

AN INVESTIGATION ON THE RELEVANCE OF TEACHING MORAL VALUES TO MITIGATE CONFLICT IN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

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ABSTRACT

The upsurge of criminal offences in schools and families, depicts an existing problem in the Kenyan society. This affects the family set up being the most import social unit and the relationship between teachers and students in learning institutions. About 40% of family murder cases, violence, rape, incest has been recorded, while about 50% of student – teacher violence, confrontations and disrespect have been recorded. This has led to offenders being arrested and put to trial by the law. Such offences affect harmony in the family as a social unit and undermine effective management of learning institutions thus defeating the achievement of expected goals of education by removing conflicts and promoting a positive attitude of mutual respect, in order to enhance a harmonious society and environment that should positively contribute to national development. The purpose of this study is to investigate causes, types, effects of conflicts, understanding knowledge and possible contribution of the teaching of moral values in educational institutions. The research will be conducted based on the conflict theory, the teleological/deontological theories and the Psychoanalytic theory. The respondents of the study included sampled students and teachers in selected learning institutions in Nairobi County. A total of 100 participants were involved, both Google questionnaires and self-administered questionnaires was used to collect data. Qualitative-Descriptive statistical method was also used to carry out the research.

Key words: Moral values, Immoral behavior practices, Learning institutions

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

People do not live their lives in moral or ethical isolation but grow up within particular moral traditions (Reiss, 1999). Liberal democracy can only flourish if its citizens hold certain moral and civic values, and manifest certain virtues (Althof & Berkowitz, 2006). Morals refer to

human behavior such as honesty, respect, integrity, diligence, decorum, justice, fairness, impartial, discipline, where morality is the practical activity and, ethics describes the theoretical, systematic, and rational reflection upon that human behavior (Churchill, 1982). Values are linked to beliefs and attitudes and guide human behavior (Rennie, 2007). Morals, values, and ethics are strongly attached to society, spirituality and culture (United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization, 1991).

There are three meaning of ethics. Firstly, ethics is commonly taken as a synonym for morality, the universal values and standards of conduct that every rational person wants every other to follow. Secondly, ethics is a well-established branch of philosophy that studies the sources of human values and standards, and struggle to locate them within theories of human individual and social condition. Thirdly, professional ethics, and it is not universal nor is it ethical theory; refers to the special codes of conduct adhered to by those who are engaged in a common pursuit. Professional ethics is an integral part of the concept of a profession (Kovac, 1996).

A wide range of misunderstandings and misconceptions surround morals, values and ethics (Churchill, 1982). Morals, values and ethics are sometimes difficult to understand because the misunderstandings and misconceptions surrounding them hinder arrival at the correct explanation. The objective of moral education lies in the fact that it can develop shared feelings with others, and makes one committed to one's own personal responsibilities and actions (Campbell, 2008). Moral agency is a dual state that encompasses the teacher as a moral person engaged in ethical teaching through professional conduct and, as a moral educator who teaches students with the same core values and principles that he or she strives to uphold in practice (Campbell, 2003). Ethical knowledge best captures the essence of teaching professionalism as it enables the teachers to appreciate the complexities of their moral agency (Campbell, 2008). Ethics is firmly connected to virtues of responsibility, trust and credibility. It should always be fair, honest, transparent, and respectful of the rights and privacy of others in society (Frank et al., 2011). Numerous sets of values exist in society.

TENENTS OF THE CONFLICT THEORY IN SOCIETY

The theory is based on the principle that all members of the human society, do not have similar values, interest, expectations or norms of standards. These vary according to one's position, privileges, abilities, class, wealth and other factors. Consensus/ agreement tends to conquer among those with similar privileges, social status, resources and power. This difference may escalate competition in different situations and time leading to possible conflicts in society. The structural and organizational setups in society can bring about feelings of denials, jealousy and exclusion, thus creating division in the social system which can escalate disagreements, hostility, opposition among different social groups of people in society.

Due to constant changes in social institutions such as the economy and politics, this can enhance conflicts especially where certain institutions are unprepared or even refuse to change for example, changes in the economy versus family life and education. Where a family continues to produce more dependents, when the economy is depressed, this results into conflict. The conflict theory also states that where leadership systems are bureaucratic, social or political, they may be maintained through force, coercion and inducement. The top hierarchy tend to demand for conformity to its values, ideas and expectations from the lower class by using force, coercion and inducements. When social order is maintained, there is a possibility for conflict to merge in the social system.

