Folkman (2013), coping can be defined as the ongoing cognitive and behavioral adjustments made in response to specific external and internal demands that are perceived to surpass an individual's available resources.

The importance of understanding students' preferred coping strategies and providing accessible and effective mental health support services cannot be underrated as it is the key to helping students manage their mental health issues. Liu et.al., (2021) conducted a mixed-methods study that aimed to explore the coping strategies of urban high school students in the United States. The study used a quantitative component to collect data on coping strategies and mental health symptoms, while the qualitative component used focus groups to explore students' experiences with coping strategies. The study found that the most commonly used coping strategies students preferred were positive reappraisal, acceptance, and seeking social support and the least used strategies were denial, substance use, and self-blame. The study also found that students who reported using more adaptive coping strategies reported lower levels of mental health symptoms and that students preferred to use coping strategies that were easily accessible, such as talking to friends, listening to music, or engaging in sports.

In a separate investigation conducted by Wang and Chen (2013) in China, which was focused on the mental well-being of high school students and their utilization of coping mechanisms. The findings indicated that high school students employed a range of coping strategies to address mental health challenges, including seeking assistance, evading problems, engaging in fantasy, rationalizing, withdrawing, self-blaming, and practicing endurance. The research involved a

sample of 320 students, and its findings revealed that female participants exhibited a preference for engaging in endurance activities, whereas male participants tended to gravitate towards engaging in imaginative or fantasy-based activities. The study's findings revealed that senior high school students tend to adopt coping styles that are positive and mature, such as problem-solving and seeking assistance. In contrast, middle school students were found to prefer coping styles that are negative and immature, such as withdrawal and self-blame. This aligns with the research conducted by Lan Yuping, whose study indicated that middle school students commonly employ a series of coping strategies, namely problem-solving, seeking consultation, escapism, rationalization, and self-accusation, to address their daily psychological challenges (Lan & Zang, 2013).

Recent research indicates that students employ diverse coping mechanisms to effectively address their mental health concerns during their academic tenure, with the pursuit of social support emerging as a prevalent strategy across various cultural settings. The study conducted by Wu et al. (2020) revealed various coping strategies employed by students to manage their mental health. These strategies encompass problem-solving, seeking social support, avoidance, acceptance, cognitive reappraisal, and emotional regulation. The predominant approach employed by individuals was problem-solving, with seeking social support being the subsequent most frequently utilized strategy. The research additionally revealed that coping strategies exhibited variability depending on the specific mental health condition, with anxiety emerging as the predominant mental health concern reported.

This assertion is additionally corroborated by the findings of Abbas, Farooq and Chaudhary (2021). The research conducted by the authors involved a sample of 300 secondary school students from Pakistan. These participants were administered a self-report questionnaire that comprised both open-ended and closed-ended questions. The purpose of the questionnaire was to assess the coping strategies employed by the students about mental health concerns. The study's results indicated that the coping strategies most frequently employed by individuals included seeking social support, participating in physical exercise, utilizing relaxation techniques, engaging in prayer and Quranic reading, and seeking assistance from professionals. Conversely, the research revealed that avoidance, self-blame, and substance use were the coping strategies least frequently employed.

Addy and Agbozo (2021) conducted a mixed-method study in Ghana to examine the mental difficulties and coping mechanisms of school-going adolescents. The findings revealed that a majority (58.5%) of the students encountered mental health challenges. The aforementioned factors were identified as contributing to the individual's difficulties, including financial constraints, academic pressure, experiences of bullying, struggles in intimate relationships, and spiritual dilemmas. The study also observed that a majority of females exhibited a higher prevalence of mental health challenges in comparison to males. The results of the study conducted on a sample of 405 students revealed that students utilized various strategies, such as isolation, seeking spiritual/religious assistance, and engaging in substance abuse, as a means of coping with their mental health challenges.



A recent cross-cultural study examining coping strategies utilized by college students in 14 different countries (including 5 in the United States, 4 in India, 2 in the United Kingdom, and 1 each in Pakistan, Germany, Hong Kong, Nepal, Austria, Iran, Romania, Malaysia, Turkey, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia) has identified several prevalent mechanisms employed to manage mental health difficulties. These coping strategies, as reported by Sattar, Yusoff, Arifin, Yasin, and Nor (2022), include support seeking (60%), active coping (40%), acceptance (40%), avoidance/denial (40%), substance abuse (35%), faith/religion (25%), and sports (25%). In contemporary times, scholarly literature has brought to light a multitude of mental health challenges that are prevalent among students within educational institutions. Nevertheless, there remains a dearth of comprehensive investigation into the practical coping mechanisms employed by students. This scenario necessitates research to identify effective coping mechanisms employed by students to address mental health concerns. By drawing on evidence from scholarly sources, students can potentially receive assistance for their mental well-being and avoid resorting to detrimental coping strategies that may exacerbate their issues.

Within educational settings, students employ a range of mechanisms and strategies to address mental health concerns. These approaches encompass diverse practices such as seeking religious support, engaging in planning activities, employing positive reinterpretation techniques, practicing breathing exercises, regularly consulting with school counselors, engaging in open conversations with trusted individuals, and utilizing social networking platforms (Giamus, Suleiman, Stuart & Chen, 2017). Additional coping strategies encompass disengagement, isolation, over-indulgence, grieving, and internalized coping strategies (Sanchez, Adams, & Arango, 2018). However, this

frequently leads to adverse effects on the physical well-being of learners, while also exacerbating pre-existing mental health conditions (Raheel, 2014).

Various investigations have been undertaken to examine the various strategies employed in mitigating stress within educational institutions. Zara (2022) in their study, on coping strategies for mental health, found that social support played a crucial role in the effective management of stress and depression among university students. In another study conducted by Klonoff-Cohen (2022), results showed that students engaged their parents and friends when they had mental health problems, especially during the COVID-19 epidemic.

The incidences of various mental health issues among children and adolescents in Kenyan schools have been observed to range from 10% to 50.5% (Magai, Malik, & Koot, 2018). The duration of time that children and adolescents spend in educational institutions exposes them to the potential impact of mental health issues, which can impede their ability to learn and subsequently lead to subpar academic performance (Rothi & Leavey, 2006). Educators endeavor to address the scholastic requirements of their students; however, they may lack the necessary training to comprehend the obstacles to learning that arise from mental health issues among students. Therefore, students employ alternative strategies to manage mental health challenges, such as withdrawal and isolation, alcohol and substance misuse, and engaging in riots that lead to unrest. In more severe cases, some individuals may resort to extreme measures, such as suicide (Magai et al., 2018). Subsequent investigations carried out among student populations in educational institutions in Kenya have revealed notable coping mechanisms such as seeking solace in praying and reading the word of God and seeking social support from peers and teachers concerning mental issues such as depression, anxiety, and stress (Mbwayo, Mathai, Khasakhala, Kuria, & Vander

Stoep, 2020). These issues have the potential to adversely impact students' scholastic achievements, interpersonal connections, and overall state of being.

In a study conducted by Othieno, Othieno, and Njenga (2018) in Kenya, the researchers examined the coping strategies and mental health of secondary school students. The findings revealed that a significant number of students employed adaptive coping mechanisms, such as seeking social support, participating in physical activities, and utilizing relaxation techniques. Conversely, a portion of the students resorted to maladaptive coping strategies, including substance abuse and withdrawal. The study identified a range of strategies, some of which were found to be effective while others were deemed ineffective. This assertion is corroborated by Alkhaldeh et.al., (2023), who observed that students employed various coping mechanisms, such as seeking assistance from their social network, participating in physical activities, and implementing relaxation techniques, to manage academic stress, which was found to be a significant predictor of mental health problems.

The study conducted by Mokaya, Kaaria, and Kivanguli (2017) revealed that a significant number of students in schools located in Kisii County exhibited symptoms of mood disturbance, borderline clinical depression, and moderate depression, indicating the need for professional intervention. The primary objective of this present study was to ascertain the coping mechanisms employed by students in Kisii County, Kenya, to manage mental health challenges within secondary school settings.

## **2.5 Mechanisms schools use to address issues that contribute to unrest in secondary schools**

The occurrence of student unrest in Kenya's educational institutions has witnessed a notable rise. These events have been characterized by acts of violence, indiscriminate destruction of property, and even loss of life. According to Kinyanjui's (1978) research, strikes are not spontaneous occurrences, but rather manifestations of persistent unresolved issues by educational institutions' authorities. Kinyanjui observed a higher incidence of strikes occurring in boys' schools compared to girls' schools, with the primary targets being the head teacher, school offices, and school property.

Educational institutions have commonly deprived students of certain fundamental rights. These include the right to express dissent without facing any form of direct or indirect repercussions, the right to actively engage in decision-making processes, and the right to foster fulfilling interpersonal relationships with peers, teachers, and the school administration (Abel & Hanna, 1971). The cumulative impact of these factors on students has resulted in the development of mistrust, confusion, and hostility. Consequently, students have resorted to expressing their frustrations through acts of violence, indicating a strong desire for meaningful participation in decision-making processes that directly impact them (Abel & Hanna, 1971).

In a study conducted by Valente, Lourenço & Németh (2020) in the United States, it was determined that there exist efficacious strategies for addressing and resolving issues of unrest within educational institutions. Various strategies have been employed to address unrest issues in schools. One such approach is the cultivation of a positive school climate, which entails fostering positive relationships with students and establishing a sense of belonging within the school

community. By doing so, students may develop stronger connections to their educational environment. Additionally, proactively addressing discipline and behavior concerns has proven to be an effective means of managing unrest in schools. Through the establishment of positive relationships with students, educators can foster an environment characterized by trust and mutual respect. This, in turn, serves as a preventive measure against potential conflicts and disturbances within educational institutions. The establishment of a positive teacher-student relationship can be accomplished through various strategies, including addressing students by their names, attentively attending to their concerns, and offering them opportunities to engage in activities that cater to their interests. When students perceive a sense of value and support within their educational setting, they tend to exhibit a more favorable disposition toward the learning process and are less inclined to engage in disruptive behaviors.

Proactively addressing discipline and behavior issues is a crucial strategy for effectively managing unrest within educational institutions. This entails establishing explicit behavioral expectations, implementing uniform consequences for inappropriate behavior, and collaborating with students and families to address underlying factors that may be influencing negative behavior (Valente et al., 2020). Educators can effectively mitigate the disruption of the learning environment by proactively addressing discipline and behavior concerns, thereby averting the escalation of minor issues into more significant challenges.

Bradshaw et.al., (2018), conducted a study in the US on the relationship between school climate, comprehensive mental health services, and school discipline practices. The study surveyed 79 high schools and found that schools with comprehensive mental health services had significantly lower

rates of suspensions and expulsions compared to schools without these services. The study concluded that comprehensive mental health services are a critical component of a positive school climate and effective discipline practices. In another study conducted by Lee (2020), on School-based health centers (SBHCs) and student mental health: Opportunities and challenges, it emerged that students who received mental health services in SBHCs reported improved mental health outcomes, including reductions in depressive symptoms and anxiety. Additionally, these students had fewer disciplinary cases and absences from school. The study concluded that SBHCs were an effective mechanism for carrying out mental health services to students in a convenient and accessible manner.

A study conducted by Aledal, Yamani, & Hindal (2017) in Kuwait examined the influence of strict school rules on student behavior. The findings revealed that the implementation of stringent school regulations had a beneficial effect on student conduct. The results of the study revealed that students who held the perception that the school rules were stringent exhibited reduced instances of disruptive behavior and demonstrated enhanced academic performance. Conversely, students who perceived the school rules as equitable and impartial were more inclined to comply with the rules and display positive behavior. The study's findings indicate that the implementation of stringent adherence to school regulations can serve as a viable strategy for mitigating student unrest concerns, as it positively influences both student conduct and academic achievement. However, it is important to acknowledge that school rules must be perceived as equitable and impartial by students to promote their compliance.

In a separate investigation carried out by The Education Trust (2018), an examination was conducted on diverse approaches aimed at fostering positive behavior and discipline within educational institutions. This encompassed the implementation of school regulations. The findings indicated that schools characterized by well-defined and unwavering rules were more inclined to cultivate a favorable school climate, wherein students experienced a sense of security and received adequate support. Consequently, this resulted in enhanced student conduct and scholastic achievement. The study additionally underscored the importance of effectively communicating school regulations and the corresponding repercussions for non-compliance to the student body. Furthermore, the study proposed that educational institutions should actively engage students and parents in the process of formulating and implementing school policies to enhance compliance rates.

In a study conducted by Smith (2019), the focus was on examining the management strategies employed by school principals in Gauteng Province, South Africa, to address learner unrest in secondary schools. The findings of the study indicated that the implementation of open communication, fostering positive relationships with students and stakeholders, and adopting restorative justice practices were identified as effective approaches in managing instances of unrest within educational institutions. These practices encompass the establishment of student accountability for their actions, coupled with the implementation of measures to address the consequences arising from their behaviors. Rather than relying solely on punitive measures, restorative justice practices promote the idea of students assuming complete accountability for their actions and actively engaging in efforts to rectify and restore any harm inflicted. This

particular methodology cultivated a perception of duty and liability, consequently proving efficacious in mitigating occurrences of turmoil within educational institutions.

In a research conducted by Odebode (2019) regarding strategies employed within school settings to address student unrest in Nigeria, it was found that the most effective methods for managing such unrest in secondary schools involved the implementation of restorative justice practices, as well as the active involvement of students in decision-making processes and the cultivation of a positive cultural environment. This assertion is corroborated by a study conducted by Mati et.al., (2016) wherein their research findings demonstrated that the most optimal and efficacious strategies for addressing student unrest encompassed the cultivation of a positive school culture, the implementation of restorative justice practices, and the active engagement of students in school decision-making processes. When students are allowed to express their opinions and perspectives within the school environment, there is a higher likelihood of fostering constructive thinking and reducing instances of disruptive behavior, thereby mitigating the ensuing disorder.

One potential approach to accomplish this objective is to establish avenues for student engagement in various capacities, such as assuming positions of authority within the school's administrative structure or actively participating in student councils and committees. The inclusion of students in decision-making processes can contribute to the enhancement of school policies and practices, as students possess distinct perspectives and insights that can be valuable. Through the implementation of these strategies, educators can establish a secure and nurturing educational setting that fosters favorable student achievements.



The implementation of guidance and counseling programs has been embraced as a strategy to mitigate and address instances of unrest within secondary educational institutions. The program is specifically designed to facilitate students' adaptation to their surroundings and cultivate their capacity to establish attainable objectives and make informed choices. In this particular scenario, the counselor addresses the personal history of the individual to facilitate the comprehension of their internal psychological landscape. This will, in turn, facilitate their comprehension of the internal realm within their being (Egbo, 2013). The primary objective of counseling is to facilitate behavioral modification, thereby enabling clients to lead more fulfilling and productive lives.

According to Nketch (2016), counseling has the potential to mitigate frustration, facilitate self-understanding, and provide guidance on the essential tasks required for healthy adolescent development. Consequently, this can lead to a reduction in stress levels and the prevalence of violence within Kenyan schools. Counseling serves as a constructive disciplinary approach that effectively targets the underlying factors contributing to disruptive conduct within educational settings. The platform offers a secure environment for students to engage in discussions regarding their difficulties and cultivate effective mechanisms for resolving them. Counseling has the potential to mitigate future instances of disorder and unrest in educational institutions by addressing the fundamental factors that contribute to such disturbances.

Masadia (2015), conducted a study to examine the challenges and opportunities related to the provision of guidance and counseling services in secondary schools in Tanzania. This study was driven by the necessity to tackle the elevated levels of student unrest within the nation, as well as recognizing the significance of guidance and counseling services in fostering both academic

achievement and personal development. The research aimed to investigate the obstacles and potential advantages related to the delivery of guidance and counseling services within these educational institutions. The study's results revealed that there were numerous obstacles linked to the delivery of guidance and counseling services in secondary schools within Tanzania. The factors encompassed in this category encompassed a scarcity of resources, insufficient training for counselors, a lack of recognition regarding the significance of guidance and counseling services, and cultural obstacles. Additionally, the research also revealed that the utilization of technology for service delivery, as well as the engagement of community members in facilitating the provision of these services, would enhance the delivery of guidance and counseling services within educational institutions.

In their study, Salgong (2016) investigated the efficacy of guidance and counseling services in addressing student discipline issues within the secondary schools of Koibatek district, Kenya. The research encompassed a sample of 240 participants from 15 secondary schools in the aforementioned region. The objective of the study was to identify efficient strategies for managing student discipline in a region characterized by significant levels of unrest. The study employed a mixed-methods methodology, wherein data was gathered via surveys and interviews conducted with teachers, students, and counselors. The findings of the research demonstrated that the provision of guidance and counseling services yielded beneficial outcomes in the realm of student discipline management within secondary educational institutions. The majority of participants indicated that counseling had proven beneficial in enhancing their comprehension of the underlying factors contributing to student unrest, as well as equipping them with the essential abilities to effectively handle student discipline. Additionally, the research revealed that

educational institutions that implemented comprehensive guidance and counseling programs exhibited reduced instances of student unrest in comparison to those institutions that did not offer such services. The study, nonetheless, identified several challenges in the delivery of guidance and counseling services. These challenges encompass insufficient counselor training, restricted availability of resources, and excessive caseloads.

