



## Parental Involvement and Students' Discipline in Public Secondary Schools in the Centre and Littoral Regions of Cameroon

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### Abstract

The study was carried out to investigate Parental Involvement and Students' Discipline in Public Secondary Schools in the Centre and Littoral Regions of Cameroon. The mixed method research design was adopted for the study. The accessible population of the study comprised of principals, guidance counsellors and students in 10 public secondary schools in six-sub-divisions in the Mfoundi Division in the Centre Region and Wouri Division in the Littoral Region of Cameroon. The sample size of the study consisted of 400 teachers, 10 principals and 10 guidance counsellors. The participants were sample using the stratified, purposive, random sampling and convenient sampling techniques. Questionnaire and interview guide were the instruments adopted for the study. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical tools. The descriptive statistical tools used were frequency count, percentages, mean, standard deviation and multiple set while qualitative data derived from interview were analyzed using the thematic analysis approach with the aid of themes and quotation. Statistically, findings showed that there is a significant and positive relationship between parental involvement and students' discipline (R-value 0.511\*\*, p-value < 0.001). The positive sign of the correlation value denotes that students' discipline will increase more if parents are adequately involved in discipline issues that concern their children and this was supported with a very high predictive explanatory power of 81.9% (Cox and Snell = 0.819). Based on the findings, it was recommended that; parents work cooperatively with other stakeholders of education to influence the improvement and education of their children. Parents should assist with school work, involve in extracurricular activities and do follow up with teachers concerning their children.

**Keywords:** Parents, Parental Involvement, Students' Discipline.

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## Introduction

It is difficult for any society to function well without the exercise of discipline. Discipline is an important ingredient that plays a crucial role in all school system (Wilson, 2021) Schools remains an introductory ground to emancipate and certify the requirement for human development. Administrative Guide 2020 in the Ministry of Secondary Education emphasizes the importance of discipline in achieving academic excellence.

Odoyo (2022) states that discipline is a centre of success of a school and all members of the school are expected to adhere to various standards. It helps not only to regulate people's reaction to various situations, but also regulate human conduct and relation to others. The aim of discipline is to help students be well adjusted, happy, achieve in academics and character and become useful to the society. Basically, discipline problems occur in secondary schools when students refuse to obey rules of the classroom or the school.

Management of students' discipline has been a great challenge and concern to many teachers, parents and entire society. Classroom management is not about controlling students. It is about creating an environment that supports learning (Morzano, 2021). In as much students' discipline management involves a number of steps and commitment of the students, parents and the teachers, the parents plays a very instrumental function in ensuring that discipline of the students is achieved and retained (Alfred et al., 2021).

The most important factor in students learning is not the curriculum but the classroom environment. A well-disciplined classroom is essential for academic excellence (Murrich, 2022) Discipline is therefore essential for the establishment of a safe and respectful environment for learning. The emotional, social and moral progress of children is dependent on good discipline. Promotion of students' discipline has been a great challenge and concern to many teachers, parents and entire society because students' indiscipline is a threat in all parts of the world.

Parents constitute a key component in facilitating academic achievement. Denessen & Deop (2019) reveals that once parents take part in students' matters, they tend to have positive effects on students' development. This means that in schools, parents have a rightful role to play. According to Imbogo & Flora (2018) families require participating in schools to support students' achievement because children are interacting between school and home every day. Ntekene (2018) describes the role of parenting in students' achievement which include making follow up for their children's learning activities, communicating with teachers on the challenges they face in strengthening children's learning and volunteering in school meetings. Samuel & Chwangan (2020) suggest that parents are very important in the development of their children's behaviour and the need for them to find ways to get involved in their children's behaviour. The decentralization of education allows the participation of parents in the development of students' discipline and education matters. UNESCO emphasizes the

significance of parental involvement in children' education, highlighting its positive impact on academic achievement and overall development.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Students' discipline is an essential element in schools and principals are viewed as central in the creation of effective school administration in which students' discipline is motivated to strive for continuous improvement in quality learning. Since principals are entrusted with the noble task of leadership in schools, they ought to employ effective management strategies. Despite the efforts made to maintain discipline, there is constant increase of indiscipline in public secondary schools in Cameroon. Students' indiscipline has become a cankerworm that has eaten too deep into the students' moral upbringing. Students have become uncontrollable and highly disrespectful to Moral integrity is guaranteed in the educational system. Therefore, corporal and all other forms of violence, discrimination of any kind, are prohibited'.