CONFLICT THEORY

Conflict theory, first purported by Karl Marx, is a theory that, society is in a state of perpetual conflict because of competition for limited resources. Conflict theory holds that social order is maintained by domination and power, rather than by consensus and conformity. According to conflict theory, those with wealth and power try to hold on to it by any means possible, chiefly by suppressing the poor and powerless. A basic premise of conflict theory is that individuals and groups within society will work to try to maximize their own wealth and power. The conflict theory is defined as a theoretical strategy which emphasizes the existence of opposing forces in the

- Life of an individual or individuals
- Groups of people, for instance, organizations

- Social structures, institutions and their functions
- Society as a whole

In other words, the conflict theory introduces the idea that a human society is a collection of competing interest groups, individuals and structures, each with their own motives, expectations, goals, and so on. Individuals, groups of people and structures in the human society are rarely in consensus but are characterized by constraints and disagreements. Other words that suggest conflict are, disorder, disharmony, instability, dis-equilibrium and disagreement. The following is a list of potential sources of conflict in a human society

- Those with money versus those without money,
- Those with power versus the powerless, rulers versus the ruled,
- Management versus the workers,
- Between the sexes
- Husbands versus wives,
- Children versus the parents
- Older versus younger generations,
- Between races, e.g. whites versus blacks,
- Between ethnic communities or regions,
- Law abiding versus law breakers,
- Between countries

The conflict theory approach is a way of explaining how human societies consider or accept the possibility of change occurring in human societies. Change in many aspects of social life including structures and functions is inevitable as time goes on.

In reference to the conflict theory, the following are its implications for Education:

- Education is an important social institution in society. As a result, education is subjected to and made victim of various social forces in society. The forces can inspire conflict in education, such as economic as well as the political forces. There is often a spill-over from such social institutions and their forces into education especially when changes occur in them. This conflict in other social institutions does enter into

education. For example, the economic remuneration questions or problems of the school teachers and lecturers. Likewise, conflict in education due to student behavior, drug problems, academic achievement can breed conflict in other social institutions e.g. family

- Education is a delicate institution especially due to the fact that children are learners in schools. Its wellbeing, upkeep, performance, achievement and chain are mostly dependent on other strongly structured social institutions for example the family, economy, religion and politics for most of its support and livelihood. These institutions have firm and stronger foundations for cushioning change and conflict if they occur. Reforms in education can come due to changes in other institutions, economy and politics. The idea here suggests that if conflicts were to enter the education institutions as a result of outside reforms, these can be cushioned by these other social institutions whose foundations are much stronger than in education. This aspect would have the effect of lessening conflict in education.
- Education should often be reviewed in order to take into consideration and accommodate the views of other affected parties or groups of people. This exercise will assist in minimizing instances of disagreement/conflict amongst stake holders in schools whenever hot/sensitive issues and questions arise instantly for example, the teaching of family education, emerging diseases such as Covid-19, H.I.V Aids, and policies to guide the readmission of school girls to class after giving birth among others.
- The educational curriculum oriented to dependence on academic examinations as the only recognized and accepted forms of accessing a whole person, encourages and trains peoples to compete. It prepares individuals for competition and not cooperation in society. Competition is a form of conflict. Assisting students to learn through examinations only helps to entrench conflict tendencies and competitive attitudes in individuals.
- To minimize such risks in society other forms of accessing learners should be installed in schools such as social and personality assessments. This approach will facilitate more cooperation/ consensus among the learners even after school where they would take up other responsibilities in society.

- Another cause of conflict in schools can be due to unequal distribution of resources and facilities such as funds, books, teaching equipment and even qualified teachers. This differentiated academic provisions can bring about poor performance among learners in different schools not due to lack of intellectual abilities or ignoring hard-work. Therefore, by allocating equalized learning resources amongst schools and learners, this will harmonize their achievements which in the end will reduce conflict amongst schools and learners.
- The main subject taught in schools are mechanisms that can help to instill consensus, assist learners to acquire cooperation, integration and order in society. Similarly, the rules and regulations in schools are crucial ways in helping learners to learn how and prepare them to obey. This preparation facilitates learners to obey more complex laws in the larger society. In this analysis, it is important to appreciate how the teaching of subjects like Christian/ Islamic Religious Education, Environmental Studies, social subjects such as Geography, History and even languages such as English, Kiswahili, rules and regulations can play important roles in enhancing consensus and cooperation to reduce conflict in society.

