

## **Relationship between Principals' Transactional Leadership Style and Students' Conformity to Rules in Public Secondary Schools in Nakuru County, Kenya.**

### **Authors**

**Dorcas K. Okindo<sup>1</sup>; Prof. John, N. Ochola<sup>2</sup>; Prof. Frederick B. J. A Ngala<sup>3</sup>**  
**<sup>1,2,3</sup> Kabarak University, Department of Education, School of Education**  
**Main author email: [dorcasokindo@g.mail](mailto:dorcasokindo@g.mail)**

### **Abstract**

This study sought to determine the relationship between principals' transactional leadership style and students' conformity to rules in Public Secondary Schools in Nakuru County, Kenya. The study was underpinned on the Social Control Theory by Hirschi (1969). The study adopted a correlational research design. The target population of this study was 338 principals, 338 deputy principals, 3426 teachers and 116,374 students in 338 public secondary schools in Nakuru County. Stratified random sampling was used to select 100 schools. Purposive sampling was used to select 100 principals while Proportionate, and simple random sampling was used to select 346 teachers and 383 students. Ten per cent of the deputy principals were selected. Questionnaires were used to collect data from principals, teachers and students, while interviews were used to collect data from Deputy Principals. Test-retest reliability had a coefficient of 0.70, indicating that the instruments were reliable. The finding revealed a statistically significant positive relationship between transactional leadership style and students' conformity to school rules  $r(=0.410; p=0.000)$ . It was concluded that principals' transactional leadership style significantly relates to students' conformity to school rules. Provision of rewards and recognition constantly to students who conform to school rules and reprimand to those students who do not conform to school rules by the principal is necessary. The study recommends that the principal should be willing to use suspension and even repeated suspension where necessary as a tool for dealing with students demonstrating chronic behaviour problems that disrupt the school climate.

**Key Terms:** Transactional, leadership, style, conformity, rules

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Dubrin (2016) defines leadership style as the predominant pattern of behaviour mostly applied by the leader. Dubrin further states that modern organizations need influential leaders who adjust to the rapidly changing environment. Paracha et al. (2012) observe that transactional leadership style deals with the exchange between the leader and the followers. The authors' further state that a transactional leader aims to ensure the path-goal accomplishment is clearly understood by the followers, to remove potential barriers with the organization and to achieve the predetermined goals. The followers accept the structure already established by the leader in exchange for performance rewards.

Lojdrová (2016) defines non-conformity to school rules as deviance to a set of norms that are accepted by a great number of people in a community or society. This study sought to establish the relationship between principals' transactional leadership style and students' conformity to rules have been noted. A study by Hayden (2009) on the nature and development of debate about deviance and violence in schools in England established that over 68.3 per cent of teachers had been assaulted by students at some point during their teaching career.

Bonny (2012) found that Kenyan secondary schools have rules and regulations designed to assist students in conforming to the expected norms of the society. However, research by Bonny (2012) found that some students fail to abide by the school rules. Kuria (2012), Rianga (2013) and Mbogoria (2012) established that principals' leadership styles have a considerable influence on students' conformity to school rules. This means that the use of an appropriate leadership style can greatly influence students' conformity to school rules. The studies done seem not to agree on the leadership style that most predict students' conformity to school rules. Education Task Force (2015) formed by the County Director of Education Nakuru County to investigate challenges in education that led to the poor academic performance reported high levels of students' non-conformity to school rules. Equally, the Quality Assurance and Standards Officer, Nakuru County (2018) document alarming cases of students' non-conformity to school rules in the County. This means that there is a problem of students' non-conformity to school rules, and this non-conformity to school rules is manifested in schools.

Stakeholders in education in Nakuru County have expressed great concern over high levels of students' non-conformity to school rules (Education task force, 2015). The Quality Assurance and Standards Officer Nakuru County (2018) confirmed that there had been several reported cases of students' non-conformity to school rules linked to teenage pregnancies, absenteeism, truancy, destruction of school property, cheating in examinations, mass walkout from schools, drug and substance abuse, stealing, fights, bullying, coming to school late among others. Resolve has been made by various task forces and subsequent implementation of their recommendations. Nevertheless, students' non-conformity to rules remains to occur in secondary schools. It can be seen that if the problem persists, it will lead to high indiscipline levels among students and thereby continue to cause poor academic performance. This study was done to establish the relationship between principals' transactional leadership style and students' conformity to rules in public secondary schools in Nakuru County, Kenya.

