Students' Emotional Intelligence and Self Discipline in Secondary Schools in Kenya

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the relationship between students' emotional intelligence and self-discipline in schools. The study was descriptive and comparative in design in that subjects were measured at once and comparisons of the variables made in relation to the variables in terms of gender and class levels. Purposive sampling was done targeting high school students. With a target of 725 students, a sample of 224 students, constituting 30.8966% of the population, was obtained. A students' questionnaire was constructed to obtain data on the students' emotional intelligence and self-discipline. The questionnaire's reliability was established to be .8906. Mean ratings were used to compare and analyze the descriptive information obtained. One-way ANOVA was used to establish whether differences in emotional intelligence existed between boys and girls in different class levels. Pearson correlation was used to see whether emotional intelligence was related to students' self-discipline. The means of female students for both self-discipline and emotional intelligence recorded slightly higher values than those of male students though not significantly different. Nevertheless, there were significant differences in levels of emotional intelligence between the classes attended by the respondents, which were associated to their experience in secondary school. Students' level of self-discipline positively related to their level of emotional intelligence.

Keywords: Students, Emotional Intelligence, Self-discipline, Secondary Schools, Kenya

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Students' discipline is a major factor in managing secondary schools like any other learning institution. Lack of discipline among students has resulted to major problems such as unrest and arson at secondary school level. Although students' indiscipline in

Kenya is considered a common phenomenon (Achwata, Shiandi & Nyang'au, 2016), lives and properties have been lost due to it.

A lot of research has been done related to indiscipline among high school students in Kenya, recommendations made, and measures taken to curb this problem, yet incidences resulting from indiscipline keep on increasing year by year and taking different forms (Oduor, 2016). General causes of unrest in secondary schools have been listed by several authors as poor administration, strict school rules and regulations, poor teacher-student relationships, communication challenges, peer pressure and influence, poor diet, ineffective teaching methods, drug abuse, and prefects' indiscipline among others (Kiyiapi, 2010; Etisi, 2010; Muli, 2012; Likoye, 2016; Oduor, 2016).

While teachers find it difficult to manage students, Jones-Smith (2011) argues that they neglect developing the students' emotional intelligence. This study, therefore, intended to explore this relatively new trait in students' emotional intelligence, in relation to how disciplined students are at personal levels. Students who are emotionally intelligent are expected to be calm, ready to learn, and disciplined.

There has been serious concern on the issue of students' indiscipline in Kenyan secondary schools which has resulted to different forms of unrest in the schools. These unrests and riots are as old as the secondary schools are; they date back to 1900 when these schools were established in Kenya (Likoye, 2016). However, the intensity of these unrests continues to increase year by year taking more destructive forms and causing loss of lives and properties. Currently, students have been involved in burning school facilities including dormitories, libraries, laboratories which have been related to unpreparedness and incompetence to tackle KCSE. According to Odour (2016), the ministry of education in Kenya established panic about expected strict exam supervision as a major cause for unrest in schools. Other causes have been established in the past but inadequate attention is paid to the emotional intelligence levels of students in Kenyan secondary school. Whenever students' emotional intelligence is poor, readiness to learn is at stake, and this leads to indiscipline. This study aimed at establishing the relationship that exists between students' levels of emotional intelligence and self-indiscipline.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence was first defined by Salovey and Mayer (1990) as the ability of individuals to monitor their own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among emotions, and to use this information to guide thinking and action. This, according to Arsenico, Cooperman, and Lover (2000) greatly helps in making wise decisions. Emotional intelligence therefore influences how a student deals with different situations that surround him or others around him.

The facet of emotional intelligence is built on five components namely; emotional awareness, emotional management, social emotional management, and relational

management. Goleman (1998) refers to these components as emotional competences. They are also referred to as domains of emotional intelligence (Serrant, 2009). Individuals bearing emotional-awareness and management competences know the emotions they are feeling and reasons for them, know the link between their emotions and the way they think, do, or say, recognize how their feelings affect their performance and they have guiding awareness of their values and goals (Serrant, 2009). They are also aware of their weaknesses and strengths.