This paper is also based on the Deontological and Theological theory of ethical decision making where Nagy (2006) quotes Blackburn as stating that deontology is referred to as ethics based on the notion of a duty or work is right. Similarly, Nagy quotes Blackburn stating Teleology as a philosophical principle that ethical decision made should be based on aspiring for the greatest good and happiness to the greatest number of people such that when a Teleological decision is made, it should benefit the greatest number of people.

This study is also based on the psychoanalytic theory where human beings would use the super-ego to determine the right moral action whenever they are confronted with decision making.

Types of conflicts in learning institutions

Inter-personal conflict- is a disagreement between two or more members in a social organization for example, family, school, religious institution or society in general. In the school system, interpersonal conflicts can occur between teachers versus teachers, students

versus teachers or students versus students. The conflict can be emotional, physical, personal, or professional.

Intra-group conflict- refers to conflict that occurs between members of a group that shares common goals and interests. Intragroup conflict can occur in small-scale, such as within a workplace or large-scale, such as between members of a specific population group. In the school system, intragroup conflicts can occur between members of staff or even amongst students.

Inter-organizational conflict- Conflict that is developed between organizations is named as Inter-organizational conflict. Inter-organizational conflict usually occurs when there is high level of competition between two firms. Mergers, takeovers and acquisitions may also result in Inter-organizational conflict (Likert and Likert 1976). In the school system, it can occur between schools with a history of rivalry academic performance.

Causes of conflicts in learning institutions

Limited resources- When students are literally struggling for amenities in schools, conflicts may arise as to who gets what and when.

Poor communication network - (Iwuagwu, 2011) highly rates poor communication network as one of the main causes of conflict in schools. For example, school principals who introduce innovation without first educating the teachers and students of the nature and foreseen benefits of the innovation in the school cannot expect genuine cooperation and participation from them which can lead to conflict.

Task inter-dependence when a task designated for one teacher is carried out by another, there is bound to be conflict. Similarly, when the task of another department is dependent upon another, conflict can also arise.

Overlapping authority when two or more departments in an institution claim authority for tasks designated, conflict may arise. Similarly, when two teachers claim authority on tasks given, conflict may arise.

Role conflict when school systems fail to carefully assess teachers' behaviours in performing tasks designated, this may arise in teachers who are given roles not actually performing to the school's expectations. Clearly defined roles usually mean that a teacher will not do any tasks given to another teacher. Streamlining roles usually tends to stop cases of conflict in roles.

Inequitable treatment- A school system has to be just in assigning roles. Here we mean that one teacher is not assigned all roles in the school rather than designating roles to different teachers with different capabilities would be just thus avoiding conflict between them.

Drug use- In the contemporary society, it has been observed that the use of drugs especially hard drugs has an effect on both student and teacher behavior that can cause unacceptable behavior in learning institutions and the society at large.

Effects of conflicts in learning institutions

i. **Lack of co-operative learning:** It is well observed in school institutions that majority of teachers do not get along with the heads in these institutions. This lack of cooperation often leads to conflict which increases laxity and laziness in school with regards to teaching practices. Teachers tend not to care about the learner as opposed to their own wellbeing. This often leads to poor delivery of the Curriculum and poor student performance.

ii. **Development of frustration:** Teachers who perform well in school may not be recognized for their hard work. This lack of recognition often leads to demoralization amongst teachers who now tend not to perform in their work in school. The frustrations brought about by conflicts as mentioned earlier in this paper often weigh them down and thus the quality of education in these academic institutions, they work for reduces.

iii. **Lack of professional motivation:** when teachers in a learning institution lack motivation which may be brought about by teacher-to-teacher conflict or teacher to head-teacher conflicts, teachers tend to be “sluggish” in delivering quality education to students. In the long run, students fall victims of lack of professional motivation. Teachers need to be motivated from time to time just to show that the work they do is appreciated.

iv. **Spill-over effects:** This occurs when conflict in the learning institutions affect families where these children come from. This results into parent/guardian versus child conflict.

Methodology

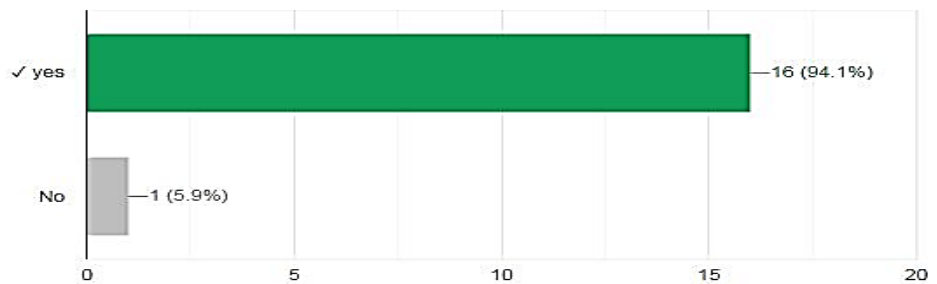
This research was conducted using Google Questionnaires and self-administered questionnaires, where the data collected, data was used to draw out the findings, conclusion and recommendation of the study.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