Themselves, teachers, school administrators and to the society at large, Ngwokabuenui (2015) There is an outcry of Cameroon educators, administrators, teachers and parents about the increasing rate of indiscipline in Cameroon secondary schools. As a result, any attempt to curb students' indiscipline in schools would be highly welcome by the government, educators, parents, teachers and administrators.

In Cameroon, corporal punishment which used to be a way of disciplining students is now unlawful under the law of Cameroon National Educational Guidelines No.98\004 1998 (article 35) which states 'the physical and Due to all these, the Minister of Secondary Education of Cameroon called on all stakeholders of Education to propose other strategies to curb these discipline problems, Nalova (2023). It is for this reason that this study seeks to examine parental involvement and students' discipline in public secondary schools in the Centre and Littoral Regions of Cameroon.

### **Objective of the Study**

To investigate the influence of parental involvement on students' discipline in public Secondary Schools in the Centre and Littoral Regions of Cameroon.

### **Research Question**

How does parental involvement influence students' discipline in Public Secondary schools in the Centre and Littoral Regions of Cameroon?

### **Literature Review**

#### **Parental Involvement and Students' Discipline**

When schools, families and community groups work together to support learning, children tend to do better in school, stay in school longer, and like school more. Parental involvement

over the past decade indicates that regardless of family income or background, students with involved parents are more likely to earn higher grades and test scores, attend school regularly, have better social skills, show improved behaviour and graduate to postsecondary education (Henderson & Mapp, 2002 as cited in Mwirichia, 2013). Ravitch (2016) recognized parent involvement as the participation of parents in every facet of children's education and development from birth to adulthood. Wilder (2014) reported that parental involvement was found to be one of the factors affecting student's achievement and student's behaviour in the school.

Parent's involvement plays a vital role in implementing the operation of educational system. School can no longer set itself up without taking into consideration the active involvement of parents and the community. Students with involvement of parents in their school tend to have fewer behavioural problems and better academic performance and are more likely to complete high school than students whose parents are not involved in their school (McNeal, 2014).

Murray et al. (2014) indicate that some school administrators feel that they can manage matters related to students better on their own without the help of parents. Hence, this study was conducted to probe the involvement of parents in discipline management of students in schools. All the parents want their children to learn and be accepted by their peers and teachers. Maintaining students' discipline is a complex process in itself and is related to variety of factors but more especially the parent factor. Parents play the primary role by assuming their responsibility towards their children at home to maintain the discipline of students (Joseph, 2013). Korkmazz (2007) supported this idea where he added that the parents should love, respect and care towards their children's education and children's basic and school needs. Furthermore, parents should express a harmonious communication with the teacher and other staff in school and provide a warm atmosphere for their children for revising the notes at home and being aware about what their children do.

Equally, important is the contribution of Chand (2013) who says that parent play a pivotal role in maintaining discipline in schools whereas the lack of their support rise to a number of problems such as assaulting, acting aggressively, school absenteeism, lateness, alcohol, drug abuse, lying, stealing, rebelliousness, fighting, smoking, befriending, school dropout, pregnancy, class repetition and relationship problem. Juang and Silbereisen (2002) said that parents who are more warmth, engaged in more discussions concerning discipline, academic and intellectual matters with their adolescents, and have higher school aspirations for their adolescents, are reported to show more participation in their adolescents' schooling. In support of this, Wanja (2014) has called on principals to adopt ways to make parents more involve in the education of their children by following up and monitoring their activities in school.