Soon after emotional intelligence's first definition by Salovey and Mayer, the same authors proposed a four-branch model of emotional intelligence (Banat & Rimawi, 2014). The model, according to Banat and Rimawi (2014), defines emotional intelligence as involving perceiving self and others emotions, using emotions to facilitate thinking and decision making, understanding and appreciating relationships among emotions, and managing emotions of self and others.

Exploration of the new concept of emotional intelligence, which is mainly non-cognitive, started in early 90's as evidenced by appearing of academic articles during that time (Shipley, Jackson, & Segrest, 2010). Since then, emotional intelligence has rigorously been studied in relation to different spheres of life such as workplace, business, nursing and other clinical aspects among others. Moshe, Mathews, and Roberts (2009) assert that emotional intelligence affects all spheres of life whether economic, political, or social. Education is a social phenomenon.

The field of education also appreciates that emotional intelligence plays an important role in the teaching –learning process which is the chore business. Studies have been carried out addressing different aspects of education. Studies done in education mainly relate, among other factors, students' academic achievement, to the levels of emotional intelligence either of teachers or students. Rust (2014) related emotional intelligence of teachers to their students' academic achievement and established that the latter is affected by the former.

Some studies that relate academic achievement to students' emotional intelligence do not find the two significantly related (Walsh-Portillo, 2011). Others reveal that emotional intelligence impacts positively the academic achievement of students in the areas studied (Shipley et al., 2010; Fayombo, 2012; Mohzan, Hussan, & Halil, 2012; Durgut, Gerekan, & Pehlivan, 2013). Besides establishing that emotional intelligence relates positively to academic achievement, Fayombo (2012) also associated 48% variance in academic achievement to respondents' levels of emotional intelligence. However, as Walsh-Portillo (2011) maintains, higher levels of emotional intelligence may not always translate to excellence in academic performance.

Other aspects investigated in studies include sex/gender, locale, age, experience and faculty of study. Though the study by Yelkikalan et al (2012) found that the area of study does not relate to emotional intelligence, it exposed that age, sex, and students' backgrounds affect their levels of emotional intelligence. The main reason for effect of students' background on emotional intelligence could be based on the argument that emotional intelligence can be learnt (Moshe et al., 2009; Goleman, 1998). To explain this further, Naghavi and Redzuan (2011) state that emotional intelligence as being of social origin and acquisitive, in that, an individual learns how to deal with emotions right from childhood.

It is a common believe that women have higher emotional intelligence than men (Naghavi & Rezuan, 2011). While some studies have confirmed this observation, others expose contradicting results. The study by Nara (2014) on emotional intelligence of secondary school students showed that male and female differ in levels of emotional intelligence in favor of female students. Studies which examine relationship between gender and emotional intelligence on basis of self-examination, reveal that men have higher emotional intelligence than that of women (Bracket & Mayer, 2003; Sanchez-Numez, Fernandez-Bercoal, Montanes, & Latorre, 2008).

2.2 Emotional Intelligence and Self-Discipline

The chore business in any educational institution is to give students the best in learning. This makes academic achievement the main goal to be achieved in such institutions. Emotional intelligence and self-discipline are important factors in influencing how effectively a student achieves academically. As already discussed above, emotional intelligence affects academic achievement of students in institutions of learning. Studies also reveal that self-discipline is related positively to academic achievement (Zhao & Kuo, 2015; Simba, Agak, & Kabuka, 2016). Students get higher levels of academic achievement partly owing to their high levels of self-discipline (Zhao & Kuo, 2015). This was confirmed in an empirical study by Simba et al., (2016), who established a moderate positive relationship between students' self-discipline and their academic achievement.

The relationship between students' emotional intelligence and self-disciplined can perhaps be demonstrated diagrammatically as follows;

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                    ┌─────────────────────────────┐
                    │    Academic Achievement     │
                    └─────────────────────────────┘