A sample target of 100 participants consisting of both teachers and students was used to determine the findings of this paper. The researcher administered Google questionnaires as follows:

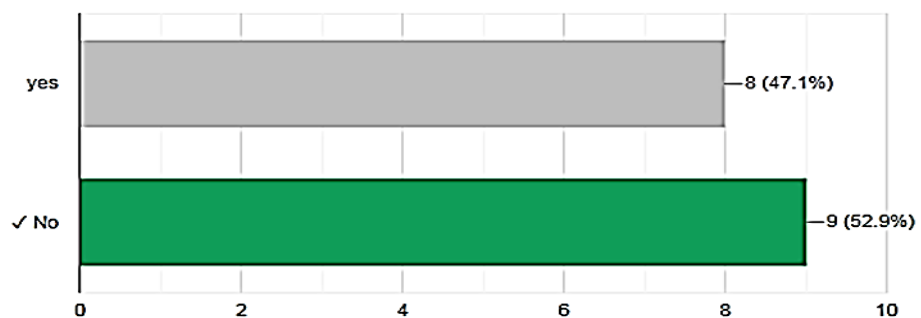
1. As a teacher, while interacting with your students on a daily basis, do you find students' behaviour in general has regressed in both ethical and moral values?

16 / 17 correct responses



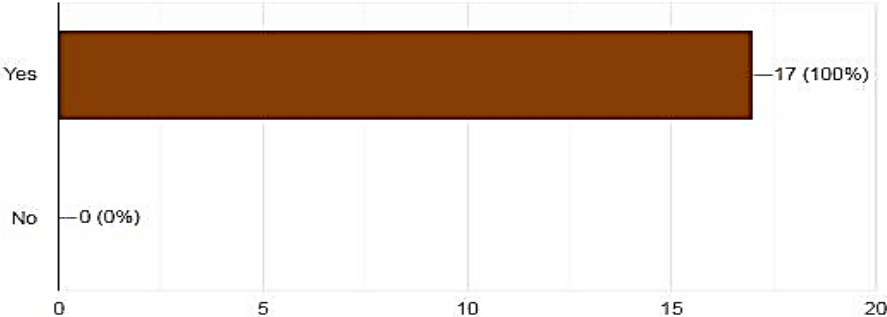
2. As a teacher, do you think students in general suffer from mental illness that has not yet been addressed or is in a regressive state and often comes out occasionally on the surface judging by the up rise in students' indiscipline cases in the country today that cannot be explained?

9 / 17 correct responses



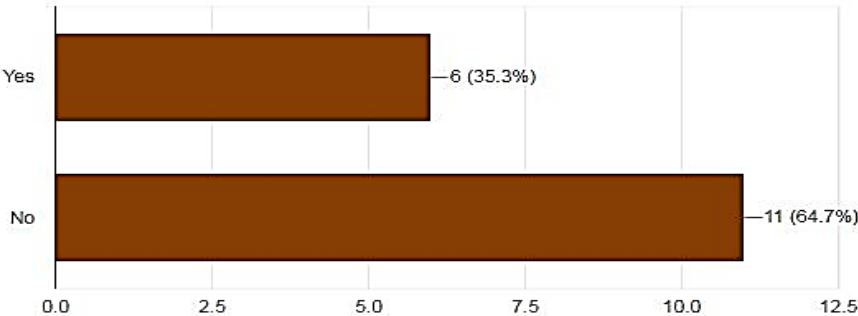
3. Do you think educational institutions in the country should create or incorporate departments that handle counselling of students?