## 2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

The transactional leader holds the "Carrot and the stick" where rewards are given for successful completion of set tasks and punishment for failure (Owiti, 2016). Paracha et al. (2012) noted that transactional leadership style

deal with the exchange between the leader and the followers. Leaders using the transactional leadership style give certain duties to be performed by the team members, and the leader provides rewards or punishment based on performance results Olayemi (2015). This implies that the relationship between the leader and the follower is based on bargaining exchange or reward system. This study sought to assess the relationship between principals' transactional leadership style and students' conformity to school rules. According to Flanigan (2012), transactional leadership style is effective when rewarding hard-working people. This implies that in a school setting, the principal can use transitional leadership style to control students' behaviour through a system of rewards and punishment. The principal would, therefore give rewards for good behaviour in terms of tokens, field trips, and recognition of praise. In contrast, bad behaviour is punished through condemning or withdrawal of physical rewards.

Transactional leadership style is usually characterized by contingency rewards, active management by exception where leaders take punitive action if a deviation occurs and passive management by exception whereby leaders fail to intervene until problems become serious. Seblewongel (2016) opines that transactional leadership style exhibits subordinates' commitment to their assigned duties because it is a matter of accomplishing duties as directed. Kashu (2013) carried a study on the influence of principals leadership styles on students KCSE performance in Kajiado North District, Kajiado County Kenya. Sampled 15 Principals and 82 teachers, findings showed that 6 out of 15 principals used transactional leadership style. In the same study, it was observed that attendance, completion of syllabus, short term goals achievement were emphasized and there was minimum focus on the long term targets. According to the principals, it was concluded used transactional leadership style to reward teachers for the work well done. The study concluded that principals 'use of transactional, democratic and autocratic leadership styles did not improve academic performance. This means that principals' leadership style does not impact performance.

Ongeri et al. (2012), on the other hand, found different results in terms of the use of the transactional leadership style. The study established a negative linear relationship between transactional leadership style and absenteeism among teachers. It was concluded from this study that leadership styles influence absenteeism. There seems to be inconsistency in findings in the use of transactional leadership style and influence by principals on either discipline or academic performance. It is generally recognized that students' conformity to school rules depends on management leadership styles. Robers et al. (2013), Theriot and Dupper (2010) confirm that students non-conformity to school rules tend to rise at the middle secondary school level. The researchers further state that students' misbehaviour in secondary school has far-reaching consequences, hence worries the stakeholders in education, and therefore needs to be addressed. According to the data from the National Center for Statistics, 41 per cent of public secondary school teachers reported that students' misbehaviour interferes with their teaching. Lannie and Mccurdy (2007) found a correlation between classroom non-conformity to learning and low achievement for students. This study explored the relationship between principals' transactional leadership styles and students' conformity to learning rules.

All students must be in school in all school days. Romero and Lee (2008) established that chronic absenteeism was highest among children living in poor families in the USA. The authors' further state that absenteeism has harmful consequences not only for students but also for schools and communities. Absenteeism or truancy affects the academic achievement of students, Heilbrunn (2007). The author found that

non-truant students have higher grades compared to truant ones. This indicates that there is a problem of students' conformity to the rule of attending school without fail. This study sought to investigate the relationship between principals' transactional leadership style and students' conformity to school attendance.

A study by Adeyemi (2010) established that examinations irregularities are widely reported in both internal and external examination in many educational institutions. This shows that students have flouted examination rules. Olabisi and Abiola (2014) found a higher rate of students' non-conformity to examination rules in public high schools in Ondo state Nigeria. Kupchick (2010) observes that in most schools across the USA conformity to safety rules had been violated by students. This led to the formulation of zero tolerance policies, which require punishment for any violation of any rules, regardless of any severity of the violation. This means there is gross non-conformity to rules in high schools in the USA. This study sought to assess the relationship between principals' transactional leadership style and students' conformity to examination and security rules.

There are many reported cases of non-conformity to rules related to bullying and fighting. Omoteso (2010) reported that 88.1 per cent of participants had been bullied, 33.1 per cent were bullies and 64.7 per cent had been involved in relational bullying while retaliation for bullying in the past was 51.1 per cent this shows a great majority of students have not conformed to the rule of not bullying others. This means that the principal should use an appropriate leadership style to enhance conformity to school rules. The studies above have not looked at the relationship between the principals' transactional leadership style and students' conformity to rules related to drugs and alcohol abuse, which this study intended to explore.

