

**GROUP POLARIZATION IN DECISION MAKING: A STUDY OF
SELECTED SECONDARY SCHOOL DISCIPLINARY PANELS IN RONGO
DISTRICT OF KENYA**

By

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KEY WORDS

Group, polarization

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ABSTRACT

Behaviour problems have been on the rise in Kenyan schools for some time now. Various maladaptive behaviours found among school children include bullying, vandalism, stealing, alcohol and drug abuse, truancy, not completing homework assignments and other forms of problem behaviours. These problem behaviours impact negatively on the teaching and learning enterprises of schools as well as on the safety and security of the school environment. As consequence, schools have to develop student behaviour management practices aimed at addressing student problem behaviours. Corporal punishment was a major means by which schools dealt with students' problem behaviours. However, because of the human rights abuses associated with corporal punishment, the Kenyan Ministry of Education had to abolish corporal punishment in 2001 and instructed schools to evolve more effective student behaviour management practices with strong emphasis on positive student behaviour development. Schools' student behaviour management practices including policies on student behaviour expectations, school rules and regulations as well as counselling services are all to be coordinated by each School Disciplinary Panel. A School Disciplinary Panel is to be composed of small group of teachers as a way of emphasizing the latter's roles in student behaviour development and not just student academic or educational development.

The central concern of this study was to investigate the Kenyan schools' behaviour management practices as being implemented by School Disciplinary Panels especially in the latter's responses to students' problem behaviours. The study investigated processes of decision making by Kenyan secondary school disciplinary panels for the management of student behaviours and the contribution of this to student behaviour development.

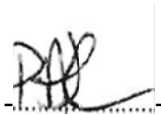
Mixed methods research design was adopted for the study. The adoption of both quantitative and qualitative approaches was to ensure the collection of comprehensive

information for better understanding of the behaviour management practices of Kenyan schools. The population for the study comprised all Kenyan schools with behaviour management practices and School Disciplinary Panels. Rongo District, one of the largest education districts in Kenya was chosen for the study. Ten of the schools in this district were actually involved in the study. The selection of the schools took into consideration the three different types of schools in Kenya (Girls' Only, Boys' Only and Co-educational schools) as well as other variables of particular interest to the study. Seventy-eight (78) disciplinary panel members from the ten selected schools were the participants of the study. Data collection was by use of questionnaire method (the Modified Choice Dilemma Questionnaire, MCDQ) and interview protocol.

The findings of the study revealed the existence of the phenomenon of group polarization in decision making processes of disciplinary hearings conducted by the School Disciplinary Panels. Study findings also revealed that the nature of information shared during disciplinary hearings, group members' motivation for approval of others and their concern for their status in the group as well as the personality characteristics of the members of the disciplinary panels (including gender, age, teaching experiences and school affiliation) were the major influences responsible for the existence of group polarization in the disciplinary processes of the Kenyan secondary school disciplinary panels. Since group polarization is about consensus decisions with characteristics of being collective decisions as well as greater support and acceptance for the decisions the conclusion of the study is that good quality decisions of Kenyan secondary school disciplinary panels have great potentials for effective management of student behaviours and for positive behavioural development of students as an important objective of education and or the schools.

DECLARATION

I declare that *Group polarization in decision making: A study of selected secondary school disciplinary panels in Rongo district of Kenya* is my own work, that, it has not been submitted for any degree or examination in any other university, and that, all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by complete references.



PETER JAIRO O. ALOKA



27/08/2012

DATE

DEDICATION

I dedicate this PhD thesis to my parents, mother, Julita Aloka and late dad David

Aloka.



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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACPA: - American College Personnel Association.

ANOVA: - One way Analysis of Variance

CDQ: - Choice Dilemma Questionnaire

KCSE: - Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education

KNUT: - Kenya National Union of Teachers

KSSSC: - Kenya Secondary School Students Council

KUJ: - Kenyan Union of Journalists

KUPPET: - Kenya Union of Post Primary School Teachers

MANOVA: - Multivariate Analysis of Variance

MDCQ: - Modified Choice Dilemma Questionnaire

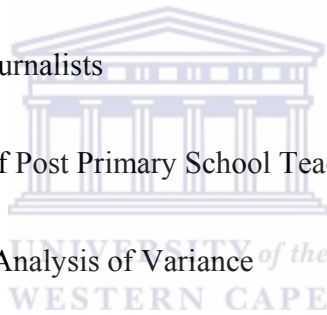
NACADA: - National Council of Anti-drug Agency

NASPA: - National Association of Student Personnel Administrators

NGO: - Non Governmental organization

PTA: - Parents Teachers Association

SPSS: - Statistical Package for Social Sciences



CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1: Background to the Study

Behaviour problems have been on the rise in Kenyan schools for some time now. Kindiki (2009) notes that secondary school students' in-disciplined behaviours have caused public concern and have continued to feature more prominently in the national agenda of Kenya. The Kenyan Ministry of Education, (2005) has also acknowledged the indisciplined or the ill-disciplined behaviours of students especially in the secondary schools of the nation as these maladaptive behaviours negatively impact on teaching and learning process. These maladaptive behaviours of secondary school students have been observed to be of various forms including bullying, vandalism, cheating in examinations, stealing, alcohol and drug abuse, truancy, not completing homework assignments and other forms of misconducts (Kindiki, 2009). A study by Hinshaw (1992) has demonstrated that these maladaptive behaviours of students are associated with their social adjustment and academic performance and therefore, could affect their success in school and later in life.