17 responses



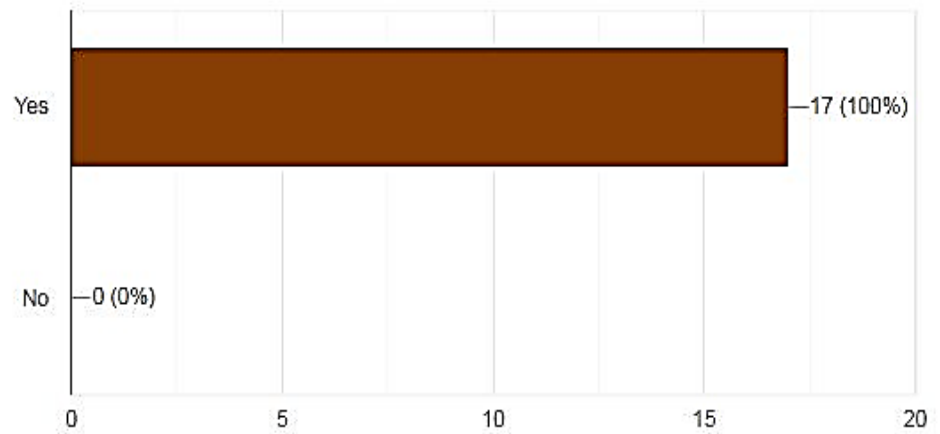
4. As a teacher, do you think the rising cases of immorality in educational institutions in the country should solely be addressed by teachers as they are the primary guardians of students while in school?

17 responses



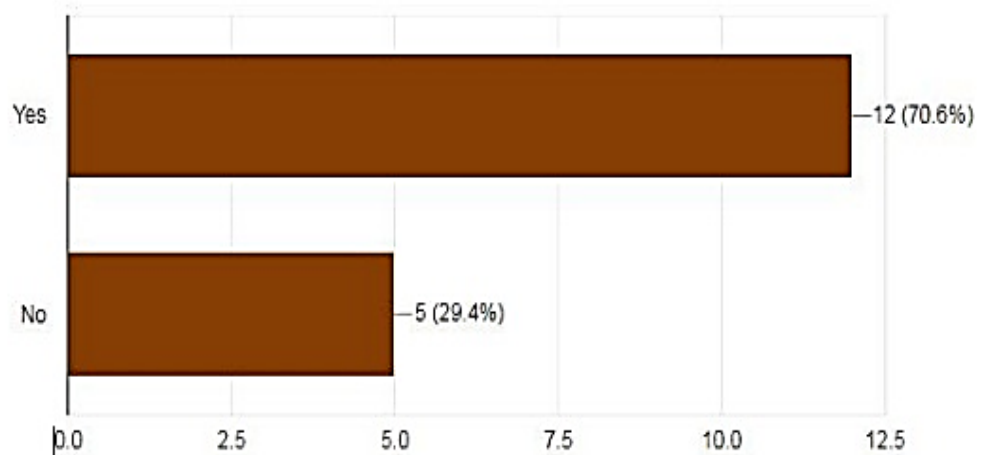
6. As a teacher, should new reforms be introduced in the school system in regards to cultivating a friendlier environment where students do not look at teachers as antagonists but rather as friends who can listen to their views and these views can be addressed in a formal and logical manner?


17 responses



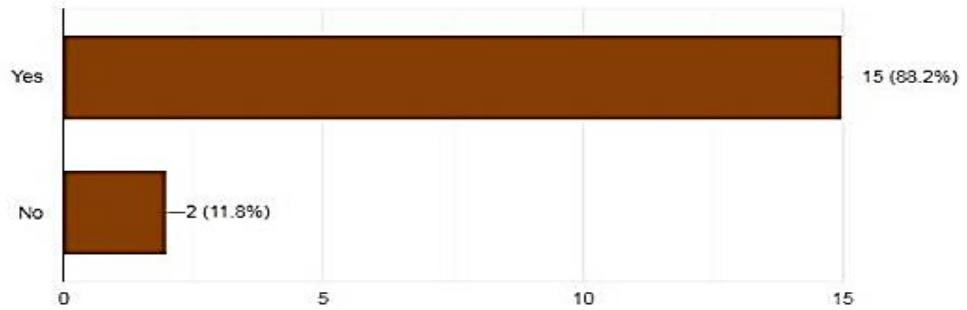
7. As a teacher, do you think students have lost respect for teachers?

17 responses



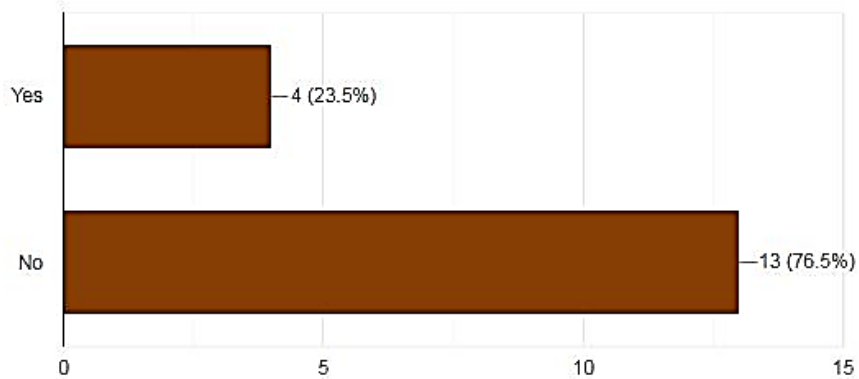
8. As a teacher, do you think lack of ideals brought by pressures of social –economic factors in society have led to neglect of good values and morals in students? 