The implementation of a comprehensive curriculum is a strategic approach employed to guarantee the timely coverage of the approved syllabus for each subject and grade level. School principals must assume the responsibility of overseeing the comprehensive coverage of the syllabus, as well as ensuring coherence and concordance between the schemes of work and records of work formulated by teachers (Theresa, 2016). In instances where a teacher has to be absent from class, ways of making up for the lost time ought to be in place and learners should not be allowed to laze around when the teacher is away. Doing this will ensure that the students are not frustrated due to academic pressure. Research done by Chai and Lim (2017), found that for a curriculum to be successfully implemented, teachers ought to integrate their inquiry-based ability and the use of technology into their teaching activities. Successful teachers commit to finishing the syllabus on time and combining their schemes of work with the changing times. The study, however, found out that issues like inadequate resources, loss of school time, and an overloaded curriculum hinder good learning progress.

Another way of alleviating chaos in schools is through academic discipline. According to Bakhda (2014), a positive learning environment should be harmonious, safe, and one that produces good results. Schools ought to endeavor to achieve the final goal of instilling academic and personal

discipline among their students. This includes finishing homework on time, doing one's best, paying attention in class, preparing well for exams, and all other activities geared towards academic achievements. It is the teacher's responsibility to make sure that the learners are well-driven and determined to succeed.

As a teacher, one ought to be a role model to their students to be able to give them quality work. It will help foster an affirmative attitude toward the need for the students to do their best and inquire from their teachers when the need arises. To improve their authority, school principals should be role models when it comes to issues of teaching, by attending classes as well (Buskila and Chen-Levi, 2021). Etisi (2010) postulates that "when teachers plan their lessons carefully and involve learners actively in learning, the incidence of discipline problems diminishes. A culture of people's treatment of each other, feelings of inclusion and appreciation, and reflecting collaboration improves discipline." The present study agrees with these opinions in the sense that attending classes gives the school administrator and chance to relate with the learners such that they are free to disclose their concerns to him/her thus making management attainable and uncomplicated. This however has not been the case in most secondary schools. Teachers and principals have not been good role models to the students. Studies by Bartanen (2020) have shown that principals are oftentimes overwhelmed by managerial duties that they forget to lead and direct the students.

The active participation of students in decision-making processes is of paramount importance for fostering peace and promoting cohesion within educational institutions. It is imperative to inform students about decisions made by school administrators and involve them in the decision-making

process (Abel & Hanna, 1971). The active participation of both students and teachers has the potential to mitigate the problem of violence in educational institutions, as it empowers them to take ownership of decision-making processes. The contemporary student body exhibits notable distinctions from their counterparts in the 1970s and 1980s, primarily due to their heightened consciousness regarding their entitlements and privileges. Democracy has permeated various facets of society and is increasingly recognized as a significant managerial tool within numerous institutions, including educational establishments.

According to Bakhda (2014), a scholar who focuses on democratic decision-making, an effective approach to decision-making involves the inclusion of students and, if feasible, parents at different stages of the decision-making process. It is imperative to acknowledge that the majority of decisions made within a school setting have an impact on students, whether it is in a latent or manifest manner. Primarily, they assume the role of the recipients of ultimate determinations. Hence, it is advisable to incorporate them into the discourse. The management staff may occasionally refrain from seeking input from students due to concerns regarding the potential presence of incorrect or biased suggestions. This hesitation may stem from a perception that students lack the necessary level of maturity to provide sensible recommendations. The recommendations put forth by students possess the potential to be highly constructive and impactful. If these recommendations are approached suitably, they can yield positive outcomes. For instance, they can foster a sense of ownership among students regarding various aspects such as rules and regulations, school testing policies, discipline matters, and school norms and standards.

As posited by Bakhda (2014), communication encompasses the act of conveying, transmitting, or exchanging information, ideas, or emotions. The author additionally posits that effective communication is a crucial component of successful management. Conversely, a lack of communication or ineffective communication can lead to various negative outcomes, such as chaos, misunderstandings, diminished confidence in the management team, and staff insecurity. Ultimately, these factors may contribute to unrest within educational institutions. Therefore, the implementation of open communication strategies has the potential to alleviate tensions within educational institutions. According to Sababu (2017), effective communication is achieved when there is a purposeful response or feedback aligned with the overall mission. Communication with students must be conducted in a clear and timely manner. In the educational context, it is imperative to acknowledge and uphold students' entitlement to express their perspectives and opinions. Consequently, it is essential to grant them the opportunity to respond to the information they have received.

In the context of Kenya, the occurrence of student unrest is not a novel phenomenon. Various manifestations have been observed, encompassing protests, strikes, arson attacks, property theft and destruction, acts of violence, and even fatalities. Numerous studies have been conducted to investigate the underlying factors contributing to student unrest, as well as potential strategies that can be implemented to effectively mitigate this issue. The findings of Salgong (2016) research on the factors leading to student unrest and the strategies employed by secondary schools in Kenya to mitigate these issues revealed that the implementation of enhanced infrastructure, more effective disciplinary measures, increased student participation in decision-making processes, improved communication between students and school administration, and the establishment of stronger

school-community partnerships were instrumental in addressing the underlying causes of unrest. According to the Ministry of Education (2018), it is agreed that addressing the issue of unrest can be achieved through the implementation of strategies such as strengthening school-community partnerships, enhancing the skills of school administrators and teachers in conflict management, and fostering a culture of respect and tolerance among students.

The findings from Ministry of Education (2018), also showed that some of the ways of addressing unrest issues in schools were; developing affirmative discipline strategies (counseling services), promoting community service, and encouraging the culture of mentorship. When students are engaged in meaningful community service projects, they develop a sense of social responsibility and empathy for others. This can help reduce negative behaviors such as bullying and vandalism and promote positive behaviors such as cooperation and respect. Mentors on the other hand can help provide guidance and support to students by helping them develop positive social skills and values.

In his study, Isabu (2017) asserts that to prevent and resolve conflicts between school management and students, there ought to be room for negotiation and talking. The study further indicated the to empower school administrators in conflict management and resolution. These are important as they are the people who often mediate and resolve conflicts when they arise in school.

Previous studies have mentioned different mechanisms schools use to avert unrest cases. Little attention however has been given to the mechanisms schools use to curb unrest cases specifically in Kisii County, Kenya yet from the statistics from the Directorate of Education (2021) Kisii County had the highest cases of unrest in secondary schools, the basis of this study.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the research designs, study area, target population, sample size and sampling techniques, instruments of data collection, data collection procedures, data analysis methods and ethical considerations.

#### **3.2 Research Design**

In this study, both descriptive survey and correlational research designs were used. Descriptive survey according to Ranganathan (2019), provides quantitative description of trends, attitudes, opinions or behavior of a population by studying a sample of that population. While descriptive survey can help describe situations the way they are without manipulating anything, they are less effective in establishing causality. The design was deemed fit for the study since it helped in describing and casting light on the issues the way they were. In this study, it gave the researcher the opportunity to describe the information about mental health and school climate as they were without manipulating anything.

According to Bhandari (2021), a correlational research design investigates relationships between variables without the researcher controlling or manipulating any of them. Correlation designs are excellent for identifying and measuring the strength and direction of relationships between variables. This can help researchers determine if variables are related and the nature of that relationship. However, they do not establish causation. This design was deemed appropriate



because it allowed the researcher to determine the relationship between the independent variables (Student's Mental Health and School Climate) and dependent variable (Student Unrest).

### **3.3 Area of Study**

Kenya comprises a total of forty-seven counties, one of which is Kisii County. The county in question shares its borders with Nyamira County to the east, Narok County to the south, Migori County to the west, Kisumu County to the north, Bomet County to the southeast, and Homabay County to the northwest. The latitude of the location in question ranges from 00 30' to 100 South, while its longitude spans from 340 38' to 350 East. The region under consideration encompasses a total land area of 1,302 square kilometers, and is estimated to have a population of approximately 1,266,860 individuals based on data obtained from the 2019 census. Kisii County comprises nine constituencies, namely: Bobasi, Bonchari, Bomachoge Chache, Bomachoge Borabu, Kitutu Chache North, Kitutu Chache South, Nyaribari Chache, Nyaribari Masaba, and South Mugirango. The primary economic activity in the region is subsistence farming. The region is widely recognized for its cultivation of bananas, as well as the production of various other agricultural commodities such as tea, coffee, sugarcane, vegetables, and dairy products (Kisii County Education Directorate, 2022)

The poverty index is estimated to be 44.5%, whereas the literacy level is estimated to be 89.5%. Based on the findings of the Kisii County Educational Directorate, it has been determined that there exist a total of 306 Public and 44 Private Secondary Schools within the region. Among these schools, 230 are classified as mixed day schools, 29 are categorized as mixed boarding schools, 25 are identified as mixed day and boarding schools, 34 are exclusively boys boarding schools,

and 32 are exclusively girls boarding schools. The collective student population across these schools amounts to 114,166, while the number of teachers employed stands at 3,940. The county is home to two National Schools, and the dropout rate in secondary education stands at 6% in relation to an enrollment rate of 81.5%.

According to reports from Kisii County Educational Directorate (2017) students in Kisii County secondary schools were arrested with jerry-cans of petrol with the intent of burning down the school, and in 2018, 5 students got injured when 2 dormitories were set ablaze by students who were protesting about the schools bad diet while others destroyed the administration block and burning property that belonged to 198 students and wanting to kill the principal. Further reports by the Kisii County Educational Directorate in 2021 indicated that there were: 7 cases of unrest in Kisii County compared to Migori County which had 2 cases, Bomet County which had 3 cases and Kericho County which had 5 cases. In addition, while being reprimanded for missing evening classes, a form three student attacked two teachers. Prior to the attack, the teacher had asked the student to kneel down as a disciplinary measure.

### **3.4 Study Population**

According to Rakhi (2018), a study population refers to the comprehensive set of items, objects, individuals, or entities that are the focus of investigation within a research study or a specific target population. The current study involved a target population consisting of 30,955 Form 2 students, 350 deputy principals, and 350 class teachers in secondary schools located in Kisii County, Kenya. Form 2 students were favored since it was presumed that they are in a transition year in the education system, marked by changes in curriculum, increased academic pressure and shifts in

social dynamics. These transitions can affect students' mental health and their perceptions of the school climate. The study also targeted deputy principals since they were tasked with both administrative and disciplinary issues and class teachers as they were the ones in close contact with these students.

### **3.5 Sample Size and Sampling Techniques**

Sample size according to Johnson and Christensen (2016), is “a set of elements taken from a larger population”. The total number of schools in Kisii County are 350. Using Mugenda & Mugenda (2019) formula, for piloting purposes, the researcher chose 10% of the total number of schools which translated to 35 schools. This was done so as to help test the effectiveness of the instruments and make any necessary adjustments. The researcher further took 1/3 of the remainder of the schools and used it for the study. This translated to 105 secondary schools. The research utilized purposive sampling methodology to carefully select a sample size consisting of 105 deputy head teachers and 105 class teachers. Creswell (2014) asserts that purposive sampling is a suitable method for researchers seeking to target a specific subgroup of individuals who possess specific characteristics or qualities. The selection of deputy principals was deliberate, as they are responsible for managing administrative and disciplinary matters. Class teachers, on the other hand, were chosen due to their close proximity to students and regular interaction with them. The sample size of 395 students was determined using Yamane's (1967) formula.

The study employed the stratified random sampling technique. Hayes (2023) describes stratified random sampling as a sampling technique that entails the division of a population into smaller, distinct groups known as strata. The process of stratification involves organizing groups or strata

based on the shared characteristics, commonalities, or attributes of their members. The educational institutions in question encompass single-sex boarding schools for boys, single-sex boarding schools for girls, coeducational boarding schools, and coeducational day secondary schools. Educational institutions were classified into three distinct categories: exclusively male boarding schools, exclusively female boarding schools, and coeducational boarding and day schools. This methodology guarantees the inclusion of individuals from all subgroups within the population, thereby enhancing the statistical precision. Moreover, the researchers employed the simple random sampling technique in order to select the participants who would participate in the data collection process. The aforementioned procedure involved the placement of cards labeled with the terms 'YES' and 'NO' within a container, followed by a subsequent randomization process. Participants who selected cards labeled with the word "yes" were chosen. This measure ensured that each student was provided with an equitable chance of being selected. The schools were selected in a proportional manner as outlined below: There were a total of 24 boys boarding schools, 24 girls boarding schools, 23 mixed boarding schools, and 34 mixed day schools, resulting in a ratio of 24:24:23:34. The ratio for students in each category were: 90:90:87:128. This was arrived at by using Hayes (2023) stratified sampling formula for sample size. This formula helps to ensure that each stratum optimally represents the population.

$\frac{\text{Sample size}}{\text{Population size}} \times \text{Stratum size}$

$$\frac{10}{100} \times 350 = 35 \text{ (for Piloting)}$$

**35 schools were involved in piloting**

$$350 - 35 = 315$$

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

Where:

n = Sample size to be studied

N = Population size

e = margin of error

$$n = \frac{30955}{1 + 30955(0.05)^2} = 395$$

A summary of the sample size is further presented in table 2.

**Table 2: Sample Frame**

Category	Population	Sample size
Form 2 students	30 954	395
Class teachers	350	105
Deputy Principals	350	105

**Source:** Kisii County Education Directorate (2022)

### **3.6 Research Instruments**

The research instruments utilized in the present study consisted of a questionnaire, an interview schedule, and a rating scale. According to Bhandari (2021), a questionnaire is defined as a compilation of inquiries or items designed to elicit information from participants regarding their attitudes, experiences, or opinions. Surveys provide an expeditious and efficient means of acquiring substantial quantities of data from a sizable population. The study employed a Likert scale questionnaire, specifically of the 4-point type. Participants were instructed to indicate their level of agreement by selecting one of the following response options: strongly agree (4), agree (3), disagree (2), or strongly disagree (1). According to Sam (2013), an interview schedule is a comprehensive compilation of structured questions that have been meticulously formulated. Its purpose is to provide interviewers with a systematic framework for gathering pertinent information pertaining to a particular subject or matter. In this study, there were questionnaires for students, an interview schedule for class teachers and a rating scale for deputy principals.

#### **3.6.1 Student's Questionnaire**

The student's questionnaire sought to find out from students their feelings about their school environment, their mental health status, coping strategies they use to cope with mental health issues and the strategies schools used to curb unrest issues. The questions utilized in this study were derived from the Beck Depression Inventory-II (BDI-II) (1996), a well-established measure of depression with a reported correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) of .93. These questions were subsequently modified to align with the specific objectives of the current investigation. The survey utilized a Likert scale consisting of four response options. Participants were instructed to indicate their level of agreement by selecting one of the following options: strongly agree (4), agree (3), disagree (2), or strongly disagree (1) (see Appendix B for reference).

### **3.6.2 Class Teachers` Interview schedule**

The interview schedule sought to gather information from the class teachers on the student's mental health issues in their school and also on issues of unrest (refer to Appendix C).

### **3.6.3 Deputy Principals School unrest scale**

The unrest rating scale was used to get information from the deputy principals about issues of unrest in their schools (refer to Appendix D).

### **3.7 Reliability of the Instruments**

Reliability as defined by Crossman (2020) is the level to which a measurement instrument gives identical results every time it is employed. Mugenda and Mugenda (2019) explains that reliability of the instrument used for data collection is the uniformity of measurement and often assessed using a test – retest method of reliability. Reliability helped the researcher identify the uncertainties and wanting items in the research instrument.

In order to test the reliability of the instruments, the researcher carried out a pilot study among 35 deputy principals, 35 class teachers and 40 Form 2 students using test-retest method of reliability. Mugenda and Mugenda (2019), describes the test-retest technique is a measure where questionnaires are administered to a group of individuals with similar characteristics as the actual sample, and the same test administered to the same group of individuals after a period of say a fortnight. In the current study, the tests were given to the respondents and after a period of two weeks the same test was administered to the same group of individuals. The scores obtained from the two tests were correlated using Pearson's r coefficient. Reliability of the instruments were of r-values as follows questionnaire for mental health=.83, questionnaire for school climate= .79 and rating scale = .79. None of the instruments had a r-value of below .70 thus ascertaining the

instrument as reliable, dependable, trustworthy and consistent to answer the research questions of the study.

### **3.8 Validity of the instruments**

Validity on the other hand as described by Kothari (2014), is the extent to which the scores from a measure represent the variable they are intended to. This is the truthfulness and significance of conclusions, which are based on the results. According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2019), the process of ensuring validity of a measure is by the use of an expert in a certain field which helps in identifying the question content and correction in the wording prior to the actual study and also to find out ways of improving overall quality of study.

Face and content validity of the instruments were ascertained by experts in the area of measurement especially the professors and lecturers in the department of Educational Psychology. This facilitated the needed rewriting and adjustment of the research instruments so as to enhance its validity. The experts went through the instruments, cross- checked and gave their input which was used to improve on the instrument.

### **3.9. Data Collection Procedures**

The researcher sought permission for data collection from Maseno University Scientific and Ethics Review Committee (MUSERC) through SGS and also through NACOSTI. Thereafter, notifications were sent to relevant institutions notifying them about the research to be undertaken. The researcher visited the schools targeted for data collection, met the heads of those institutions



and briefed them about the research to be conducted. The mechanisms of data collection were discussed and dates for data collection were set.