Cameroon Law of Education (2001) spells out the responsibility of parents in the educational matters of secondary education. The Document for School Heads No.07/08/MINSEC/CAB of 25<sup>th</sup> According to Titanji (2015) reforms had been envisaged by government of Cameroon to

bring about quality and relevant education to her citizens especially those in the public secondary school sectors such as by February, 2008 also outlined the roles of the Parent Teachers Association (PTA), in the functioning of schools. They ranged from funding projects, provision of didactic materials and other school facilities, assisting in supervision /management through counselling and proposals to principals'/school administrators and recruiting part time teachers. Individual parents are not refused participations as per the above law. Hence, parents do not only have to take part in educating children but, also assist in the discipline of the students as well. It has been opined that when parents participate in education, students are more likely be encouraged to be assiduous and perform tasks on time increasing community participation in education among others. Hence, parental participation in education of their children in public secondary schools may likely ensure quality education, increase the relevance of education to the children, build and sustain an enabling culture, ensure attainment of high-quality norms for sustainability (discipline), develop relevant curriculum, ensure timely access to communication tools and create and nourish community-based partnership among others.

This study was guided by Epstein theory of parental involvement which is known as "school-family-community-partnership -model. It discusses the relationship between school, family and community and the development of children. Epstein's school-family-partnership theory demonstrates and suggests that the stakeholders work cooperatively to influence the improvement and education of children.

They should interact and keep on communicating on the development of students activities and behaviours. It emphasizes how educators should view students as children so that families can be taken as partners with schools in the development of children's education. This helps families and the community to recognize that by being partners, they have to share interest and responsibilities with their children. The theory is valuable to this work as it shows how parents are important components in students discipline management. It also contributes on the ways how parents can play together in school activities so as to bring mutual commitment to the students to focus on their achievement and self discipline.

In conducting empirical review, many studies show that parents are not involved in their children's wellbeing. This has motivated scholars to conduct research to see if students will be well disciplined If their parents are highly involved in their academics.

## **Methodology**

The mixed method convergent research design was adopted for the study. This is because the researcher went to the field once and collected both quantitative and qualitative data. The accessible population of the study comprised of principals, guidance counsellors and students in 10 public secondary schools in six-sub-divisions in the Mfoundi Division in the Centre Region and Wourri Division in the Littoral Region of Cameroon. The sample size of the study consisted of 400 teachers, 10 principals and 10 guidance counsellors. The participants were sample using the stratified, purposive, random sampling and convenient sampling

techniques. Questionnaire and interview guide were the instruments adopted for the study. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical tools. The descriptive statistical tools used were frequency count, percentages, mean, standard deviation and multiple set while qualitative data derived from interview were analyzed using the thematic analysis approach with the aid of themes and quotation.

## Findings

The presentation of findings was done by first presenting the demographic data to explain the sample, followed by descriptive findings for both variables and then accompanied with inferential findings. The qualitative findings were presented after the hypotheses results to further strengthen the inferential statistics.

Among the 391 teachers successfully sampled, 53.2% (208) were female and 46.8% (183) were male. Age wise, 33.8% (132) of the teachers were within the age range of 30-39 years, 26.3% (103) within the age range of 40-49 years, 20.2% (79) were below 30 years, and 19.7% (77) were 50 years and above. Regarding years of teaching experience, 33.0% (129) of the teachers had taught for 11-15 years, followed by 23.5% (92) for 1-5 years, 23.3% (91) for more than 15 years, and 20.2% (79) for 6-10 years. Finally, many of the teachers 46.3% (181) were holders of DIPES I, followed by 23.5% (92) holders with DIPES II while few of them 13.6% (53) were holders of Master's, 13.3% (52) Bachelor's, and 3.3% (13) Doctoral Degree.

The table depicts teachers' opinion on parental involvement and students' discipline.

**Table 1:**

*Appraising the Level of Parental Involvement on Issues Regarding Students' Discipline from Teachers' Perspectives*

Items	Stretched				Collapsed		Mean	Std. Dev
	SA	A	D	SD	SA/A	D/SD		
Principals often invite parents during disciplinary councils.	139 (35.5%)	117 (29.9%)	95 (24.3%)	40 (10.2%)	256 (65.5%)	135 (34.5%)	2.91	.999
Principals asked parent to decide punishment for students.	0 (0.0%)	54 (13.8%)	143 (36.6%)	194 (49.6%)	54 (13.8%)	337 (86.2%)	1.64	.712
Principals often summon parents of recalcitrant students in school.	209 (53.5%)	182 (46.5%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	391 (100%)	0 (0.0%)	3.53	.499
Principals constantly inform parents of their children behaviour.	132 (33.8%)	142 (36.3%)	90 (23.0%)	27 (6.9%)	274 (70.1%)	117 (29.9%)	2.97	.919