17 responses



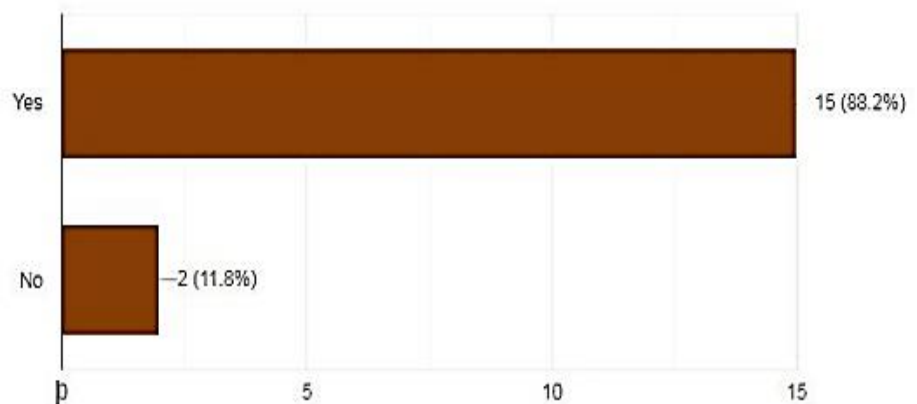
9. Do you think that the current increase in cases of indiscipline amongst students is due to a dysfunctional educational system?

17 responses



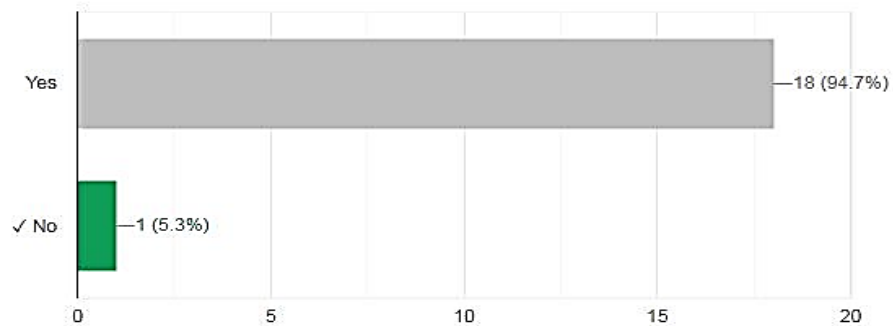
10. Do you think that the current social-economic crisis brought about by the recent covid-19 pandemic has increased indiscipline in students? 

17 responses



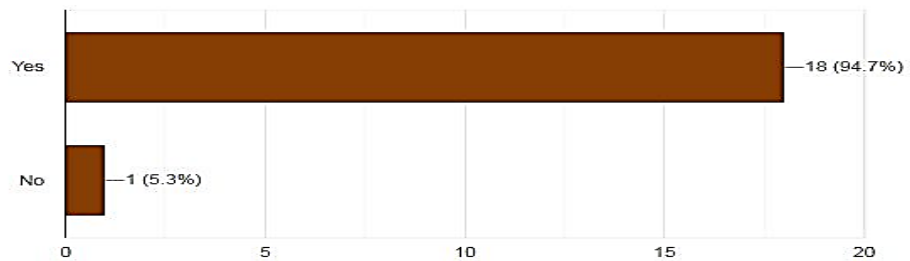
1. As a student, do you think that the atmosphere of schools should be made ethical and empathetic so that development of feeling for high ideals in students, respect and work according to them may be done to reduce cases of indiscipline in schools?