On the day of data collection, the researcher first and foremost arranged the respondents according to their various groups. Then met them in their groups and gave an introduction about herself, explaining the importance of the study. Further, the researcher assured them of confidentiality of the data they provided. The researcher also assured them of giving feedback on the study's findings. Finally, questionnaires were administered and also interviews were conducted.

### **3.10 Data Analysis Methods**

In the present study quantitative data were collected, sorted, edited, coded and tabulated into the computer using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) in readiness for analysis. The questions that were in negative form were reversed into positives while coding the data. Descriptive statistics such as frequency counts, percentages and means was used to analyze quantitative data. Inferential statistics such as Spearman's rho and ordinal regression were used as well. Spearman's rho was seen fit because it helps in measuring the strength and direction of a relationship between variables and when data consists of ordinal variables and Ordinal regression was deemed fit as it is designed for modeling associations with an ordinal dependent variable, where the categories have a meaningful rank order but not necessarily equal intervals. It considers the order of the categories, providing a more suitable analysis compared to other forms of regression that assume an interval-level dependent variable.

The independent variables were mental health which was categorized into two; depression and academic stress and school climate which was categorized into three; student-teacher relationship, teacher-behavioral management techniques and school climate. The dependent variable was unrest which had 5 ordered levels (5- Severe, 4- Major, 3- Moderate, 2- Mild, 1- Minor). 5 being the highest level of unrest and 1 being the lowest level of unrest. The researcher took the highest level of unrest ticked by the respondents. The distinguishing characteristic of each level is as follows:

5 - Students rioting/burning of dormitories and classrooms/breaking of windows and attacking teachers

4 - students shouting at teachers/ howling, booing

3- students boycotting classes/ school assembly

2- students fighting each other

1- students refusing to take food/ students going slow

Unrest was further categorized according to its severity as follows;

5- Severe

4- Major

3- Moderate

2- Mild

1- Minor

The unit of analysis were schools. The researcher reversed all negative responses to positive, then collapsed the scores from the 395 form two students by doing the average for the students' scores in each school. Before doing correlation analysis, the researcher converted continuous data into

ordinal data by categorizing the data into different ranks and assigning values. Subsequently, the researcher correlated the composite or collapsed scores with the scores of the dependent variable.

Analysis of depression in schools was based on Beck Depression Inventory-II (BDI-II) (1996) of depression which had an  $r$  of .93

0-13 -minimal depression

14-19 -mild depression

20-28 -moderate depression

29-63 -severe depression

School Climate analysis was done based on the School Climate Scale, Sulda (2020)

14-19 -poor/negative

20-28 - fair/moderate

29-63 -healthy/ positive

Qualitative data from the interview schedule were received in verbatim form, transcribed and reported in an ongoing process as themes emerged. Data was stored as files in a computer, recorded digitally and saved both in the hard disk and an external hard drive for easy retrieval and future use. Table 3 shows the summarized data analysis per objective.

**Table 3: Data analysis**

<b>Objective</b>	<b>Instrument</b>	<b>Data analysis technique</b>
Objective 1	Questionnaire Interview schedule	Percentages, frequency counts, means, standard deviation, Spearman's rho, ordinal regression and categorization of themes
Objective 2	Questionnaire Interview schedule	Percentages, frequency counts, means, standard deviation, Spearman's rho, ordinal regression and categorization of themes
Objective 3	Questionnaire Interview schedule	Percentages, frequency counts, means, standard deviation and categorization of themes

**Source: Researcher (2023)**

Analysis of correlation studies of the study, was based on Amendore (2021) yardstick as follows:

1-0- 0.8- very strong positive correlation

0.8-0.6- strong positive correlation

0.6- 0.4- moderate positive correlation

0.4-0.2- weak positive correlation

0.2- 0.0- very weak positive correlation

0.0- No correlation

0.0- - 0.2- very weak negative correlation

-0.2- -0.4- weak negative correlations

-0.4- -0.6- moderate negative correlation

-0.6- -0.8- strong negative correlation

-0.8- -1.0- very strong negative correlation

According to Lee (2019) the following are assumptions for ordinal regression:

- i. The dependent variable is measured on an ordinal level
- ii. One or more of the independent variables are either continuous, categorical or ordinal
- iii. No Multi-collinearity- that is two or more independent variables should not be highly correlated with each other.
- iv. The effects of any explanatory variables are consistent or proportional across the different thresholds

Based on the assumptions, the study ensured that the assumptions were met. The dependent variable of the current study was ordinal in nature with 5 levels. The independent variables as well were ordinal and had no multicollinearity. However, there was an absence of a clear and consistent relationship between the independent variables and the log odds across the different categories of the dependent variable in the current study. Based on this information, it was suggested that the assumption of proportional odds may have been violated in this regression model.

The study adopted the proportional Odds regression model also known as the Cumulative Logit Model by McCullagh (1980) as shown:

$$\text{logit}(P(Y \leq j | X)) = \beta_0j + \beta_1X_1 + \beta_2X_2 + \dots + \beta_pX_p$$

where:

$\text{logit}(P(Y \leq j | X))$  represents the cumulative log-odds of the dependent variable Y being in category j or lower, given the predictor variables X.

$P(Y \leq j | X)$  represents the cumulative probability of the dependent variable Y being in category j or lower.

$\beta_0j$  represents the intercept term for the  $j^{\text{th}}$  category.

$\beta_1, \beta_2, \dots, \beta_p$  represent the coefficients or effects of the predictor variables  $X_1, X_2, \dots, X_p$ , respectively

X represents the predictable variables.

### **3.11 Ethical Considerations**

According to Bhandari (2021), ethical issues in research are bound to come up especially when handling sensitive information, respondents and situation that can jeopardize an organization in an event of sharing their information. Researchers need to adhere to all ethical issues that include informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity, voluntary participation, and communicating the results of the study to the targeted respondents and stakeholders.

The researcher sought permission to collect data from Maseno University Scientific and Ethics Review Committee (MUSERC) through SGS and also from NACOSTI. The researcher sought consent for students from the Parents representatives on behalf of their parents to collect data from the form 2 students. The participants have a right to confidentiality and discretion. The researcher thus, assured the respondents about confidentiality on the data they shared and asked them not to write their names in the questionnaires. This took care of the respondents' anonymity. Further, the researcher asked those who were willing to participate to do so without forcing them. They were also assured of getting feedback.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESULTS, PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION

#### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter covers the response rate of the respondents, results, presentations and discussions following objectives of the study:

1. Establish the influence of mental health variables on unrest in Secondary Schools in Kisii County, Kenya.
  - i. Establish the influence of depression on unrest in Secondary schools in Kisii County
  - ii. Determine the influence of academic stress on unrest in secondary schools in Kisii County
2. Determine the influence of school climate variables on unrest in Secondary schools in Kisii County, Kenya.
  - i. Establish the influence of student-teacher relationship on unrest in secondary schools in Kisii County.
  - ii. Determine the influence of school learning environment on unrest in secondary schools in Kisii county.
  - iii. Establish the influence of teacher behavioral management strategies on unrest in schools in Kisii County.
3. Establish strategies used by students to cope with mental health issues in secondary schools in Kisii County, Kenya.
4. Establish mechanisms used by schools in addressing issues that contribute to student unrest in secondary schools in Kisii County, Kenya.

## 4.2 Response Rate

The respondents included students, class teachers and deputy principals. A questionnaire was administered to 395 form two students who all filled and returned it, thus giving a response rate of 100%. An interview schedule was administered to 94 (89%) class teachers. Further, a rating scale was also administered to 105 deputy principals who gave their feedback thus translating to 100% response rate. Zikmund et.al., (2010), postulates that a good response rate is above 50.0 % and it is adequate to generalize the findings of the study. It was therefore concluded that the targeted samples for the study were within the acceptable range and thus representative of the study population. A summary of the response rate is presented in Table 4.

**Table 4: Response rate**

<b>Respondents</b>	<b>Sample size</b>	<b>Participants</b>	<b>Return rate (%)</b>
Students	395	395	100
Class teachers	105	94	89
Deputy Principals	105	105	100
<b>Total</b>	<b>605</b>	<b>594</b>	<b>98</b>

## 4.3 Objective 1: Influence of Mental Health variables on Unrest in Secondary Schools in Kisii County, Kenya.

The study sought to establish the influence of mental health variables (depression and academic stress) on unrest in Secondary Schools in Kisii County, Kenya.



### 4.3.1 Depression

Depression as a mental health variable was further subdivided into three variables; cognitive aspect, mood aspect and motivation aspect. A questionnaire in the form of Likert type scale was used to collect data. The mean scores for depression aspects are presented in Table 5.

**Table 5: Descriptive Statistics for Depression Aspects (cognitive, mood and motivation)**

Descriptive Statistics		COGNITIVE	MOOD	MOTIVATION
N	Valid	105	105	105
	Missing	0	0	0
Mean		25.92	28.14	26.29
Median		26.00	28.00	25.00
Std. Deviation		2.344	.777	3.458
Minimum		22	27	22
Maximum		33	30	34

Table 5 shows the descriptive statistics for the aspects of depression. Cognitive aspects had a mean of 25.92, mood had 28.14 and motivation had a mean of 26.29. This therefore means that the depression level of students in the sampled schools was moderate.

**Table 6: Descriptive Statistics for student`s depression in schools**

	COGNITIVE		MOOD		MOTIVATION	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
Moderate	101	96.2	105	100	97	92.3
Mild	4	3.2	0	0	0	0
Severe	0	0	0	0	8	7.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>100</b>

The results in table 6 indicate that students in 101 schools (96.2%) had moderate cognitive aspect of depression. The remaining 4 schools (3.8%) had students with mild cognitive aspect of depression. This finding suggests that most of the schools had students with moderate cognitive aspect of depression. Results from the mood aspect of depression indicated that students in all schools experienced moderate type of depression (105) (100%) while results from the motivation aspect of depression indicated that students in 97 schools (92.3%) in Kisii County, had moderate type of motivation depression while students in 8 (7.6%) schools had severe motivation depression. The current study finding therefore concluded that most students in Kisii County secondary schools, had moderate type of depression.

The dependent variable in the study was unrest which had 5 ordered levels (5- Severe, 4- Major, 3- Moderate, 2- Mild, 1- Minor). 5 being the highest level of unrest and 1 being the lowest level of unrest. The researcher took the highest level of unrest ticked by the respondents. The distinguishing characteristic of each level was as follows:

5 - Students rioting/burning of dormitories and classrooms/breaking of windows and attacking teachers

4 - students shouting at teachers/ howling, booing

3- students boycotting classes/ school assembly

2- students fighting each other

1- students refusing to take food/ students going slow

The study also did a correlation between depression sub-scales (cognitive, mood and depression) and unrest using Spearman's rho as shown in table 7.

**Table 7: Spearman`s rho correlation matrix for depression sub-scales and unrest**

		<b>Correlations</b>				
		<b>COGNITIVE</b>	<b>MOOD</b>	<b>MOTIVATON</b>	<b>UNREST</b>	
Spearman's rho	COGNITIVE	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.012	-.004	-.336**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.900	.967	.000
		N	105	105	105	105
	MOOD	Correlation Coefficient	-.012	1.000	.057	.040
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.900	.	.562	.687
		N	105	105	105	105
	MOTIVATON	Correlation Coefficient	-.004	.057	1.000	.075
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.967	.562	.	.448
		N	105	105	105	105
	UNREST	Correlation Coefficient	-.336**	.040	.075	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.687	.448	.
		N	105	105	105	105

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

Based on the correlation matrix, cognitive aspect of depression had a statistically significant negative correlation with unrest (-.34). The negative correlation coefficient suggested a negative relationship, with a statistical significance of 0.00 at the 0.05 level. In other words, when cognitive distortions, (thinking negatively, feeling hopeless and sadness) increase, there is a tendency for unrest levels to decrease. The mood and motivation aspects of depression were not statistically significant ( .04; .08) respectively at the 0.05 level.

As indicated in Chapter three, Amendore (2021) yardstick was further used to interpret the strength and direction of the correlation between the independent and dependent variables. Based on this, the correlation matrix in Table 7 shows that the cognitive aspect of depression had a moderate negative correlation with unrest.

Basing on Amendore’s (2021) yardstick for interpretation, the mood aspect of depression according to the correlation matrix showed a weak positive correlation (0.04). The motivation aspect of depression as well indicated a weak positive correlation (0.08).

The study further employed ordinal regression to establish the influence of depression on unrest. Results in Table 8 shows the summary of unrest in secondary schools in Kisii County and table 9 shows the inferential statistics for cognitive aspect of depression.

**Table 8: Case summary of unrest in schools**

<b>Case Processing Summary</b>		<b>N</b>	<b>Marginal Percentage</b>
Unrest	minor	17	16.2
	mild	28	26.7
	moderate	32	30.5
	major	20	19.0
	severe	8	7.6
Valid		105	100.0
Missing		0	
Total		105	

The Table indicates the number, severity and percentage of unrest in schools. Most schools had moderate level of unrest 32 (30.5%) , while 8 (7.6%) schools had severe unrest and 17 (16.2%) had minor unrest. Based on this result, the study concluded that 32 schools had moderate type of unrest.

**Table 9: Model fitting for cognitive depression**

<b>Model Fitting Information</b>				
Model	-2 Log Likelihood	Chi-Square	df	Sig.
Intercept Only	106.110			
Final	102.018	4.091	1	.043

Link function: Logit.

This table provides information on the model fit for logistic regression analysis and it compares the intercept-only model (with no predictors) to the final model (with at least one predictor). The -2log likelihood, chi-square, degrees of freedom, and significance level help assess whether the inclusion of predictors in the model improves its fit to the data. In this case, the "Final" model has a significantly better fit compared to the "Intercept Only" model, as indicated by the significant chi-square test ( $p = 0.043$ ).

**Table 10: Goodness -of-fit for cognitive aspect of depression**

Goodness-of-Fit			
	Chi-Square	df	Sig.
Pearson	37.736	43	.698
Deviance	40.896	43	.563
Link function: Logit.			

Based on the provided output, the goodness-of-fit statistics (Pearson chi-square and deviance) indicate that the chosen model, with the logit link function, has a good fit to the observed data. However, the lack of statistical significance (as indicated by the p-values) suggests that the model's fit is not significantly different from a perfectly fitting model.

**Table 11: Parameter estimates for cognitive aspect of depression**

Parameter Estimates		Estimate	Std. Error	Wald	df	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
							Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Threshold	[Unrest = 1]	.125	3.599	.001	1	.972	-6.929	7.179
	[Unrest = 2]	1.485	3.600	.170	1	.680	-5.571	8.541
	[Unrest = 3]	2.787	3.608	.597	1	.440	-4.284	9.858
	[Unrest = 4]	4.271	3.624	1.389	1	.239	2.831	11.373
Location	COGNITIVE	3.057	.116	.242	1	.047	.171	.285

Link function: Logit.

Based on the parameter estimates from the logistic regression model, it was clear that there was an influence of cognitive depression on students' unrest ( $\beta = 3.057$ ;  $p = .047$ ). This meant that the cognitive aspect of depression had a positive association on the outcome variable unrest. This implied that the higher the cognitive aspect of depression (thinking negatively, faulty and maladjusted thought) are associated with a higher probability of unrest.

The results obtained from the present study on cognitive depression align with the outcomes reported in a study conducted by Iverson et al. (2022) pertaining to the perceived cognitive impairment experienced by high school students in the United States. According to the findings of the study, a significant proportion of students, specifically 38%, indicated experiencing substantial challenges in terms of concentration, memory, and decision-making abilities which are indicative of cognitive depression. These challenges were a source of frustration which caused agitation and aggressive behavior among the students. The findings of the present study as well align with those of WHO (2019), as both indicate that students experiencing cognitive depression exhibit difficulties in concentration during class, feelings of hopelessness regarding the future, disrupted

sleep patterns, and changes in appetite (symptoms of cognitive depression) led to discontent and disruptive behaviors among learners.

Furthermore, the present research outcomes align with the results obtained in a study conducted by Abela and Hankin (2018) regarding the association between cognitive vulnerability and depression risk in a sample comprising 372 Canadian and 335 Chinese adolescents. The findings of the study revealed that Canadian adolescents exhibited a pessimistic perception of self, whereas Chinese adolescents manifested symptoms of hopelessness, which is indicative of cognitive depression. These feelings of hopelessness and pessimism resulted in students being demotivated and frustrated and thus becoming agitated with the school program. The results of this study also are consistent with the findings of a study conducted in Rajkot city, India, which employed binary logistic regression analysis (Patel et al., 2023). The findings revealed that a total of 31.99% of the student population exhibited symptoms of depression. The study identified several factors that have predictive value for depression, including insufficient nutrition, academic stressors, and pessimistic cognitions which led to disruptive behaviors and violence in school.

Based on WHO (2019) findings, Iverson et.al (2022), Abela and Hankin (2018), Patel.et.al., (2023) and the current study`s findings, it is clear that students in high schools, experience depression, with the cognitive aspect having a higher influence of the students behaviors. Poor concentration in class, feelings of hopelessness, thinking negatively about themselves and having irrational faulty thoughts have made the students to be frustrated and thus project their emotions by causing chaos and violence in school.