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Parents are cooperative in the discipline of their children in school.	0 (0.0%)	13 (3.3%)	248 (63.4%)	130 (33.2%)	13 (3.3%)	378 (96.7%)	1.70	.526
Parents support every discipline measure taken by the school.	0 (0.0%)	13 (3.3%)	233 (59.6%)	145 (37.1%)	13 (3.3%)	378 (96.7%)	1.66	.539
Parents are called to participate in making disciplined rules and regulations in schools.	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	248 (63.4%)	143 (36.6%)	0 (0.0%)	391 (100%)	1.63	.482
<b>MRS and overall mean</b>	<b>480</b> <b>(17.5%)</b>	<b>521</b> <b>(19.0%)</b>	<b>1057</b> <b>(38.6%)</b>	<b>679</b> <b>(24.8%)</b>	<b>1001</b> <b>(36.6%)</b>	<b>1736</b> <b>(63.4%)</b>	<b>2.29</b>	<b>.668</b>

**Key:** SA=Strongly Agree, A=Agree, D=Disagree and SD= Strongly Disagree.  
**Std. Dev;** Standard Deviation

In aggregate, more of teachers 63.4% denied parental involvement and support in the discipline of their children when compared to 36.6% of teachers that accepted parental involvement. More so, the overall mean of 2.29 below 2.5 on a mean scale of 1-4 implies that parental involvement and support in the discipline of their children by the school is very low. Specifically, while all teachers 100% (391) confirmed that principal often summon parents of recalcitrant students in school, 70.1% (274) affirmed constant informing of parents about their children behaviour in school, and 65.5% (256) agreed that principals often invite parents during disciplinary councils with 34.5% (135) disagreed.

On the contrary, majority of teachers 96.7% (378) indicated that parents are not cooperative in the discipline of their children in school while only 3.3% (13) agreed to parental cooperation. More so, many of the teachers 96.7% (378) indicated that parents do not support every discipline measure taken by the school against their children while only 3.3% (13) of teachers accepted fully support from parents. Moreover, all teachers 100% (391) indicated that parents are not called to participate in making disciplined rules and regulations in schools.

Furthermore, more of teachers 96.7% (378) equally indicated that parents do not support every discipline measure taken by the school. Finally, more of teachers 86.2% (337) reported that principals do not asked parent to decide punishment for students while 13.8% (54) agreed. This may account for the reason many parents do not support the school in disciplining their children in their own preferred style which maybe not be supported by the ministerial law. The figure below presents the summary of finding.

## Principals' Opinion on Active Parental Involvement

**Table 3:**

*Principals' Opinion if Parents Active Involvement with School Administration can Help Promote Discipline*

Themes	Theme description	Quotations
Improves behaviour	Generally, students perceived to behave well in school	<p><i>"Yes. Active parents involvement promotes better behavior amongst students. A parent who is involved in a child's academics makes a big impression on the students."</i></p> <p><i>"Yes, discipline should not be left in the hands of the school alone. The parents need to get involved because they know their children better and know where they are lacking. So they need to start the discipline from home before sending them to school."</i></p> <p><i>"Yes, students whose parents are involved in their academics are less likely to suffer behavioural issues because they do follow up and make sure their children are doing what is expected from them."</i></p> <p><i>"Yes, active parental involvement creates this positive relation between the school and the parents. And when there is collaboration, all parties can jointly put efforts to see that the mission of the school is realized one of them being building children who are morally upright."</i></p> <p><i>"Yes, the home is the child's first school which therefore means parents are the first teachers of their children. Normally, the parents are in the position to bring up their children the right way so it does have to be a burden to teachers again. Some of them failed in their duties and at this level they still fail to do follow up for the children. Active parental involvement is very important in discipline."</i></p> <p><i>"Yes, generally, parental involvement helps to improve students' discipline. On this note, I am calling on other parents who do not like to actively get involve in their children school life to start doing so."</i></p> <p><i>"Yes, active parents involvement helps to promote school discipline. It makes students to respect school rules and regulation properly."</i></p> <p><i>"Oh yes, adequate support from parents will promote school discipline. However, this is greatly lacking from many parents. They do not really show concern when the school demand their presence due to their children inappropriate behaviours. Some parents are really terrible."</i></p>
Boast school attendance and social	Reduces the rate of absenteeism	<p><i>"Yes, parental involvement positively influences children's behavior. It improves students' attendance, social skills, and behaviour."</i></p> <p><i>"Yes, parental involvement leads to reduced absenteeism."</i></p>