Cheloti et al. (2014) noted that principals and deputy principals had been blamed on the lack of adequate relational skills in dealing with students' issues. Cheloti et al. (2014) further established that arson attacks in Itierio, Endarasha and Kisii High school were due to lack of participation by students in the decision-making process regarding rules made by the administration. It is therefore apparent that students have violated school rules. The causes of such violations is not clear hence, the need to establish the relationship between principals' transactional leadership style and students' conformity to rules related to their welfare.

### 3.0 RESULTS

#### Descriptive Analysis

The objective of the study was to assess the relationship between principals' transactional leadership style and students' conformity to rules in public secondary schools in Nakuru County, Kenya. The objective was analyzed using percentages and correlation analysis.

#### Principals' Transactional Leadership Style (According to Teachers' Data)

The analysis in table 1 below was computed according to teachers' data regarding principals' transactional leadership style:

**Table 1: Principals Transactional Leadership Style (According to Teachers' Data)**

Statement	N	SD strongly Disagree	D Disagree	N Neutral	A Agree	SA Strongly Agree
The principal calls attention to what students can get for what they have accomplished	282	8.2%	16.3%	35.1%	22.3%	18.1%
The principal provides rewards or recognition when students reach their goals	282	7.8%	13.5%	13.1%	30.5%	35.1%
The principal tells students what to do if they want to be rewarded	282	11.0%	14.2%	16.3%	32.6%	25.9%

The findings in Table 1 indicate that 40.4 per cent of the respondents revealed that principals bring to attention to what students can get for tasks they have accomplished. This means that students' behaviour is motivated by rewards for good behaviour and punishment for non-compliance to expected set standards. This view is affirmed by 65.6 per cent of the respondents who stated that principals provide rewards or recognition when students reach their goals. The study indicates that principals are using this style to manage students' behaviour. Gill (2016) noted that leaders who used transactional leadership style strictly controlled workers through the application of rules. This study has revealed that principals' in public secondary schools in Nakuru County Kenya use transactional leadership style to enhance students' conformity to school rules.

**Table 2: Principals' Transactional Leadership Style (According to Principals' Data)**

Statement	N	SD strongly Disagree	D Disagree	N Neutral	A Agree	SA Strongly Agree
The principal calls attention to what students can get for what they have accomplished	82	4.9%	17.1%	36.6%	20.7%	20.7%
The principal provides rewards or recognition when students reach their goals	82	6.1%	13.4%	12.2%	31.7%	36.6%
The principal tells students what to do if they want to be rewarded	82	7.3%	15.9%	11.0%	36.6%	29.3%

The findings in Table 2 indicate that 68.3 per cent of the respondents stated that a principal provides rewards or recognition when students reach their goals. This suggests that more than half the respondents indicated that principals used a transactional leadership style to control students' behaviour. The results also



showed that 65.9 per cent of the respondents stated that principals tell students what to do if they wanted to be rewarded. This means that the principals came up with set standards and expected behaviour, which is a principle of transactional leadership style. The principals and teachers concurred that most principals use transactional leadership style to control students' behaviour. In conclusion, the study established that principals used transactional leadership style to ensure students' conform to rules in public secondary schools in Nakuru County, Kenya.

### Correlation Analysis

In testing the nature of relationship between transactional leadership style and students' conformity to rules, Pearson correlation test was computed. Table 5 shows the findings of the analysis:

**Table 1: Relationship between transactional Leadership Style and Students' Conformity to School Rules Overall (Teachers and Principals)**

		Transactional Leadership Style
<b>Students' Conformity to Rules</b>	Pearson Correlation	.410 **
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	364
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).		

The findings of the study show a statistically significant positive relationship between principals' transactional leadership style and students' conformity to rules ( $r = 0.410$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). This means that principals in public secondary schools in Nakuru County use transactional leadership style to enhance students' conformity to rules. This means that principals in Nakuru County used a transactional leadership style to enhance students' conformity to school rules. This implies that principals should use contingency rewards to motivate. Similarly, the principal should use forms of punishment, like denial of privileges and suspension to deter deviant behaviour. The principals should adopt a process of exchange where he/she specifies the rules and rewards or punishment for adherence or non-adherence in accordance with the achievement of those criteria.

### 4.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It was concluded that principals' transactional leadership style significantly relates to students' conformity to school rules. Therefore, it is important for school principals to provide rewards and recognition constantly to students who conform to school rules, while use reprimand to those who do not conform to school rules. The study also recommends that principals should be willing to use suspension and even repeated suspension as a tool for dealing with students demonstrating chronic behaviour problems that disrupt the school climate. The principal should be cautious when meting punishment to the students for they can trigger students' non-conformity to school rules.

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