  ┌──────────────┐                          ┌──────────────┐
  │  Emotional   │                          │Self-Discipline│
  │ Intelligence │                          │              │
  └──────────────┘                          └──────────────┘
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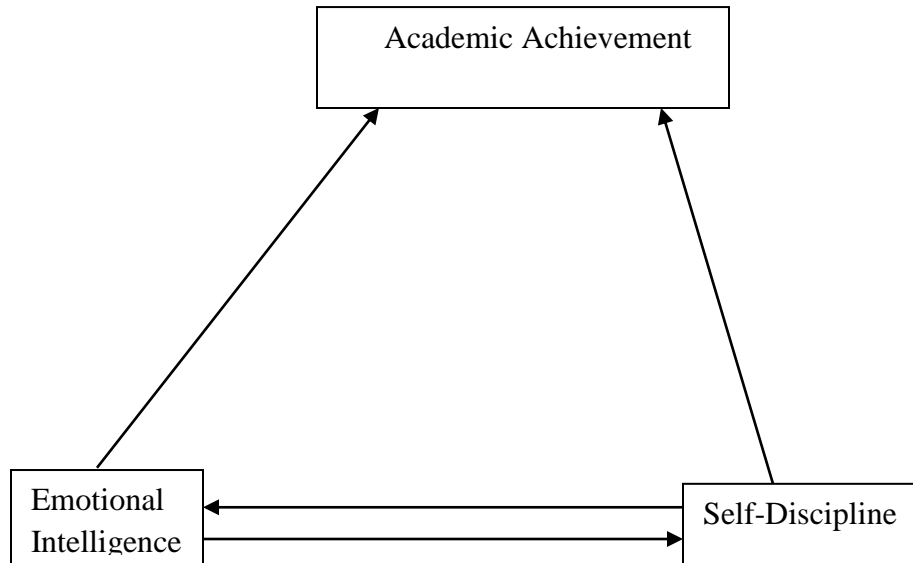
In the above paradigm emotional intelligence and self-discipline influence each other, and both positively influence academic achievement. Self-discipline has to do with a student's ability to control emotions, feelings, and desires so as to achieve predetermined goals (Knapczyk, 2004). For an individual to be able to control emotions and desires, the individual must be able to recognize his /her own feelings, that is, have high levels of self-awareness- an important component of emotional intelligence (Twain, 2001). After identifying the emotions, the student should also be able to direct the emotions into acceptable channels (Knapcyzk, 2004) that will not affect others negatively. A student who understands others emotions and feelings (has high level of emotional intelligence) has healthy relationships with his/her teachers and fellow learners (Bracket & Katulak, 2006), and is able to prioritize activities geared toward achieving personal goals. A self-disciplined student is most likely emotionally intelligent and an emotionally intelligence student is most likely self-disciplined.

Behavioural problems in schools are on the rise even leading to violence and unrest in most parts of the world, including Africa (Dolev & Leshem, 2016; Berenji & Ghafoori, 2015). An explanation to this phenomenon could be students' low levels of emotional intelligence as well as self-discipline. Zhao and Kuo (2015) maintain that a self-disciplined student is able to suppress distracting responses such as emotions and desires so as to improve life quality. On the other hand, Gayathri and Meenakshi (2013) assert that individuals with high levels of emotional intelligence end up in a life of improved quality. Precisely, students with higher levels of emotional intelligence are less involved in aggressive interactions.

Though numerous studies have been conducted and reviews of literature done regarding students' emotional intelligence, there are gaps that need to be filled. One such a gap concerns the relationship between self-disciple and emotional intelligence of students.

This empirical study seeks to find out whether self-discipline is related to emotional intelligence of high school students.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

The study adopted a descriptive comparative design since measurements of the subject in relation to the variables were done at a single point in time and the variables were compared in terms of gender and class. Relationship between variables was done making the study also correlational in design.

3.2 Research Instrument

One questionnaire was used to collect data on students' self-discipline along with the levels of students' emotional intelligence; emotional awareness, emotional management, social-emotional management, and relational management. The overall reliability of the questionnaire was established at 0.806.

Respondents were assured that the information they gave was to be used for no other purpose than the research in question. The questionnaires were then administered and respondents advised to complete them without writing their names anywhere on the questionnaires.

3.3 Population and Sample

The study targeted 725 students in a public mixed secondary school in rural Kenya. The study sampled 28 boys and 28 girls from each class from form one to form four, with 112 boys and 112 girls constituting the sample. The overall sample included 224 students making 30.896 per cent of the target population.