skills		<p><i>Absenteeism causes a decrease in academic performance because as they miss classess, their performances drop. So, when the involvement of parents increased, absenteeism reduces."</i></p> <p><i>"Yes, because when parents are involved, some children come to school regularly. They believe that their parents will always visit or contact teachers or administration for feedback about the child."</i></p> <p><i>"From my experience, some students' absenteeism has greatly reduced because of parental follow-up of their school activities."</i></p>
Boast problem solving	Teachers and school administration believe to know students problem better and solve them.	<p><i>"Yes, the interaction between the teacher and parents helps teachers to know the students more. There are some students who suffer from some behavioural problems and their parents can't help out. So if they get involve and let the teachers know what has been happening, they can solve these problems."</i></p> <p><i>"Yes, with the PTA meetings, parents get to know what is happening in school and their children in particular. Base on that, they are able to join the teachers and administrators solve some behavioural problems by talking to them at home and encouraging them to behave properly."</i></p> <p><i>"Yes, because the school will better how to solve a child problems with active parents involvement."</i></p> <p><i>"Yes, because the school as a whole will solve the problem of some students better when their parents actively get involved."</i></p>
School adaptation	Children adapting properly in school	<p><i>"Yes, parental involvement positively influences children's behavior like it helps students adapt better to school."</i></p>
Study focus	Students perceived to be more focus in learning	<p><i>"Yes, active parental involvement can improve discipline. Parents know their children better than the school. So it is their duty to make sure their surely leave the house every day and on time and also do follow up to be sure they attend classes. With this, students will become more focus knowing that their parents have eyes on them too."</i></p>

In aggregate, principals reported that parents' active involvement was perceived to improve students' behaviour, boast school attendance, foster social skills in students, boast problem solving, enable students to adapt better in school and stay focus to study.

## Guidance Counsellors Opinion on Active Parental Involvement

**Table 4:**

*Counsellors' Opinion if Active Parental Involvement with School Administration Can Promote Students' Discipline*

Themes	Theme description	Quotations
Boast social and well-being	Parental involvement perceived to help students improve on their well-being and social interaction	<p><i>"Yes, discipline starts from home so if parents are invited to witness how discipline cases of their children are being solved, they will follow them more appropriately at home."</i></p> <p><i>"Yes to a greater extent because parental involvement plays a critical role in shaping students behaviour, significantly impacting academic performance, social skills and overall well-being."</i></p> <p><i>"Yes, when parents actively engage in their children's education, they are more likely to exhibit positive behaviour both in and out of the classroom."</i></p> <p><i>"Yes, discipline entails a lot, if it is left solely in the hands of teacher and administrators it will make work difficult. So if parents do part of the work, it will help in solving some of the issues."</i></p>
Reduce absenteeism	Parental involvement perceived to enhance school attendance	<p><i>"Yes, parent involvement leads to reduced absenteeism because they follow up their children and encourage them to attend classes regularly."</i></p> <p><i>"Yes, it helps especially in the aspect of absenteeism. This is because parents are the ones to constantly make sure their children leave home and are in school attending classes."</i></p>
Listen to parents more	Students believe to listen more to parents and change	<i>"Yes, parents have a strong influence on their children. They have a direct influence that is stronger than that of teachers, friends and media. So they can listen to them better if they discipline them."</i>
Boast performance	Help students to focus more and improve on performance	<p><i>"Yes, parents' active involvement promotes better behaviour. Parents who are involved in the child's academic make a big impression on the students."</i></p>
Consciousness	Make students to be conscious of study	<i>"Yes, when parents are involved, the students are more conscious of their behavior."</i>
Less	Students tend to	<i>"Yes, the students become less disobedient knowing that not only</i>

disobedient	obey more	<i>the teachers have eyes on them but their parents too."</i>
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Adding to the voice of the principals, Guidance Counsellor just like the principals reported that parents active involvement will improve school discipline by fostering students' social well-being, reduce absenteeism, improve school performance, makes students more conscious of their study, and makes them less disobedient.