Studying cognitive depression among high school students is of significance because the onset of most of the lifetime mental disorders occurs during this period. From the findings of this current study, it is evident that students in Kisii county secondary schools suffer from cognitive depression which is a mental health issue. They experience feelings of hopelessness, reduced interests in their daily routine/social relations, worthlessness, negative self-evaluation and self-criticism, lack of concentration, reduced appetite, weight loss, insomnia or increased sleep, and low motivation. When students feel their mental health concerns are not acknowledged or addressed adequately, they might express their discontent through protests, chaos or other forms of unrest.

It is therefore imperative that the mental health of students especially their cognitive aspects be checked and regularly assessed so as to curb early enough the issues of depression among students in high school.

#### **4.3.2 Academic Stress and Unrest**

Academic stress is referred to as the pressure students are exposed to as a result of academic expectations/goals set in a school setting. This includes overloaded curriculum, exam anxiety and meeting deadlines on assignments given, reading for weekly and monthly tests.

The study aimed to investigate the impact of academic stress as a factor affecting mental health on the occurrence of unrest in secondary schools located in Kisii County, Kenya. The results from the respondents on academic stress indicated that students in all 105 schools (100%) had moderate levels of academic stress. This was characterized by excessive assignments, examinations,



overwhelming academic programs, too wide syllabus, extended class sessions without breaks, short holidays and shortage of textbooks in the school library.

The study also did a correlation between academic stress and unrest and employed Spearman's rho as shown in Table 12.

**Table 12: Spearman's rho for academic stress and unrest**

<b>Correlations</b>				
		<b>ACADEMIC STRESS UNREST</b>		
Spearman's rho	ACADEMICSTRESS	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.113
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.253
		N	105	105
	UNREST	Correlation Coefficient	.113	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.253	.
		N	105	105

Based on the Spearman's rho correlation coefficients, it was clear that academic stress had a non-statistically significant positive correlation ( $r=0.11$ ;  $p=.25$ ) with unrest.

The results of the study were further interpreted using Amendore (2021) yardstick to ascertain the direction of the relationship between academic stress and unrest. Based on the yardstick the study concluded that academic stress had a very weak positive correlation with unrest.

To supplement the results from the questionnaire on academic stress, the researcher carried out an interview from among 94 class teachers out of 105 teachers who were sampled for the study. The results are as follows:

**Table 13: Themes for interview on academic stress**

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Fear of exams	42
Short holidays	18
Overloaded curriculum	15
Too many assignments	12
Lack of textbooks	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>94</b>

Some of the themes that emerged from the interviews conducted are as follows:

**Fear of exams:** 42 teachers reported that students became agitated and caused chaos because they feared exams. Some of the responses are as follows:

Teacher Y had this to say:

*“Poor academic performance, fear of failing exams and failing to meet parents’ expectations were among the factors that cause students to become stressed. Academic Stress makes the students irritable and restless in school which leads to chaos.”*

### **Short holidays**

Teacher N had this to say:

*“Covid 19 messed the education calendar. We used to have enough rest of 1 month but the recent times have been different, we get to close school for a week only. Students become agitated and overwhelmed because they are expected to finish the curriculum/ syllabus in time for exams.”*

### **Overloaded curriculum**

Teacher Z:

*“The school syllabus is too wide sometimes we don’t get to finish teaching. When we get to the last term we speed up the teaching process which sometimes is not adequately done and sometimes it spills over to the next form.” This becomes too much for the learners who instead of working with the teachers choose to retaliate by being disruptive.*

### **Lack of textbooks**

Teacher W:

*“Our library is not fully equipped; we don’t have the latest books and what we have are inadequate. The students are forced to share the books and most of them don’t actually use the library.” This inadequacy has led to students being stressed especially when they are almost doing exams. With this kind of stress, the students incite each other and cause chaos.*

Findings of this study concur with the findings of a study conducted in Tamil Nadu- India by Subramani and Venkatachalam (2019) which indicated that academic stress among students (fear of failure in exams, too many tests, parental expectations, comparison with others, and grade competition with other students) led to retaliation by students and causing chaos in school. Further, the results of the study agree with Bouchrika (2020) who found out in his study that the final and midterm exams and class workload accounted for the top source of stress for students in the U.S and this made the students abscond classes and examinations.

Additionally, the current study findings concur with findings from a study conducted by Misra (2017) which indicated that, too many exams, and the pressure to perform were the main causes

of academic stress among students in high schools and which cause agitation among students leading to violence. Results drawn from the interview schedule are in tandem with the students responses on the issue of short holidays, inadequate books in the library, wide syllabus and the fear of failing exams as the causes of unrest in schools.

The present study's findings are consistent with those of a prior study conducted by Aafreen et al. (2018). The findings of their study demonstrated that stress has the capacity to enhance cognitive abilities and motor responses, thereby facilitating improved performance in demanding circumstances. Nevertheless, scholarly research has indicated that students who encounter academic stress exhibit certain traits, including unfavorable perceptions of the educational setting, a perception of excessive workload, diminished interest in their subjects of study, an inability to consistently attend classes, limited engagement in classroom activities, and a sense of futility in academic pursuits, leading to feelings of agitation and restlessness (Akabay, 2016). The present study findings, along with the interview reports and the research conducted by Misra (2017), Subramani and Venkatachalam (2019), and Bouchrika (2020), collectively indicate that the primary factor contributing to academic stress among students is the apprehension of failing in examinations and the excessive number of tests and this has led to frustration among students which in turn has led to agitation and unrest in schools.

Students face a considerable amount of workload in school. It is not surprising therefore that many students face psychological problems during this period. Academic stress, such as overloaded curriculum and syllabus, exams, long hours of study, short holidays, inadequate resources and pressure to perform well, can lead to increased levels of anxiety, burnout, physical exhaustion and

other mental health problems among students. These conditions can create a sense of frustration, helplessness, and exacerbate feelings of stress, isolation, and discontentment, potentially causing agitation which may lead to unrest.

#### **4.3 Objective 2: Influence of School Climate Variables on unrest in Secondary Schools in Kisii County, Kenya.**

The study's second objective aimed to assess the impact of school climate variables, specifically teacher-student relationship, school learning environment, and teacher behavioral management strategies, on student unrest in secondary schools within Kisii County. The means scores for school climate variable (teacher-student relationship, school learning environment and teacher behavioral management strategies) are shown in Table 14

**Table 14: Means for school climate variables**

		<b>Statistics</b>		
		<b>STR</b>	<b>SLE</b>	<b>TBMS</b>
N	Valid	105	105	105
	Missing	0	0	0
Mean		28.95	36.26	26.81
Median		30.00	39.00	28.00
Std. Deviation		3.520	6.014	4.140
Minimum		21	23	17
Maximum		35	48	34

Note- STR stands for student-teacher relationship, SLE means school learning environment and TBMS stands for teacher behavioral management strategies.

Table 14 shows the descriptive statistics for school climate variables. Student-teacher relationship had a mean of 28.95, school learning environment was 36.26 and teacher behavioral management techniques was 26.81. This therefore meant that the school climate in the sampled schools was fair/moderate.

**Table 15: Descriptive statistics for school climate variables**

Categories	STR		SLE		TBMS	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
Poor	14	13	27	25.7	79	75
Fair	94	89	71	67.6	15	14.2
Healthy	7	6	7	6.6	11	10.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>100</b>

The results obtained from the student-teacher relationship indicated that students in 14 (13%) schools experienced a poor student- teacher relationship, students in 94 (89%) schools had a fair student-teacher relationship and students in 7(6%) schools had a healthy student-teacher relationship.

Results from the respondents on the school learning environment, indicated that students from 27 (25.7%) schools had a poor school environment, students from 71(67.6%) schools had a fair school environment and students from 7 (6.6%) schools had a healthy environment. The current study therefore concluded that most students in schools in Kisii County, had a fair school environment.

Results from the respondents on teacher behavioral management strategies indicated that students in 79 (75%) schools expressed that their teachers used fair behavioral management strategies while students in 15 (14.2%) schools indicated that their teachers had poor strategies and students in 11(10.4%) schools indicated that their teachers had health behavioral management strategies. The

finding of the study therefore concluded that students in the sampled schools indicated that their teachers had fair behavioral management strategies.

The study also sought to find the correlation between each of the school climate variables and unrest using Spearman’s rho as shown in table 16.

**Table 16: Spearman’s rho correlation matrix for school climate variables and unrest**

		<b>Correlations</b>				
		<b>STR</b>	<b>SLE</b>	<b>TBMS</b>	<b>UNREST</b>	
Spearman's rho	STR	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.052	.012	-.123
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.600	.903	.211
		N	105	105	105	105
	SLE	Correlation Coefficient	-.052	1.000	.287**	.045
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.600	.	.003	.649
		N	105	105	105	105
	TBMS	Correlation Coefficient	.012	.287**	1.000	-.079
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.903	.003	.	.423
		N	105	105	105	105
	UNREST	Correlation Coefficient	-.123	.045	-.079	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.211	.649	.423	.
		N	105	105	105	105

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

Based on the correlation matrix, student-teacher relationship (STR) had a negative non-significant correlation ( $r = -.12$ ,  $p = .21$ ) with unrest. The school learning environment (SLE) had a positive non-significant correlation with unrest ( $r = .05$ ,  $p = .64$ ) and the teacher behavioral management strategies (TBMS) had a non-significant negative correlation ( $r = -0.08$ ,  $p = .42$ ) with unrest.

The results from the correlation matrix were further interpreted using Amendore (2021) yardstick for correlational studies. Based on the yardstick the study concluded that student-teacher

relationship had a very weak negative correlation (-.12) with unrest, school learning environment had a moderate positive correlation (.05) with unrest and teacher behavioral management strategies had a strong negative correlation (-.08) with unrest.

To supplement to the results from the questionnaire on school climate, the researcher carried out an interview from among 94 class teachers out of 105 teachers who were sampled for the study.

Results were categorized into theme as shown in Table 17:

**Table 17: Themes for school climate**

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Congestion in School	27
Limited resources	24
Behavior modification strategies	
1. Corporal punishment	17
2. Counseling	16
3. Suspension/ expulsion	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>94</b>

Some of the themes and responses from the interviews were as follows:

### **Congestion in school**

Teacher X :

*“There is a lot of congestion in our school especially with the governments directive on 100% transition from primary to secondary schools. Our learners are overcrowded in the classroom and yet the facilities are not enough for all of them.” This kind of situation has led to students rioting because of the inadequacies in school.*

### **Limited resources**

Teacher M:

*“With a lot of students in school, and limited resources its difficult to cater for their individual needs. We are overwhelmed and thus let them be.” This has often led to agitation by learners.*



Teacher Z:

*“Schools have become a ground for misbehavior. With large crowds it’s hard to handle these students especially with the limited staff. The student- teacher ratio is not proportional and we feel overwhelmed as teachers.”*

### **Behavior modification strategies**

Teacher Y

*“caning students nowadays is against the law and when one is found canning or administering corporal punishment they are likely to be interdicted. We therefore prefer to send them home on suspensions or worst case scenarios expulsion.” With this kind of punishment, sometimes students don’t take it kindly and retaliate by either attacking teachers or inciting fellow students to go on strike.*

Teacher N :

*“Personally I talk to my students when they misbehave. I have realized that these young generations just want an understanding ear. Most students confide in me when they have issues and am able to correct them before their behaviors get out of hand.”*

Teacher W:

*“In our school we sometimes use corporal punishment. We know it’s against the Ministry's laws but sometimes it is necessary. If we spare the rod we will spoil the child. We are however careful not to go to the extremes in administering it.”*

This study aligns with the findings of Lewis and Sugai (2014), who observed that teachers were strict and employed corporal punishment. Additionally, it corresponds with the research by Van den Berg and Cillessen (2015), which indicated that students encountered victimization as a result of teacher strictness. Further the study suggested that strict teachers may unintentionally create an environment that may cause students to be excluded or victimized by their peers thus becoming frustrated and causing violence.

The current study findings are also in agreement with a study carried out by Meehan and Hughes (2018) involving 887 high school students in the US on the relationship between high school students' perceptions of teacher caring and their academic engagement and achievement. The results of the study indicated that students' academic achievement was higher because they got support from their teachers. They paid attention in class, participated in class discussions, completed their homework in time, and studied for their exams thus minimal cases of disgruntlement. This shows the importance of positive teacher-student relationships, particularly in the high school setting where students face many academic and personal challenges.

Based on Van den Berg and Cillessen findings (2015), Lewis & Sugai (2015) and the findings of the current study, it is clear that teachers in school are strict and they still used corporal punishment and that the school learning environment has a correlation with unrest. Further, students who create a strong bond with their teachers do perform better than students whose behavior with their teachers have some conflict (Berry & O'Connor, 2019).

Good student-teacher relationships can positively impact student behaviors in the classroom. The learning environment plays a significant role in developing a student's motivation to learn, and positive relationships can help maintain student interest and active engagement in learning (Maulana et al., 2013). On the other hand, if the foundation for a good relationship is lacking, it will negatively impact student behaviors. When a teacher fails to regard an individual student's educational needs, relationship problems between teachers and students arise. Where possible, teachers ought to treat each student as an individual who deserves one-on-one attention and

specialized, concentrated education. With this kind of relationship peace and cohesion will be fostered and thus minimum cases of unrest are witnessed.

The finding of the study highlighted several areas of concern in the school learning environment. These included issues related to food quality, lighting, overcrowding, sharing of resources, ventilation, hygiene, availability of textbooks and water, staff adequacy, and security. All these relates to a poor school environment which the study findings showed that there was a positive relationship between school learning environment and unrest.

The present study's findings are consistent with those of a prior study conducted by Cheryan et.al., (2014). The results of the study revealed that a suboptimal learning environment, characterized by factors such as inadequate air quality or ventilation, is associated with a reduction in student attendance at schools. Moreover, the present study results align with the findings of a study conducted by Ajayi and Akinsanya (2016) regarding the impact of school location, school facilities, and resource utilization on the academic performance of students in senior secondary schools in Ogun State, Nigeria. The findings indicated that students voiced discontent regarding the prevailing conditions within their educational institution, specifically citing insufficiencies in social amenities such as water supply through boreholes, electricity for lighting, and the availability of stationery and facilities.

Findings from the current study however, do not agree with the findings from a study conducted by Gbadamosi (2017) in Oyo State, Nigeria. The results of the study indicated that the most common cause of students' unrest was poor learning environment which was largely characterized

by inadequate classroom with open roofs, broken chairs and tables, lack of instructional materials, insufficient teachers and a non-functional library came last. Reason for this discrepancy is unknown and therefore further research needs to be conducted.

The findings of this current study, concur with the findings of a study conducted by Suleman, Hussain and Ambreen (2013) in Karak district in Pakistan. The results showed that when teachers used corporal punishment, suspended or expelled students to manage disruptive behaviors, students became aggressive and violent in school. Additionally, Majani (2020) agrees with the study's findings that teachers relied on punitive/ reactive strategies such as punishment to deal with disrupting students. With such punitive measures, students retaliate and cause mayhem and havoc in schools. Flannery et al., 2014 in their study also agree with the current study findings that teachers in school use suspension and expulsion to manage challenging behaviors. The results from the interview schedules agree a lot with the current study's findings. Teachers prefer sending students home to their parents to help in correcting bad behaviors. This can be attributed to the Ministry of Education policy of no corporal punishment. However, some teachers in schools still use corporal punishment as a way of averting bad behavior among students. Some teachers also take time to talk to their students when they misbehave before they take other measures.

School climate/ environment should be peaceful and safe to help foster cohesion. Where there is a conducive learning environment, issues of frustration, absconding classes or causing chaos will be minimized. On the contrary a defective environment, resulting from poor planning and incompetent management, is an impediment to individual excellence and a recipe for chaos and unrest. It is imperative therefore to have a safe and secure school learning environment in order to

facilitate and promote the quality of education for the learners, their emotional health and wellbeing. Teachers who use corporal punishment may view it as a way to assert their authority and maintain control in the classroom. They may believe that physical punishment establishes a hierarchical relationship where students are expected to comply with authority figures. This however is potentially harmful to students' mental health well-being, self-esteem, and may have long-term negative impact on the learners. Instead, teachers should adopt positive behavior management strategies that promote respect, communication, and the development of social-emotional skills so as to create a safe and supportive learning environment.

#### 4.4. Objective 3: Strategies used by students to cope with Mental Health issues

The objective of this study was to examine the coping strategies employed by students in Kisii County, Kenya, in order to manage their mental health challenges within the context of Secondary Schools. The findings are displayed in Table 18.