1 / 19 correct responses



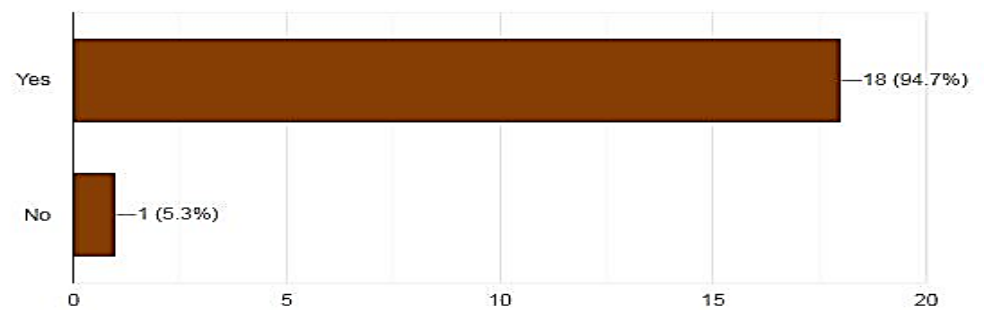
3. Do you think emphasis should be given on the importance of labour, work experience and vocational education, so that students may escape themselves from disappointment and dissatisfaction in their future life?

19 responses



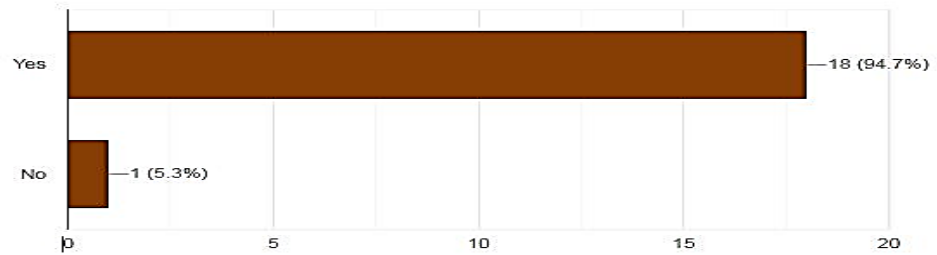
4. Do you think intimate relations should be established in schools, home and society where parents of students and the teachers of the society play an active role in providing solutions to problems brought about by indiscipline of students in schools?

19 responses



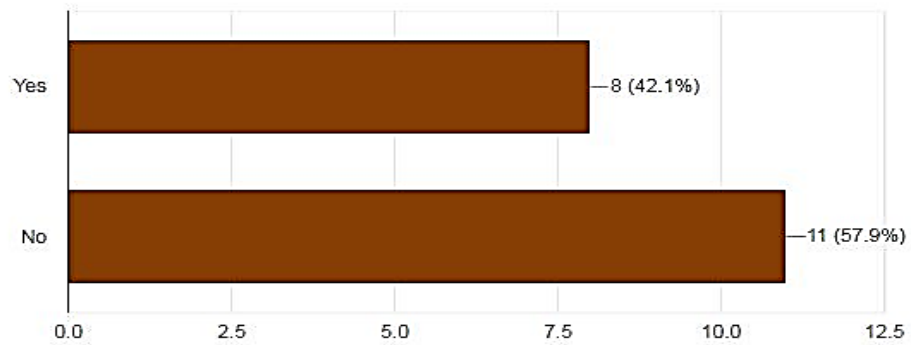
5. As a student, do you think employment opportunities should be provided with ease to reduce tension and stress brought about by students thinking of unemployment rather than employment after finishing school?

19 responses



6. As a student, do you think corporal punishment should be reinstated in schools to curb indiscipline cases that are on the increase today?

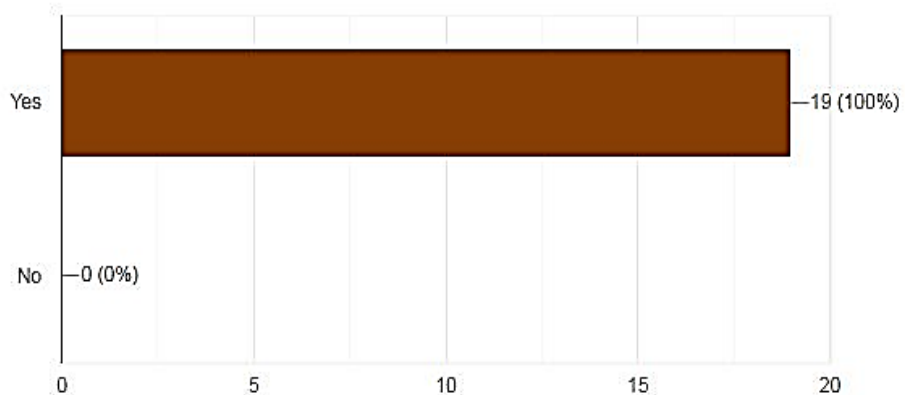
19 responses



7. As a student, do you think proper arrangements should be made for establishing personal contact between teachers and students?