### Testing of Hypothesis Two:

Ho<sub>2</sub>: There is no significant relationship between principals' involvement of parents and students' discipline in public secondary schools in the Littoral and Centre Regions of Cameroon.

Ha<sub>2</sub>: There is a significant relationship between principals' involvement of parents and students' discipline in public secondary schools in the Littoral and Centre Regions of Cameroon.

**Table: 4**

### Perceived Relationship between Principals' Involvement of Parents and Students' Discipline

Test	Statistical parameters	Parental involvement	Students' Discipline	Predictive explanatory power of the relationship in terms of percentage (Cox and Snell)
Spearman's rho	R-value	1	.511**	0.819 (81.9%)
n	<i>p</i> -value		.000	
test	n	391	391	

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

Statistically, findings showed that there is a significant and positive relationship between parental involvement and students' discipline (R-value 0.511\*\*,  $p$ -value < 0.001). The positive sign of the correlation value denotes that students' discipline will increase more if parents are adequately involved in discipline issues that concern their children and this was supported with a very high predictive explanatory power of 81.9% (Cox and Snell = 0.819). Therefore, the hypothesis that states there is a significant relationship between principals' involvement of parents and students' discipline in public secondary schools in the Littoral and Centre Regions of Cameroon was accepted.

## Discussion

The findings showed that there is a significant and positive relationship between parental involvement and students' discipline. The positive sign of the correlation value denotes that students' discipline will increase more if parents are adequately involved in discipline issues that concern their children and this was supported with a very high predictive explanatory power. In support of the hypothesis prediction, principals and guidance counsellors said that

active parents' involvement will improve students' behaviours, boost school attendance/reduce absenteeism, improve on students' social skills, boost problem-solving, enhance school adaptation, enhance study focus, improve on their wellbeing and consciousness and makes them less disobedient.

From a theoretical standpoint of view, Epstein Theory of overlapping sphere of influence (1998) sees a child as dependent on the family, the school and community and has recognized the need for active parental involvement in the education of their children not only at the home level but to the level of the school. It is belief that parents working in joint collaboration with schools can help make school environment a far better place for other children, teachers, support staff and administrators. This could also help to reduce disruptive behaviours and enhance students' engagement in learning. Although awareness of getting families involved in school settings has increased in most Western countries, this awareness is still lacking in most African countries. At times, our schools lack comprehensive plans for partnership with families.

The constant increase of students' indiscipline in secondary schools in Cameroon, require joint effort of both parents, community and the school members themselves to instill discipline at some level. The school together with parents and community should share a common goal which is to restore discipline in schools. This same thinking was highlighted by Chester Bernard theory of collaboration (1974) which also called on parents to actively collaborate with the schools in the handling of their children.

Parents must understand that their children will not stay in school forever. Therefore, whatever bad behaviour they support of their children, the same parents will be victims of the children bad behaviour and even the highest losers. On this note, wise parents should cooperate more with the schools in the discipline of their children in the right way. In fact, we expect parents to even take the lead in the discipline of their children in schools for bad behaviours.

## **Conclusion and Recommendation**

Based on the Findings, the following conclusion and recommendations were made. The study identified a deficiency in the engagement of parents in the discipline of their children. The findings revealed that there is a positive relationship between parental involvement and students' discipline. This therefore implies that students' discipline will increase more if parents are adequately involved in discipline issues that concern their children.

To address this issue, it is recommended that parents work cooperatively with other stakeholders of education to influence the improvement and education of their children. Parents should assist with school work, involve in extracurricular activities and follow up with teachers concerning their children.

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