**Table 18: Strategies used by students to cope with mental health issues**

Statements	N	Agree		Disagree	
		f	%	f	%
Seeing the school counselor	395	76	19.2	319	80.8
Reading books more and more	395	176	44.6	219	55.4
Seeing my teachers for advice/help	395	343	86.8	52	13.2
Taking enough rest	395	176	44.6	219	54.4
Eating well	395	129	32.7	266	67.3
Reaching out to my classmates and talking out my issues	395	90	22.8	305	77.2
Distancing myself from friends	395	305	77.2	90	22.8
Reaching out to my parents	395	352	89.1	43	10.9
Exercising regularly	395	129	32.7	266	67.3
Planning my work well	395	219	55.4	176	44.6
Praying	395	305	77.2	90	22.8
Resorting to taking drugs to make me forget those issues	395	90	22.8	305	77.2
Seeing the school nurse	395	265	67.1	130	32.9
Avoiding assignments that are difficult	395	266	67.3	129	32.7
Reading the word of God	395	305	77.2	90	22.8

The data presented in Table 18 reveals that a significant majority of the students, specifically 352 individuals (equivalent to 89.1% of the sample), reported that they engage with their parents when confronted with mental health concerns. Additionally, 343 students (86.8% of the sample) indicated that they seek guidance or assistance from their teachers. Another coping mechanism observed among the students was the utilization of religious practices, such as reading religious texts and engaging in prayer, as well as distancing themselves from their friends. This approach was reported by 305 students, accounting for 77.2% of the sample. Moreover, a total of 266 students, accounting for 67.3% of the sample, reported actively evading challenging assignments. Additionally, 265 students, representing 67.1% of the participants, reported having sought assistance from the school nurse. According to the data presented in Table 18, it is evident that a total of 76 students, accounting for 19.2% of the sample, reported seeking assistance from the school counselor in instances of mental health concerns. This finding suggests that seeking support or help from the school counselor was the least favored approach among the students for addressing their mental health issues.

The present study suggests that engaging in prayer and reading religious texts, with both activities being reported by 77.2% of participants, are prominent coping strategies employed by students to address their mental health challenges. This finding aligns with the study conducted by Kalungwa in 2014, which similarly concluded that engaging in prayer and reading religious texts were effective strategies for coping with occupational stress. The present investigation aligns with the findings of Sattar, Yusoff, Arifin, Yasin, and Nor (2022), which revealed that a quarter of the student population turned to religion or faith as a coping mechanism for addressing mental health challenges.

The findings derived from the present study additionally demonstrate that a significant proportion of the student population, specifically 32.7%, engaged in regular physical exercise as a means of effectively coping with their mental health concerns. This finding aligns with the research conducted by Othieno et al. (2018), which demonstrated that engaging in physical activities was beneficial for students in managing their mental health challenges. Additionally, Othieno et al. (2018) found that certain students employed maladaptive coping mechanisms, including substance abuse and withdrawal. This finding aligns with the results of the present study, which indicate that 22.8% of the student participants reported using drugs as a coping mechanism for alleviating their mental health concerns.

The findings of the present study, however, are not in alignment with the study conducted by Kalungwa regarding the management of occupational stress. According to Kalungwa (2014), the findings of the study indicate that engaging in interpersonal communication, seeking professional counseling, and allocating time for leisure activities and relaxation are essential approaches for effectively addressing stress-related concerns. Furthermore, the results of this study do not align with the findings of a previous study conducted by Giamus et.al., (2017), which similarly indicated that students sought regular support from school counselors when experiencing mental health concerns.

The implementation of coping strategies to address mental health challenges holds significant significance. Students encounter a multitude of challenges, including but not limited to financial difficulties, academic pressure, peer victimization, challenges in intimate relationships, and spiritual dilemmas. The adoption of positive strategies is crucial for students to effectively navigate life issues. Based on the findings of the study, it can be inferred that students exhibit a preference

for seeking support from their parents when confronted with mental health challenges. Moreover, it can be inferred that students have limited access to school counselors when it comes to addressing mental health concerns.

#### **4.5 Objective 4: Mechanisms used by schools in addressing issues that contribute to student unrest in secondary schools in Kisii County, Kenya.**

The objective of this study was to ascertain the strategies employed by schools in Kisii County, Kenya to address the factors that contribute to unrest in secondary schools. The findings are displayed in Table 19. The researchers utilized an interview schedule consisting of 94 class teachers to augment the findings obtained from the questionnaires completed by the students. The findings are presented in Table 19.

**Table 19: Mechanisms schools use to manage unrest**

<b>Mechanism used to address unrest</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Agree</b>		<b>Disagree</b>	
		<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
Offering counseling services	395	76	19.2	319	80.7
Holding meetings and talking to students	395	219	55.4	176	44.6
Monitoring the number of assignments given to students	395	219	55.4	176	44.6
Allowing students to watch the T.V.	395	90	22.8	305	77.2
Ensuring that school rules are adhered to the letter	395	379	96	16	4.01
Punishing students who violate school rules	395	372	94.1	23	5.8
Addressing students' grievances regularly	395	51	12.9	344	87.0
Involving students in making school rules	395	00	00	395	100
Rewarding students who do well	395	374	94.7	21	5.3
Ensuring that there is adequate safety in school	395	374	94.7	21	5.1
Sensitizing students on the importance of adhering to school rules and regulations	395	374	94.7	21	5.3



The findings in Table 19 shows that 379 (96%) students felt that adhering to the school rules was the key mechanism schools use to address unrest issues in schools. Another 374 (94.7%) students indicated that sensitizing on the importance of following the school rules and regulations, ensuring students safety as well as rewarding those who do well was a strategy schools used to effectively address unrest issues. From the findings of the study addressing students' grievances (12.9%) was a mechanism that was not commonly used in schools, offering counselling services (19.2%) as well was less popular. The least approach used in schools was involving students in making school rules as reported by none (0%) of the students.

The present study's findings align with the results of a prior study conducted by Aledal et.al., (2016) regarding the influence of stringent school regulations on student conduct. The earlier study demonstrated that compliance with school rules yielded favorable outcomes in terms of student behavior. This implies that students exhibit reduced instances of disruptive behaviors when they perceive the school rules to be stringent. The findings of The Education Trust (2018) further corroborate these results by suggesting that the implementation of school regulations fosters positive conduct. Moreover, schools that establish unambiguous and uniform rules are more inclined to cultivate a favorable school environment, wherein students perceive a sense of security and receive adequate support.

According to the data presented in Table 19, a significant majority of students (94.1%) faced disciplinary consequences as a result of their noncompliance with established school regulations. Based on the obtained outcome, one can deduce that students are frequently compelled to adhere to pre-established regulations imposed by educational institutions. However, there is a discrepancy

with the findings of a study conducted by Smith (2019), which suggests that punitive measures such as corporal punishment should be avoided in favor of promoting restorative justice practices. These practices aim to foster students' accountability for their actions and facilitate the process of rectifying any harm they may have caused.

Mati et.al.,(2016) posit that the inclusion of students in decision-making processes fosters the cultivation of a sense of ownership and responsibility towards their school environment. Consequently, students are more inclined to generate constructive ideas and exhibit reduced engagement in disruptive behavior, thereby mitigating instances of chaos. This, however, presents a contrasting perspective to the results obtained in the aforementioned study, which suggest that students do not participate in any decision-making processes within the school environment (0%).

The results of the present study also revealed that counseling services were reported as being utilized the least among students in schools, with a usage rate of 19.2%. Bradshaw et al. (2018) conducted a study which revealed that educational institutions offering comprehensive mental health services, encompassing counseling and student support, exhibited notably reduced rates of suspensions and expulsions in comparison to schools lacking such provisions. Similarly, a study by Zins and Elias (2017) found that schools that implemented social-emotional learning programs, which include components of mental health and counseling services, had significant reductions in problem behavior, including aggression and violence.

A study conducted to examine the strategies employed by schools in addressing issues related to unrest utilized data obtained from interviews with teachers. The findings revealed that establishing open lines of communication between the school administration and the students emerged as the

most effective approach. Additionally, it has been revealed that the majority of schools lack counseling services, and in cases where such services exist, they are often non-operational. This finding aligns with the viewpoints of the students regarding the insufficiency of counseling services provided in educational institutions. When expressing support for the implementation of counseling services, educators made the following statements:

Teacher Z:

*"Many educational institutions lack active counselling services, including dedicated guidance and counselling offices." The individuals responsible for providing counseling to students are predominantly teachers specializing in religious subjects. It is imperative to establish a presence of qualified counselors.*

Teacher Y argues that educational institutions should employ counselors who are distinct from the teaching staff.

*"Many students encounter challenges when attempting to communicate with a teacher after experiencing disciplinary actions from said teacher within the classroom setting".*

The claim made by Teacher Y regarding the challenges students face when seeking assistance from teachers is in congruous with the viewpoint expressed by students themselves. The findings of the student survey indicate that the majority of students, specifically 89.1% (n = 352), prefer to engage in conversations with their parents as a strategy for addressing mental health concerns. Additionally, a significant proportion of students, 86.8% (n = 343), reported that they choose to communicate with their teachers when confronted with mental health issues.

Teacher X asserts that there is a lack of open communication between the students and the school administration.

*“Students often develop individual strategies for coping with their challenges, which occasionally manifest as strikes when they feel their concerns are not being acknowledged. These strikes serve as a means of communication for them. Establishing clear and open communication between the school administration and students is of paramount importance. This facilitates the expression of students' emotions and discontent, thereby discouraging the adoption of violent and disruptive measures”.*

The analysis of teacher interviews regarding the management of student unrest reveals discrepancies between the accounts provided by teachers and the actual implementation of school policies and procedures. While teachers propose that the presence of independent school counselors can effectively mitigate unrest issues (21.90%), foster transparent communication between students and school administration (20.0%), and attentively listen to students (20.0%), students contend that teachers predominantly rely on methods such as enforcing school rules, administering punishments, and offering rewards to address unrest. In support of counseling as an alternative to punitive measures, educators expressed the following sentiments:

Teacher W:

*“This current cohort of students exhibits heightened emotional sensitivity and demonstrates a diminished capacity to cope with adversity.” It is imperative to exercise caution when dealing with them. The majority of individuals exhibit prompt reactions, particularly in response to punitive measures. Hence, it is imperative for educational institutions to acquire knowledge regarding alternative methods of disciplinary measures. For instance, redirecting students towards guidance and counseling services rather than resorting to suspension.*

Managing discipline and behavior issues constitutes a crucial approach to effectively address unrest within educational institutions. Establishing explicit behavioral guidelines, implementing uniform repercussions for misconduct, and collaborating with students and their families to tackle underlying factors that may be influencing adverse behavior. The implementation of strategies aimed at fostering a positive school climate, encompassing the cultivation of constructive student-teacher relationships, the establishment of a supportive environment that fosters a sense of

belonging among students, and the proactive management of disciplinary and behavioral concerns, has shown promise in effectively addressing instances of unrest within educational institutions. Through the establishment of positive relationships with students, educators have the capacity to foster an environment characterized by trust and mutual respect, thereby mitigating the occurrence of conflicts and unrest within educational institutions. When students experience a sense of value and support within their educational setting, they tend to exhibit a more favorable disposition towards the process of acquiring knowledge, while concurrently displaying a reduced inclination towards engaging in disruptive conduct.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.1. Introduction

This chapter presents a summary of the study findings, conclusions, recommendations and suggested areas for further research.

#### 5.2 Summary of the findings

The summary of the findings is presented based on the study objectives.

##### 5.2.1 Influence of Mental Health variables on unrest in Secondary Schools in Kisii County, Kenya.

###### i. Influence of depression on unrest in Secondary schools in Kisii County

The study established that the cognitive aspect of depression had a negative correlation (-.34) with unrest and the negative correlation coefficient suggested a moderate negative relationship, which was statistically significant ( $\beta = 3.057$ ;  $p = .047$ ). The mood aspect of depression had a positive correlation (.04) and the motivation aspect had a positive correlation (.08) with unrest.

###### ii. Influence of Academic stress on unrest in secondary schools in Kisii County

The study established that:

Academic stress had a positive correlation (.11) with unrest but the relationship was not statistically significant.

### **5.2.2 Influence of School Climate variables on Unrest in Secondary Schools in Kisii County, Kenya.**

i. Influence of student-teacher relationship on unrest in secondary schools in Kisii County.

The study established that student-teacher relationship had a negative correlation (-.12) with unrest. The negative correlation coefficient suggested a weak negative relationship.

ii. Influence of school learning environment on unrest in secondary schools in Kisii county.

The school learning environment had a positive correlation (.05) with unrest. The positive correlation suggested a weak positive relationship.

iii. Establish the influence of teacher behavioral management strategies on unrest in schools in Kisii County.

The study established that teacher behavioral management strategies had a weak negative correlation (-.08) with unrest.

### **5.2.3 Strategies used by students to cope with Mental Health issues**

The study established that students preferred reaching out to their parents when experiencing mental health issues (89.1%), and seeking advice/help from their teachers (86.8%). The study also found out that praying and reading the word of God were common coping strategies students used, as well as regular exercises. However, the study findings noted that students did not seek help from school counselors with their mental health issues and some students resorted to maladaptive coping strategies such as drugs and substance abuse and withdrawal from people.

### **5.2.4 Mechanisms used by schools to address issues contributing to unrest**

The study established that schools preferred enhancing strict rules so as to avoid disruptive behaviors and sensitization to students on the importance of adhering to school rules and

regulations. The study also established that students who violated school rules were punished. It also emerged from the study that students were not allowed to participate in decision making especially when making school rules.

### **5.3 Conclusions**

Based on the findings of the study the following are the conclusions;

#### **5.3.1 Influence of Mental Health variables (Depression and Academic stress) on unrest in Secondary Schools in Kisii County, Kenya.**

The cognitive aspect of depression had a negative correlation with unrest which was statistically significant. However, mood and motivation aspects had a positive but non-significant correlation with unrest. In addition, academic stress had a positive but non-significant correlation with unrest.

#### **5.3.2 Influence of School Climate variables (teacher-student relationship, school learning environment and school learning environment) on Unrest in Secondary Schools in Kisii County, Kenya.**

School climate variables (i.e., student-teacher relationship, learning environment and behavioral management strategies), had non-significant correlations with unrest. However, the direction of relationship between student-teacher relationship and unrest was negative, behavioral management strategies and unrest was negative and between school learning environment and unrest was positive.

#### **5.3.3 Strategies used by students to cope with Mental Health issues**

According to the study, the most preferred strategy that students used to cope with their mental health issues was approaching their parents concerning their mental health issues.



#### **5.3.4 Mechanisms used by schools to address issues contributing to unrest**

Based on the study findings, it was also concluded that the most common mechanism schools used in addressing issues that can lead to unrest was by ensuring that school rules and regulations were adhered to and that students are sensitized about the same.

#### **5.4 Recommendations**

In relation to the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. School administrators should address issues like academic stress that are likely to contribute to cognitive depression.
2. Students should be encouraged to seek counselling services from the school counselors.
3. Students should be more involved in making school rules.

#### **5.5 Suggestions for further research**

A Study should be done to establish why students avoid seeing school counselors for their mental health issues yet they are the professionals trained in handling students` issues in schools.

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**APPENDICES**  
**APPENDIX A: INFORMATION SHEET**

FAITH CHEBET KILEL,  
MASENO UNIVERSITY,  
P.O. BOX PRIVATE BAG,  
MASENO-KENYA .  
MOBILE NO. 0701967417  
E-MAIL ADDRESS kilelfaith@gmail.com

Dear Respondent,

As part of my PhD in Educational Psychology degree I am undertaking a research study entitled: Influence of Student's Mental Health and School Climate on Unrest and Coping Strategies in Secondary schools in Kisii County, Kenya.

I would like you to assist me by completing the attached questionnaires as per the instruction given in each case. The completion time will take approximately 30 minutes and the questionnaires will thereafter be collected by the researcher upon completion by all respondents.

Your participation is fully voluntary and no one will be victimized whatsoever for failing to take part in this study. The result of this study will remain highly confidential as the questionnaires are anonymous and data will be aggregated such that individual data cannot be identified.

We will provide a copy of the result to your school administration. In case of any queries or complaints kindly direct them to the above stated contacts.

Thank you for considering participating in this study.

**APPENDIX B: STUDENTS' QUESTIONNAIRE ON MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES**

This questionnaire aims to obtain information on mental health and school climate issues among students in secondary schools. You are therefore urged to respond to all the questions by providing accurate and honest information. Note that information gathered will be treated with utmost confidentiality

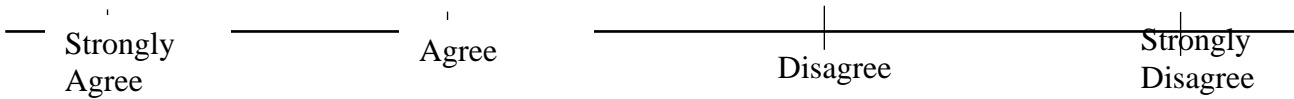
Do not write your name or name of your school on this questionnaire.