3.4 Statistical Treatment of Data

Data collected using questionnaires was cleaned, coded, and then fed into the SPSS for processing. Descriptive statistics were obtained before recoding negatively coded statements. Means of levels of respondents' levels were compared and analysis made on which discussion was based. One-way ANOVA was used to compare difference in emotional intelligence levels between boys and girls, and between classes of the respondents. Pearson correlation coefficient was determined to investigate how emotional intelligence of the students relates to their self-discipline.

4.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results were organized in line with the research questions and hypotheses used in the study. The scale used for the variables was rated;
    0- Very Poor   1- Poor   2- Average   3- Good   4- Very Good

Research question one; 'What are the levels of self-discipline of secondary school students?'

To answer this question, means of levels of students' self-discipline were determined using descriptive statistics.

Overall self-discipline

Table 1 shows the overall mean of students' self-discipline of the respondents involved in the study. Students' self-discipline rated average (μ=2.00).

Table 1
Mean of students' self-discipline

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
SD	224	.80	3.20	2.00	.42360
Valid N (listwise)	224				

The standard deviation is small (SD=.42360) implying that students' individual means did not deviate a lot from the mean value of 2.00, which rates average. Most students, therefore, bear average levels of self-discipline. This finding contradicts that of Simba et al (2016), from whose study; over 68% of respondents were found to bear self-disciplined levels that rated above average.

Self-discipline for students on basis of gender

On the basis of gender, boys' levels of self-discipline (μ=1.97) rated slightly lower than that of girls (μ=2.04) as table 2 shows.

Table 2

Means of levels of students' self-discipline on basis of gender

Gender	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Male	1.9723	112	.43293
Female	2.0384	112	.41335
Total	2.0054	224	.42360

However, the difference between levels of self-discipline for boys and girls was insignificant (table 3) since p=.244 and is greater than .05, the alpha value, implying that gender is not a determinant in levels of self-discipline of students in secondary school.

Table 3

ANOVA results for differences of levels of self-disciple between male and female students

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	.244	1	.244	1.365	.244
Within Groups	39.769	222	.179		
Total	40.014	223			

This finding contradicts the findings of some studies that female students are more self-disciplined than male students (Duckworth & Seligman, 2006; Nekby, Thoursie, & Vahtrik, 2015). According to Duckworth & Seligman, 2006 girls are more self-disciplined than boys. While investigating effects of gender on examination behavior, Nekby et al (2015) obtained results about female students which lead to the conclusion, among others, that girls are more self-disciplined than boys.

Self-discipline for students in different classes

Means of levels of students' self-discipline in different classes were compared and their results portrayed in table 4.

Table 4
Means of levels of students' self-discipline in different classes

Class	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Form One	2.00	57	.43839
Form Two	2.00	55	.46627
Form Three	1.98	56	.45246
Form Four	2.03	56	.33493
Total	2.01	224	.42360

Form three students recorded the lowest level of self-discipline ($\mu=1.98$), followed by form two students ($\mu=2.00$), then form one students ($\mu=2.01$), and the highest were the form four students ($\mu=2.03$). However, there was no significant difference in levels of self-discipline for students in all the classes ($\alpha=.930, > .05$), that is, in all the classes, students' levels of self-discipline were similar as table 5 shows.

Table 5

ANOVA results for differences of levels of self-disciple for students in different classes

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	.081	3	.027	.150	.930
Within Groups	39.932	220	.182		
Total	40.014	223			

Research question two determined the levels of emotional intelligence of secondary school students?

Overall emotional intelligence

This question was addressed by first determining the overall mean of the levels of emotional intelligence for all the students included in the sample. Results obtained were as indicated in table 6

Table 6
Overall mean for students' emotional intelligence

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Overall Emotional Intelligence	224	1.33	3.65	2.35	.45686
Valid N (listwise)	224				

Students recorded an average rating in their overall emotional intelligence as shown in table 6 (α=2.35). To delve into the issue further, levels of emotional intelligence were analyzed as per gender.

Emotional intelligence on basis of gender

Portrayed in table 7 are average means of levels of emotional intelligence for both boys and girls used as respondents in the study.