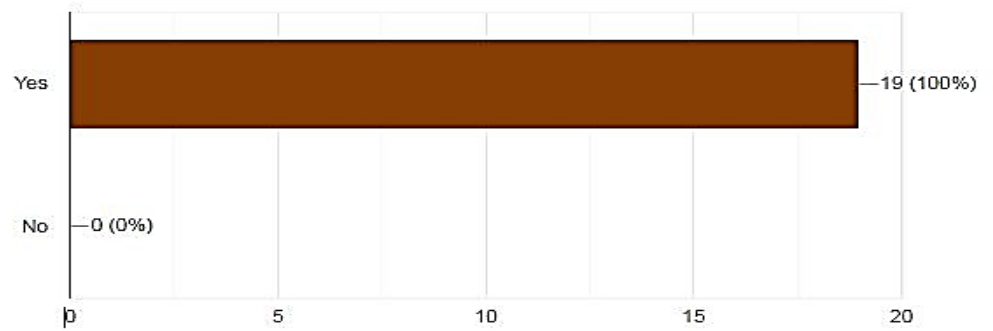


19 responses



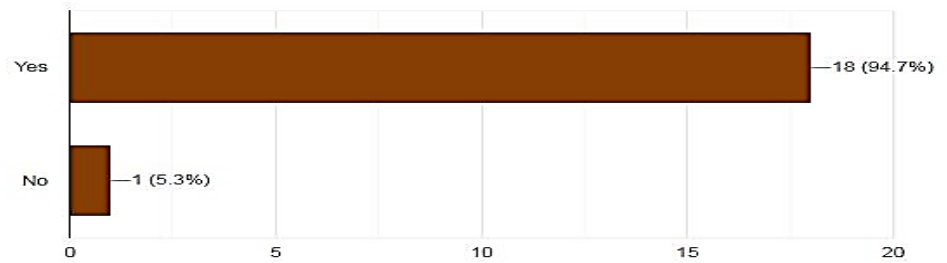
8. Do you think school authorities should have empathetic views towards students' problems?

19 responses



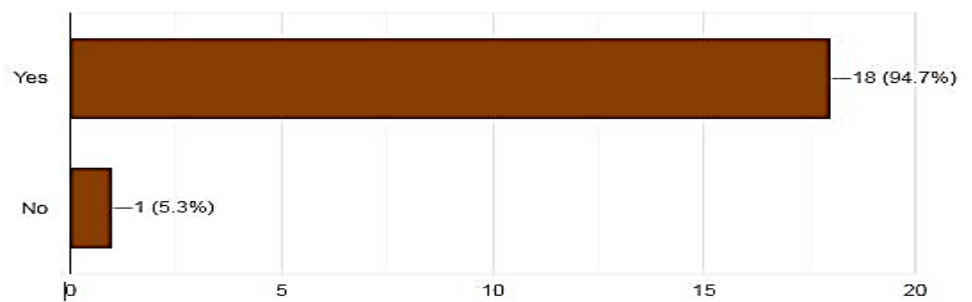
9. Should education systems/frameworks be oriented to practical aspects of Education aimed at reducing indiscipline in schools?

19 responses



10. Should the economic and social conditions of teachers be improved in schools in order to reduce the occurrence of conflicts between teachers and students?

19 responses



CONCLUSIONS

From the finding above, conclusion can be made that it is true that there is an upsurge in moral degradation in schools. There is need for reforms in the education sector taking into account that moral degradation is on the rise. Learning institutions need to introduce new friendlier reforms such as revival of better practices for guidance and counselling in schools. The findings also indicate that the current Covid-19 pandemic has contributed to student teacher antagonism in schools. Therefore, a conducive learning environment should be created for example, teacher / students, teachers / teachers, students / students where they can interact and correlate in harmony during the schooling and even after completion of schooling.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The researcher's findings in this paper are that due to the existing conflict between teachers and students, recommendations have to be made. These recommendations are

- First and foremost, Educational Institutions need to revamp their entire departments by improving dialogue. Defining roles that each department carries out and thirdly adequate resources should be provided to the different department so as to stop competition for the few resources available. This would reduce conflicts between departments.
- Students need to understand their boundaries and how to relate to teachers and vice versa.
- Inculcating the teaching of moral values through the teaching of subjects in schools such as Christian and Islamic religious education, Geography, Environmental Studies, History Languages such as English, French, Kiswahili, rules and regulations that enhance consensus and cooperation.
- Introduction of reward systems for both members of staff in schools and students for good performance other than appraisals that tend to encourage competition which in its self is a conflict.

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