Form: \_\_\_\_\_

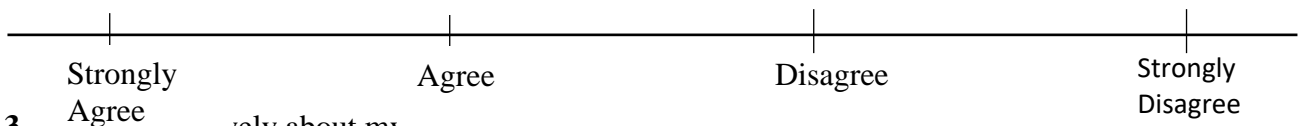
**Depression: Cognitive aspect**

**The following statements describe how you feel and act as an individual. Kindly give your responses accurately**

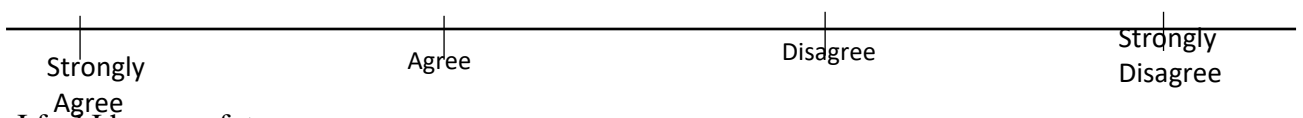
1. I feel that I am a failure



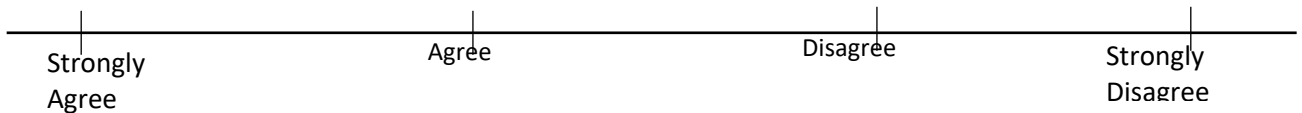
2. I feel incompetent



3. I rely about my -----



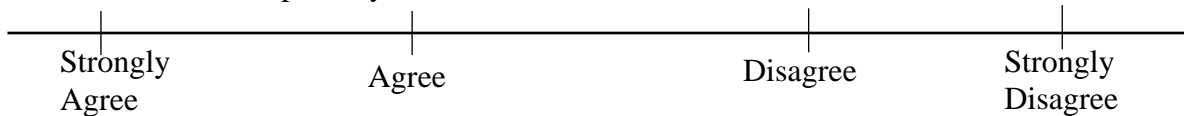
4. I feel I have no future.



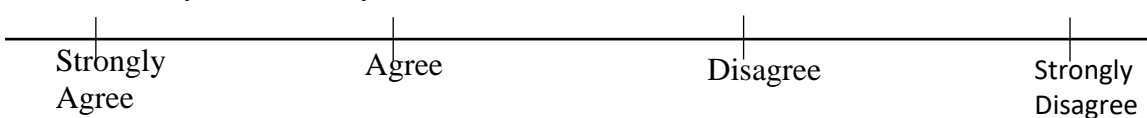
5. I feel I am not qualified for the class/form I am in.



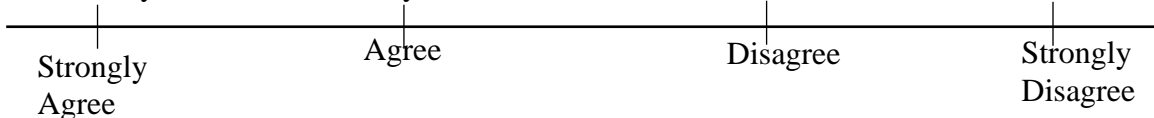
6. I fear that I will not pass my examinations.



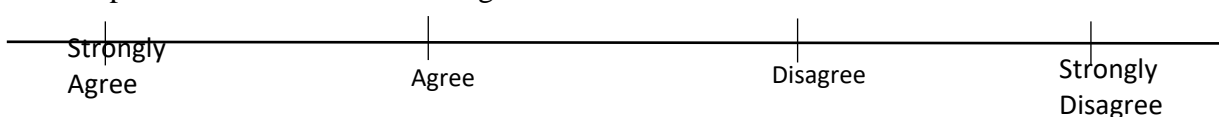
7. I interact very well with my classmates.



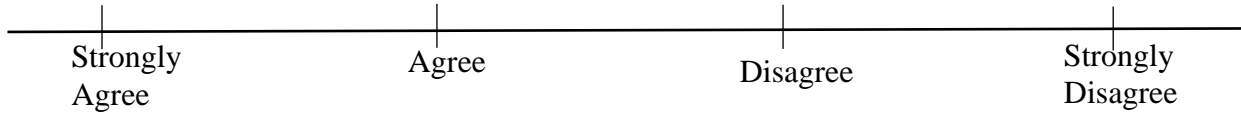
8. I know my limits as well as my abilities.



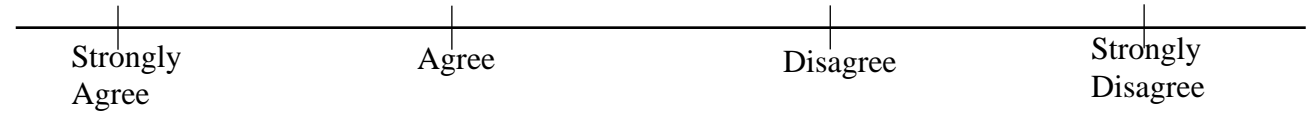
9. I face problems rather than avoiding them



10. I ask for help when I need it

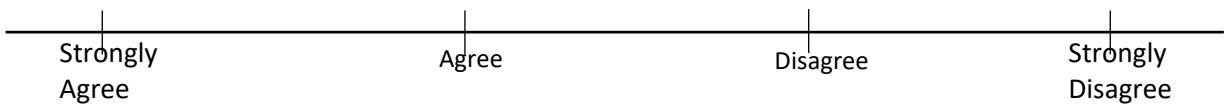


11. I can't concentrate very well in my studies

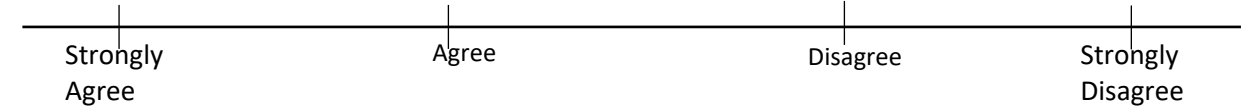


**Depression: Mood Aspect**

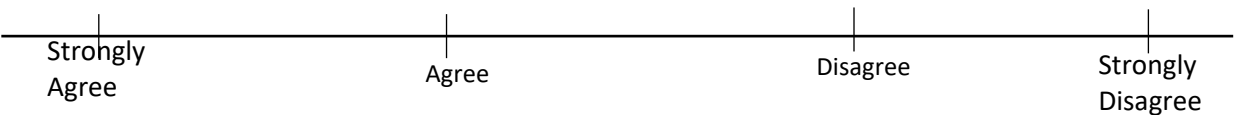
1. I feel humiliated by my teachers.



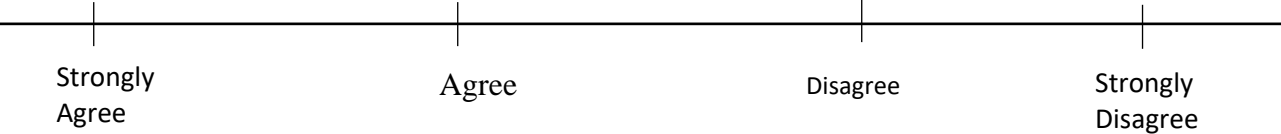
2. I feel I am useless.



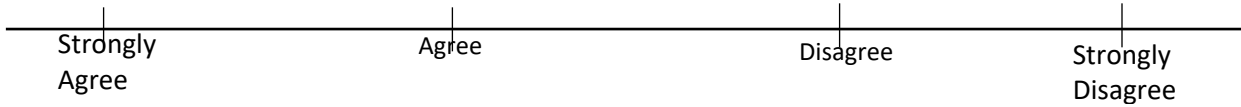
3. I experience loss of interest in books.



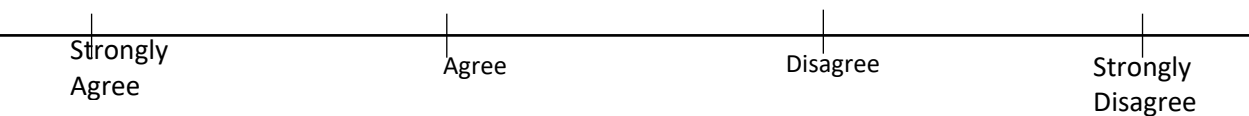
4. I find no taste in the food served in school.



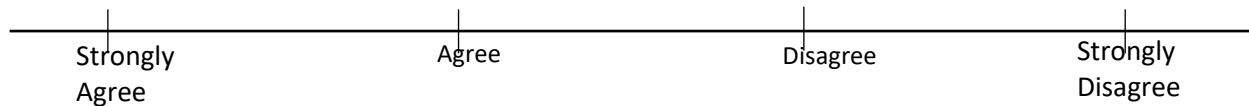
5. I can express my thoughts and feelings freely.



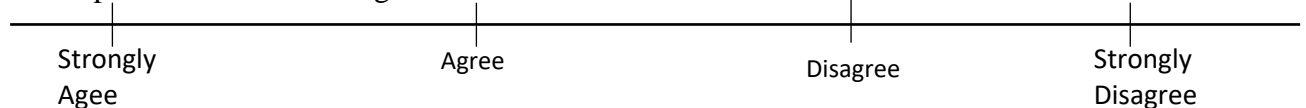
6. I feel miserable most of the time.



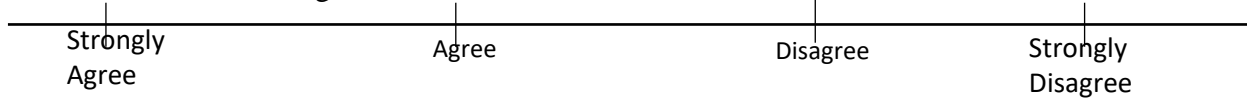
7. I am able to cope with disappointments.



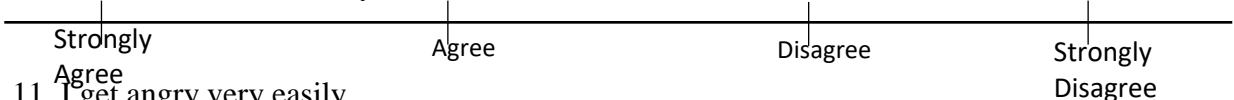
8. I experience suicidal thoughts.



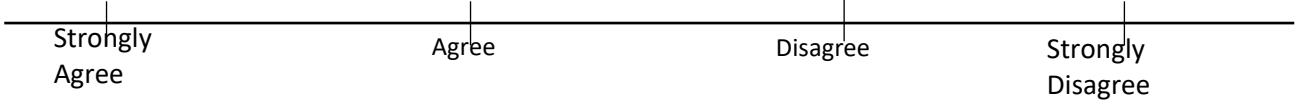
9. I can deal with change



10. I am confident about myself



11. I get angry very easily

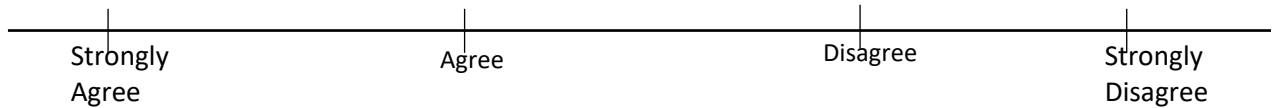


**Depression: motivational aspect**

1. I find it difficult to wake up in the morning.



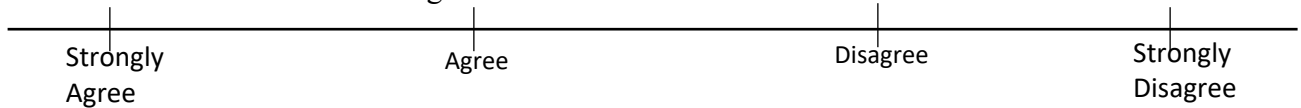
2. I feel awful all the time.



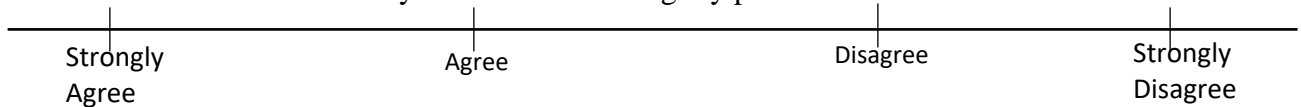
3. I wish I was dead.



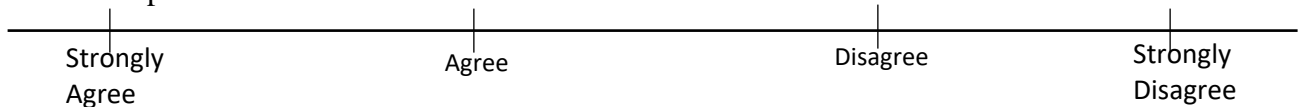
4. I don't feel better after sitting for hours in class



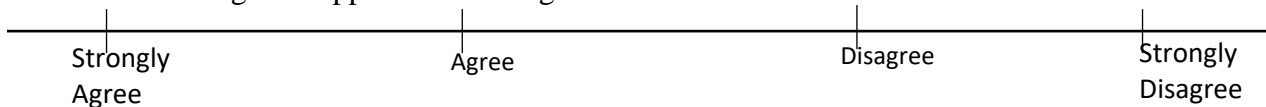
5. I find it easier to talk to my teachers concerning my personal issues



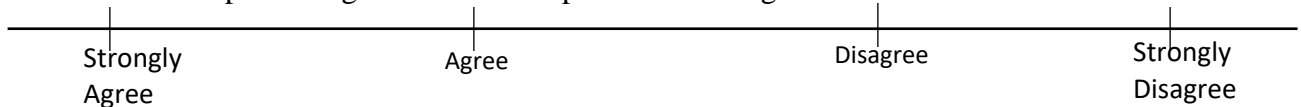
6. I am optimistic



7. I see challenges as opportunities for growth



8. I set realistic personal goals and have a plan for working toward them.



9.I can work on my own without supervision

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	----------	-------------------

10.I finish all my assignments in good time

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	----------	-------------------

### Academic stress

The following statement describe your schools' academics. Kindly respond to them truthfully

1. In my school we are given too many assignments.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	----------	-------------------

2.We are given too many examinations in my school.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	----------	-------------------

3.Academic programs in my school are overwhelming

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	----------	-------------------

4.The syllabus is too wide.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	----------	-------------------

5.In my school we sit for too long in class without a break.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	----------	-------------------

6.In my school we have short holidays without enough rest.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	----------	-------------------

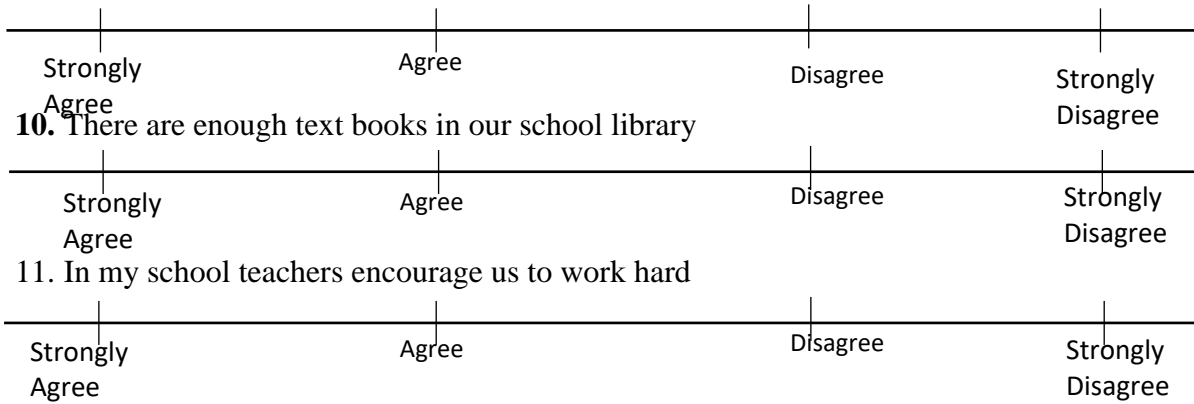
7.Teachers in my school help students with their academic challenges

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	----------	-------------------

8.In my school we have adequate lessons each day.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	----------	-------------------

9. In my school Teachers recognize students' good performances

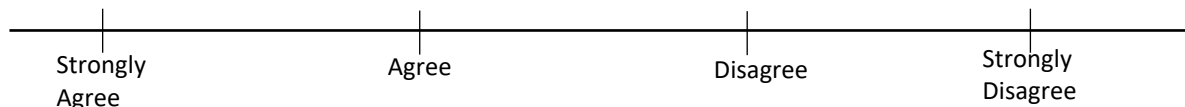


**School Climate**

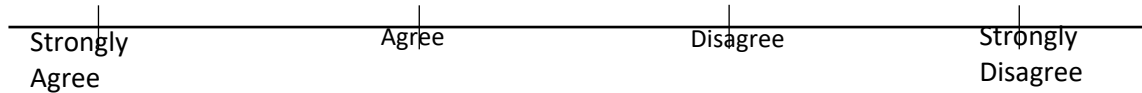
**Student Teacher relationship**

The following are statements on how teachers relate with students in their school. Kindly answer them to the best of your knowledge

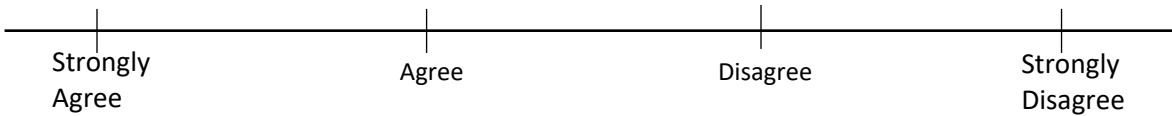
1. Students have no right to question teachers' decisions.