Table 7
Emotional Intelligence on basis of gender

Gender	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Male	2.32	112	.43781
Female	2.38	112	.47557
Total	2.35	224	.45686

Female students recorded a slightly higher level of emotional intelligence (α=2.38) than male students (α=2.32) though results of one-way ANOVA in table 8 show that the difference in emotional intelligence in terms of gender was insignificant (p=.375 hence >.05, which is the alpha value). This finding challenges the general view that girls have higher emotional intelligence compared to that of boys (Nara, 2014; Yelkikalan et al., 2012) but supports the findings of other studies with similar observations (Sancuez-Nunez et al., 2008; Naghavi & Redzuan, 2011). Besides the findings contradict those of Ahmad, Baghash, and Khan (2009), whose study revealed significant differences in emotional intelligence between males and females in favor of males.

Table 8
One-way ANOVA comparing emotional intelligence on basis of gender

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	.165	1	.165	.789	.375
Within Groups	46.381	222	.209		
Total	46.546	223			

The means of the levels of emotional intelligence were further compared descriptively in relation to the classes in which the respondents attended, that is, from form one to form four, and results depicted in table 9

Emotional intelligence levels for students in different classes

Table 9
Overall emotional intelligence in relation to the class attended by the respondent

Class	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Form One	2.25	56	.40211
Form Two	2.27	56	.52105
Form Three	2.37	56	.47003
Form Four	2.51	56	.38585
Total	2.35	224	.45686

The level of emotional intelligence was lowest for form one students (α=2.25) and increased with increase in the number of years spent in high school. Therefore the form two students recorded the second lowest mean of emotional intelligence (α=2.27), followed by for three students (α=2.37) and the highest mean was recorded by form four students (α=2.51).

A bivariate correlation test confirmed the above observation when it revealed a significant positive relationship between the class attended (table 10), equivalent to the

number of years spent in high school, and the level of emotional intelligence (p=.001, < .05, r=.219).

Table 10
Pearson correlation coefficient of the relationship between the class attended and level of emotional intelligence

		Class	Overall Emotional Intelligence
	Pearson Correlation	1	.219[**]
Class	Sig. (2-tailed)		.001
	N	224	224
Overall Emotional Intelligence	Pearson Correlation	.219[**]	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	
	N	224	224

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

This finding can be discussed in relation to findings of Nara (2014) who ascertained that emotional intelligence is affected by experience. Since all the participants were in the same environment of learning, but in different classes, they bore different levels of experience; those in form four being the most experienced and those in form one the least experienced. Perhaps, as the students spend more years at school, their age also increases and they become more experienced and more emotionally developed. Given that emotional intelligence can be learnt (Goleman, 1998) and developed (Twain, 2001), possibly explains how students develop their emotional intelligence as their experience in high school increases.

Research question three looked at the relationship between emotional intelligence and self-discipline of secondary school students

This question was addressed by checking on whether there is a relationship between the two variables. Results of the Pearson test were obtained and presented in table 11.

Table 11
Pearson correlation coefficient of the relationship between the levels of self-discipline and emotional intelligence

		SD	Overall Emotional Intelligence
	Pearson Correlation	1	.229[**]
SD	Sig. (2-tailed)		.001
	N	224	224
Overall Emotional Intelligence	Pearson Correlation	.229[**]	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	
	N	224	224

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
A weak but positive relationship between self-discipline and emotional intelligence was revealed (p=.001, > .05). This means that emotional intelligence and self-discipline influence each other. To improve on one translates to improving the other and vice versa.

4.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study established that students' level of self-discipline as well as their emotional intelligence rated average. Although the means of female students for both self-discipline and emotional intelligence recorded slightly higher values than those of male students, the differences were statistically insignificant. Nevertheless, there were significant differences in levels of emotional intelligence between the classes attended by the respondents which were associated with their experience in secondary school. Students' level of self-discipline was revealed to be positively related to their level of emotional intelligence

This study would therefore recommend that strategies of developing students' emotional intelligence be put in place. If their levels of emotional intelligence would be improved, their levels of self-discipline would also improve. Improvement of self-discipline would result to improved classroom discipline (Twain, 2001) and the overall result will be reduced levels of unrest in schools.

More studies should be conducted, either in form of replication, or adding more variables. There is need to compare levels of emotional intelligence and self-discipline for students in urban and rural areas, low achievers and high achievers, among other variables.

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