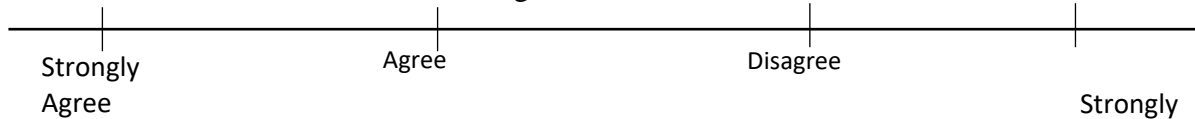
2. Teachers are harsh.



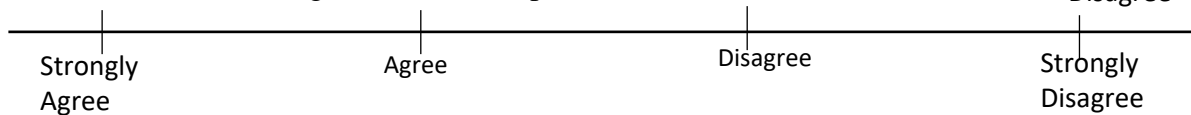
3. Teachers are strict.



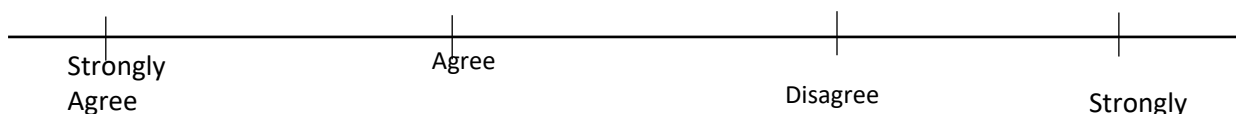
4. Teachers leave no room for reasoning when some mistake has occurred.



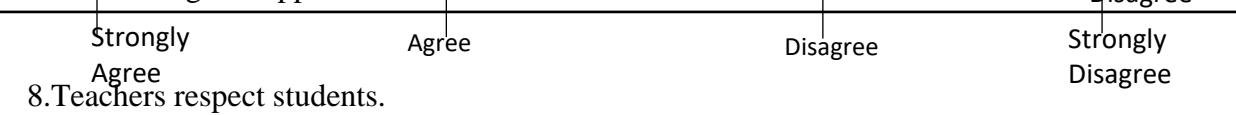
5. Teachers do not recognize learners as persons.



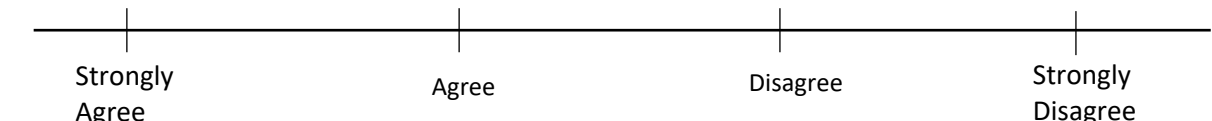
6. Students' rights are violated



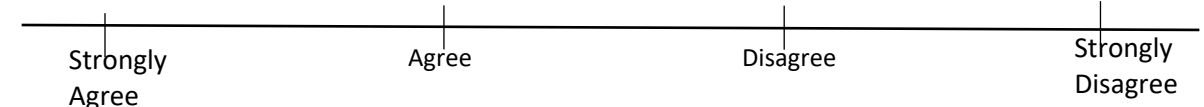
7. Teachers give support to students.



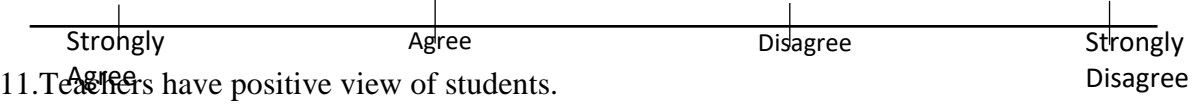
8. Teachers respect students.



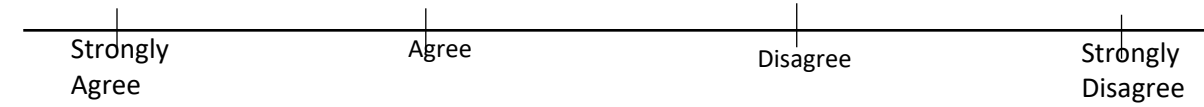
9. Teachers take time to assist students at individual level.



10. Teachers are so much loving.



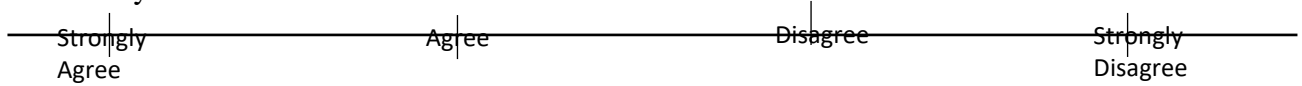
11. Teachers have positive view of students.



**School learning environment**

**Below are statements that describe your school learning environment**

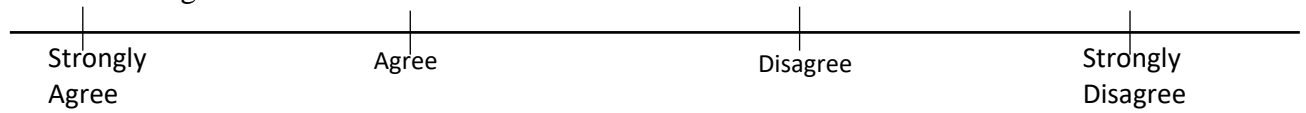
1. Poorly cooked meals



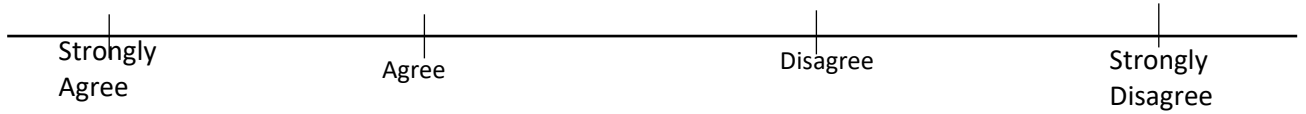
2. Poor lighting in classroom and dormitories



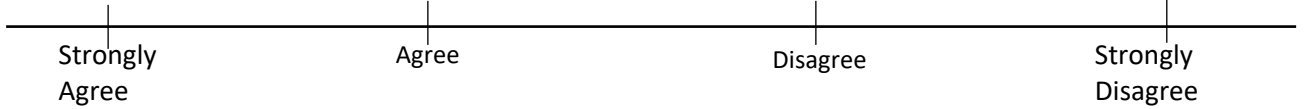
3. Overcrowding in the classrooms and dormitories.



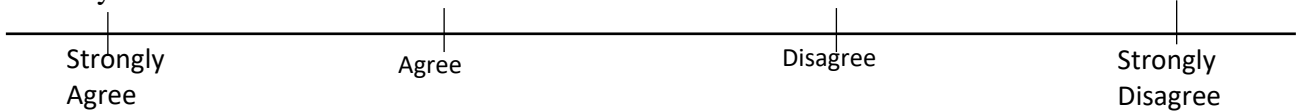
4. Beds are shared in the dormitories and desks in the classrooms.



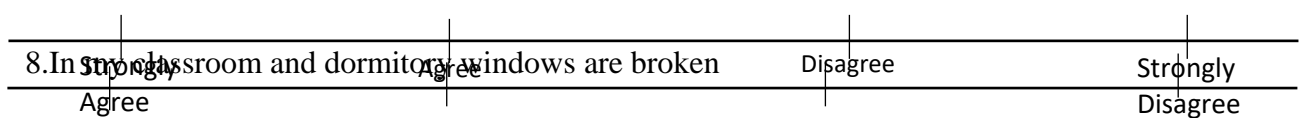
5. Poor ventilation in the classrooms and dormitories.



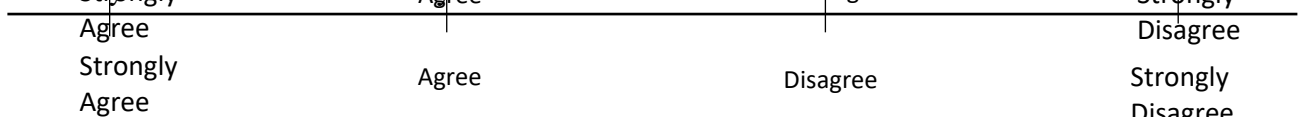
6. Filthy toilets



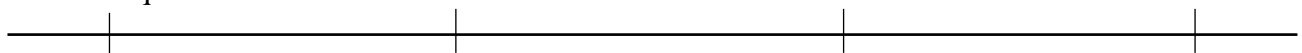
7. Lack of textbooks



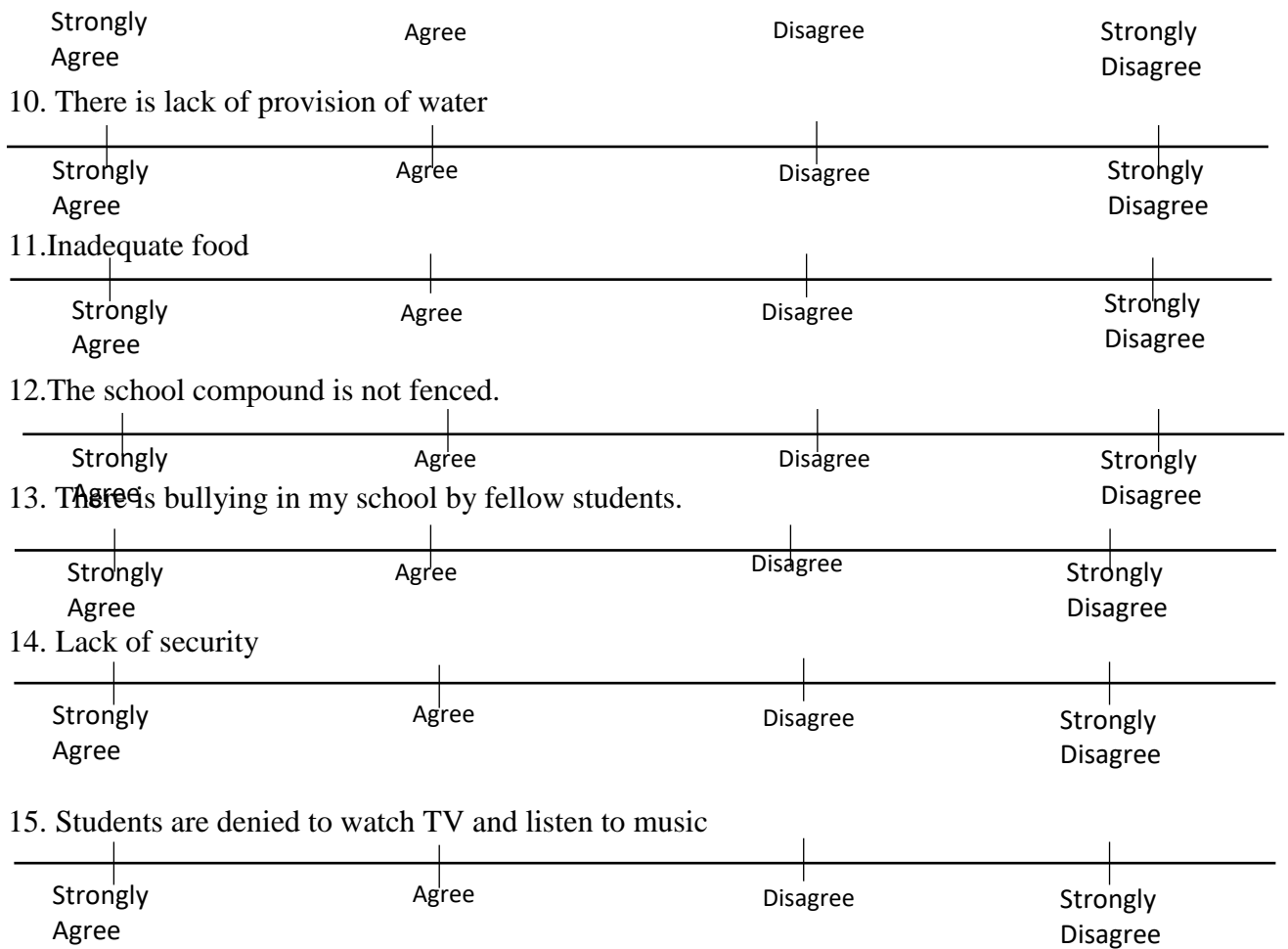
8. Inadequate classroom and dormitory windows are broken



9. Inadequate staff

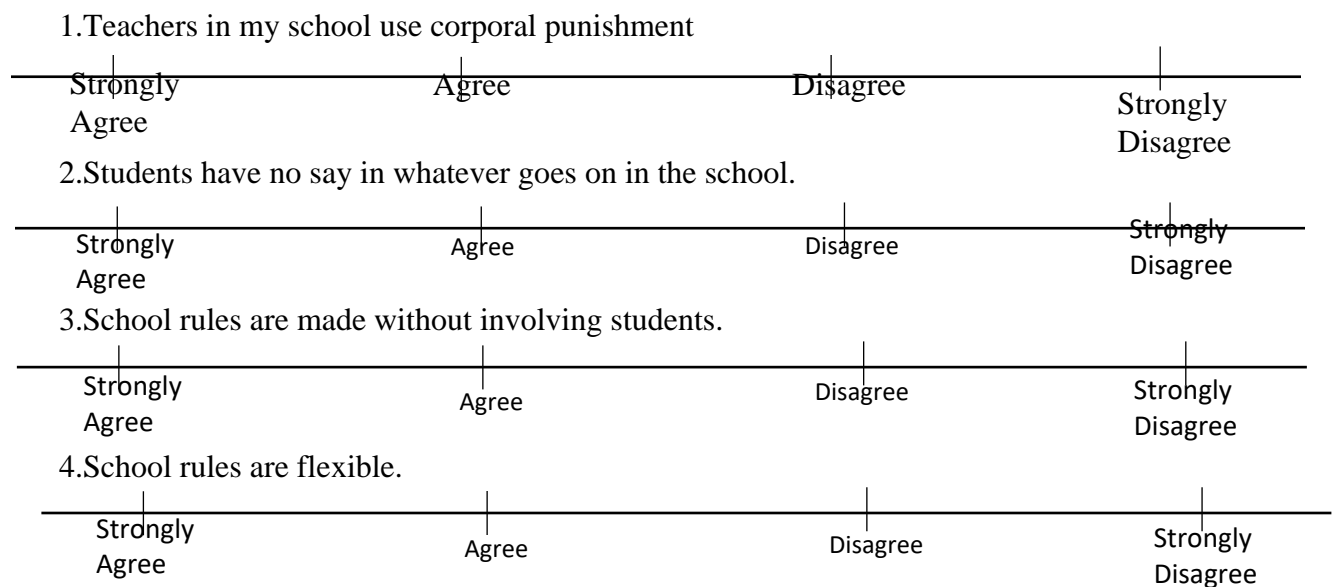




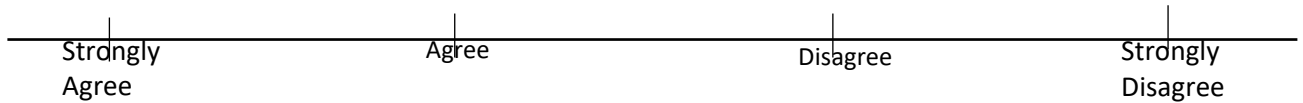


**Teachers' Behavioral Management strategies.**

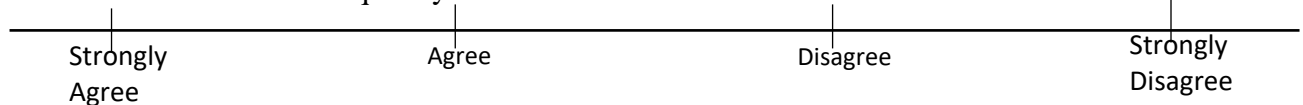
**The following are disciplinary methods used in your school.**



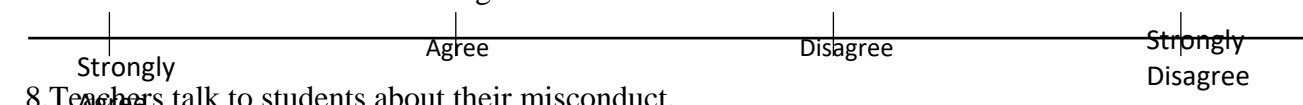
5. There is lack of well-defined communication system between the student's body and the school administration.



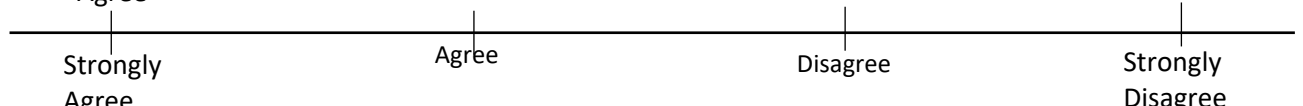
6. Students' issues are adequately addressed.



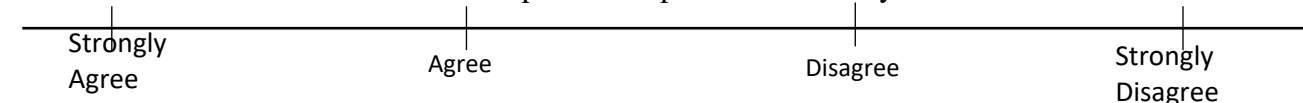
7. Students have forums to air their grievances.



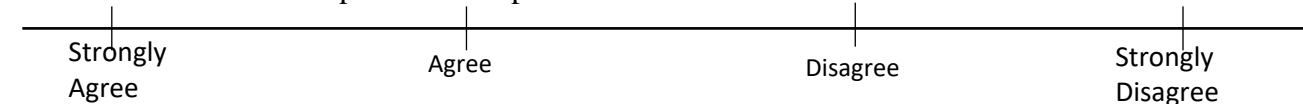
8. Teachers talk to students about their misconduct.



9. Teachers threaten students with suspension/expulsion when they misbehave.



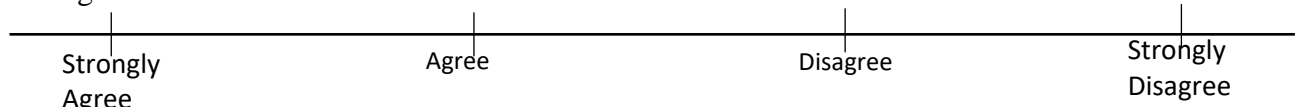
10. Teachers involve the parents to help talk to the students



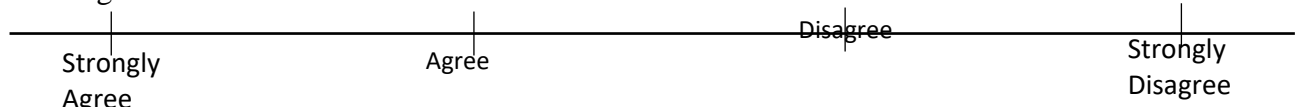
### Students coping strategies

The following are strategies you have used as a student to manage mental health issues you experience in your school.

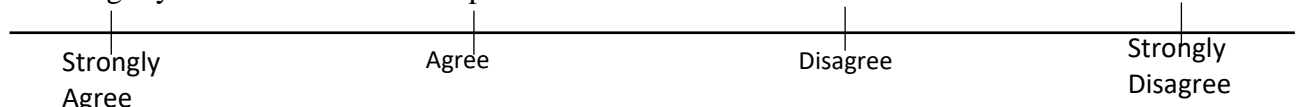
1. Seeing the school counselor.



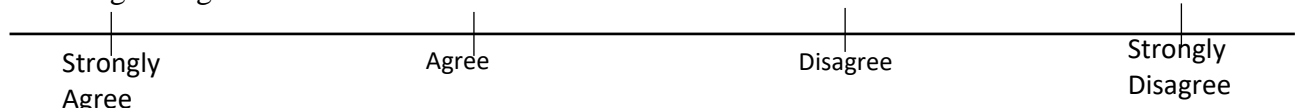
2. Reading books more and more.



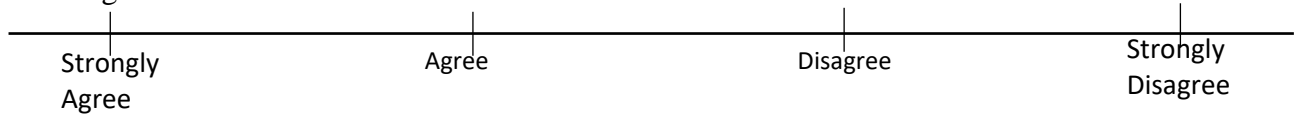
3. Seeing my teachers for advice/help



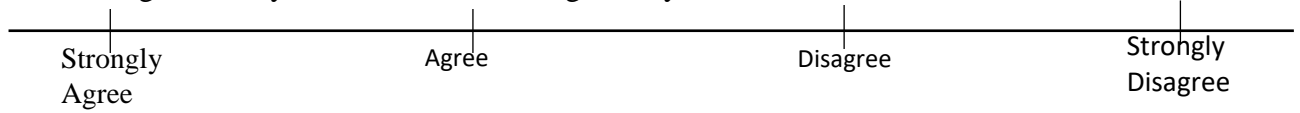
4. Taking enough rest.



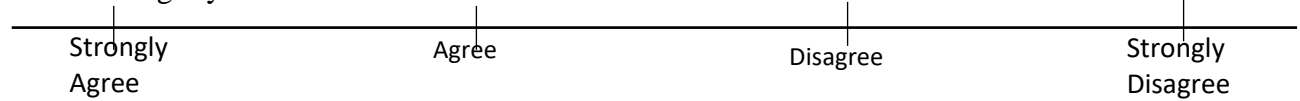
5. Eating well.



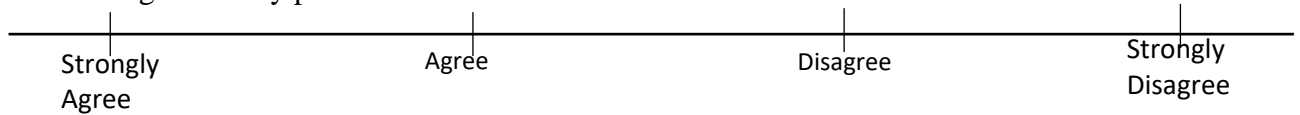
6. Reaching out to my classmates and talking out my issues.



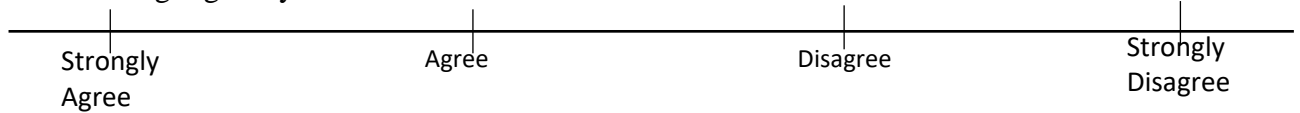
7. Distancing myself from friends



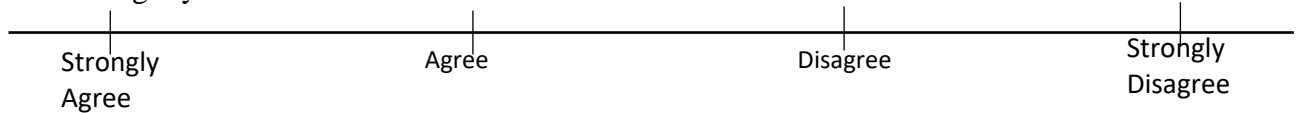
8. Reaching out to my parents.



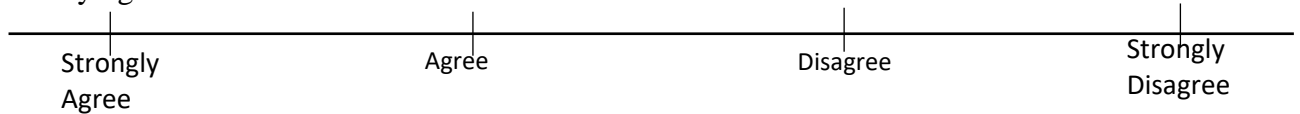
9. Exercising regularly.



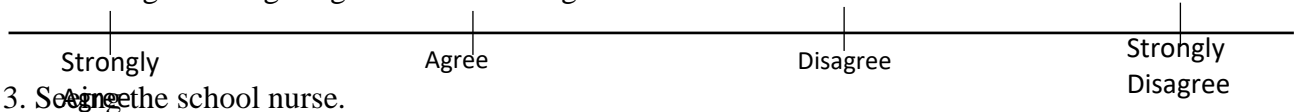
10. Planning my work well.



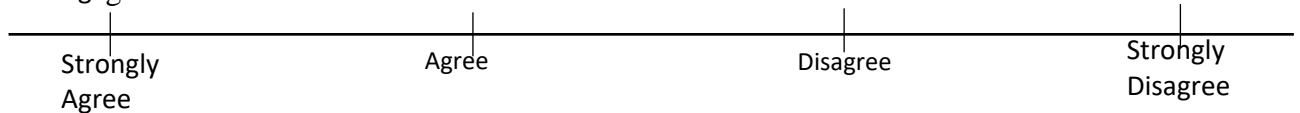
11. Praying



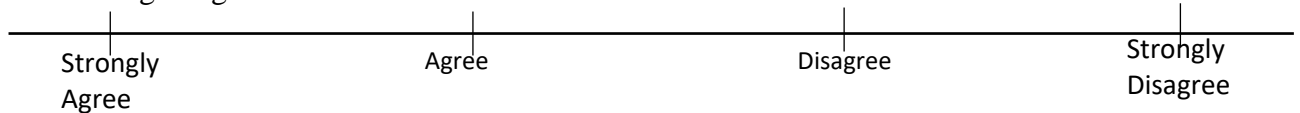
12. Resorting to taking drugs to make me forget those issues.



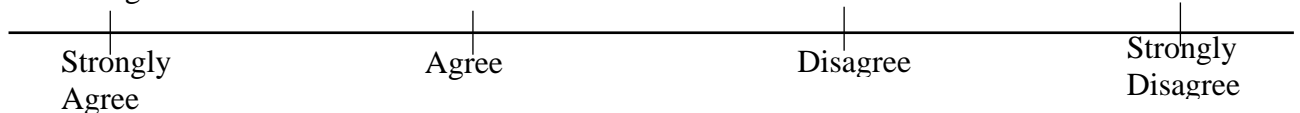
13. Seeing the school nurse.



14. Avoiding assignments that are difficult.



15. Reading the word of God



## **APPENDIX C:**

### **INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR CLASS TEACHERS**

This interview schedule aims to obtain information from you as a class teacher on the students' mental health issues in your school. You are kindly requested to be honest in information you give. Note that information you give will be treated with utmost confidentiality.

1. What are the mental health issues students in your school experience?
2. In your opinion, what contributes to students' mental health issues?
3. Do you think students' mental health issues have any connection with unrest in your school? If so, state how mental health contributes to unrest
4. State how you handle students' mental health issues
5. What are the factors that contribute to unrest in your school?
6. How do students handle mental health issues in your school?
7. In your opinion, what should be done to minimize unrest in your school?

## APPENDIX D

### SCHOOL UNREST RATING SCALE FOR DEPUTY PRINCIPALS

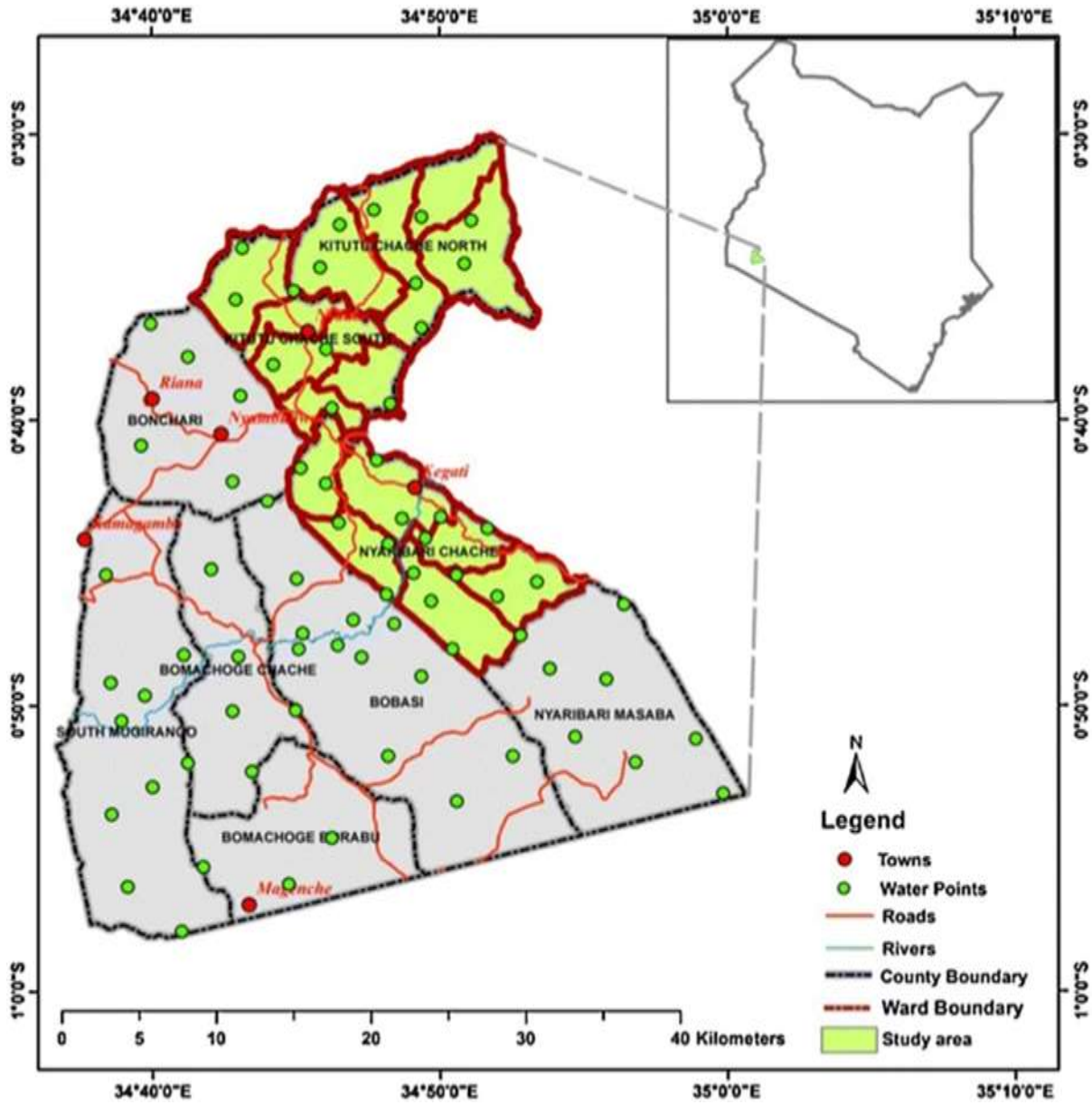
This rating scale seeks to obtain information on school unrest in secondary schools. Kindly respond to all the questions by providing accurate and honest information. The information you give will only be used for academic purposes and also will be treated with utmost confidentiality.

Below are categories of unrest as they occur in schools. Kindly indicate by putting a tick mark on (✓) those that have occurred in your school

- 5 - Students rioting/burning of dormitories and classrooms/breaking of windows and attacking teachers
- 4 - students shouting at teachers/ howling, booing
- 3- students boycotting classes/ school assembly
- 2- students fighting each other
- 1- students refusing to take food/ students going slow

**Thank you for your time and responses given.**

# APPENDIX E: MAP OF KISII COUNTY



## APPENDIX F: LETTER FROM MUSERC



### MASENO UNIVERSITY SCIENTIFIC AND ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

Tel: +254 057 351 622 Ext: 3050  
Fax: +254 057 351 221

Private Bag – 40105, Maseno, Kenya  
Email: [muerc-secretariate@maseno.ac.ke](mailto:muerc-secretariate@maseno.ac.ke)

REF: MSU/DRPI/MUSERC/01216/23

Date: 13<sup>th</sup> April, 2023

TO: Faith Kilel  
PHD/ED/00010/017  
Department of Educational Psychology  
School of Education, Maseno University  
P. O. Box, Private Bag, Maseno, Kenya

Dear Madam,

**RE: Influence of Students Mental Health and School Climate on Unrest in Secondary Schools in Kisii County, Kenya**

This is to inform you that **Maseno University Scientific and Ethics Review Committee (MUSERC)** has reviewed and approved your above research proposal. Your application approval number is MUSERC/01216/23. The approval period is 13<sup>th</sup> April, 2023 – 12<sup>th</sup> April, 2024.

This approval is subject to compliance with the following requirements;

- i. Only approved documents including (informed consents, study instruments, MTA) will be used.
- ii. All changes including (amendments, deviations, and violations) are submitted for review and approval by Maseno University Scientific and Ethics Review Committee (MUSERC).
- iii. Death and life threatening problems and serious adverse events or unexpected adverse events whether related or unrelated to the study must be reported to Maseno University Scientific and Ethics Review Committee (MUSERC) within 24 hours of notification.
- iv. Any changes, anticipated or otherwise that may increase the risks or affected safety or welfare of study participants and others or affect the integrity of the research must be reported to Maseno University Scientific and Ethics Review Committee (MUSERC) within 24 hours.
- v. Clearance for export of biological specimens must be obtained from relevant institutions.
- vi. Submission of a request for renewal of approval at least 60 days prior to expiry of the approval period. Attach a comprehensive progress report to support the renewal.
- vii. Submission of an executive summary report within 90 days upon completion of the study to Maseno University Scientific and Ethics Review Committee (MUSERC).

Prior to commencing your study, you will be expected to obtain a research license from National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) <https://oris.nacosti.go.ke> and also obtain other clearances needed.

Yours sincerely

Prof. Philip O. Owuor, PhD, FAAS, FKNAS  
Chairman, MUSERC



MASENO UNIVERSITY IS ISO 9001 CERTIFIED



**APPENDIX G: RESEARCH PERMIT**



REPUBLIC OF KENYA



**NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION**

Ref No: **478491**

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