School behaviour problems in Kenyan secondary schools got noticed internationally in May 1997 when fifty-seven students of Bombolulu Girls Secondary School, Mombasa, perished as a result of fire alleged to have been started by other students. In 1999 at another secondary school in Nyeri, four school prefects were also burnt in their hostel – the attack which was alleged to have been perpetrated by other students who wanted to

prevent the prefects from submitting their names to the school authorities for a punishable offence (Kindiki, 2009). In the same year, a drug addicted and drunken student of Sangalo Institute of Science and Technology murdered the school principal (East African Standard Newspaper Correspondent, 1999). In September 13, 2002, the students of a secondary school in Nairobi were sent home because they burnt down their school hostels (students' residences). On the same date, some students from the University of Nairobi broke into a police station, in Nairobi, to release one of their colleagues charged with a sexual offence (Kindiki, 2004). In October 2005, more than 400 students of Kabuyefwe secondary school, in Kitale went on rampage and burnt down the school administrative block. According to the Daily Nation Newspaper Editorial (2005), the reasons the students gave for their misbehaviour included poor school certificate results (the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education, KCSE), irregular class attendance by teachers, poor food served in the school and the restriction given to boys from having social relationships with their female counterparts.

Over the years, there have been incidences of students' maladaptive behaviours which have escalated particularly in the last decade (Kirui, Mbugua & Sang, 2011). Kindiki, (2009) reiterates that, in 2007 alone, 300 secondary schools in Kenya were closed after students went on the rampage destroying property and a number of them lost their lives. Onyango (2003) observes that such episodes seem to be a reflection of the violence being witnessed in the larger society of Kenya. These rising cases of maladaptive behaviours of students in schools were in part blamed on the gaps in communication or the ineffective communication systems between students and school authorities (or school management teams) in most of the schools in Kenya (The

Daily Nation Newspaper Correspondent, 2007). Behaviour problems of students may impact negatively on the students themselves; affect not only the other students in school, but also the teachers and the school environment as a whole. This is corroborated by Andrews & Taylor, (1998) when they argue that, the students with maladaptive behaviours tend to be absent from school frequently due to suspensions, which in turn make them lose out time to pursue the curricular subjects, an occurrence that would promote poor performance in school academic tasks. This would eventually negatively impact on their academic achievements. Moreover, to the other students and teachers, the behaviour problems of the affected students may make the school environment unsafe for them, hindering teaching and learning, thereby inhibiting the pursuance of the major school goal, that is, to enhance cognitive, emotional, behavioural and overall development of students. For instance, according to Joubbert, de Waal & Rossouw (2004), the behaviour problem of a student often gets other students scared to attend school. Students' maladaptive behaviours are often found to threaten other students making school unsafe and insecure. Consequently, students' access to equal educational opportunities, conduct, normal teaching and learning process, and safe environment is seriously disrupted. Furthermore, the disruptive behaviour and other forms of misconduct by some students (Moloi, 2002), adversely affects other students' safety, security and success in education and creates an environment of fear, emotional unrest consistently experienced in a school. Yahaya, Ramli, Hashim, Ibrahim, Rahman & Yahaya, (2009) add that students' behaviour problems interfere with teaching and learning and are thought to be precursor to later school dropout and similar negative social

outcomes. This is because the students with behaviour problems come to school but they are not ready to learn. As a result, they are unable or unwilling to meet the school's expectations. Students' behaviour problems also interfere with their ability to fully attend to and engage in instructional activities, prompting a call for appropriate directions for addressing barriers to learning. The behaviour problems among students are also thought to be a leading contributor to teachers' stress and attrition, as teachers are subjected to abuse or intimidation and experience unsafe working environment, lack sense of dignity at work, feel angry, humiliated and are depressed (Yahaya, *et al*, 2009). In certain instances, the confidence of the teachers is undermined and their sense of personal safety violated (Slavin, 2003). In general, these student behaviour problems constitute barriers to learning, make school unsafe and negatively affect learning and overall well-being of students and teachers. Moreover, they also contribute to teacher stress thus seriously affecting their performance negatively. All these students' behaviour problems may make Kenyan educational objectives unachievable, thus making schools not producing future adults who should be good functional citizens contributing to the nation's economy and quality of life of the people of Kenya.

Teachers in the past responded to these problems by relying on reactive measures such as corporal punishments to address the behaviour problems (Marais & Meier, 2010). The human right abuses associated with corporal punishments have serious obstacle to learning process and hence to the attainment of the school's educational objective, and the overall development of students (Gottfredon, 1989; Anderson, 1998). To this end, therefore, how best to respond to students' maladaptive behaviours has become a

central concern of schools. In this regard, the Department of Education's (2011) suggestion of a way to respond to students' maladaptive behaviours is for the schools to develop behaviour policy which stipulates standard of behaviour expected of students at schools, including how the standard is to be achieved. This includes any disciplinary penalties for breaking the rules and rewards for good behaviours (Department of Education, 2011). The success of any educational system depends on a systematic effort of the school to address behaviour problems (Rembolt, 1994). Poulou (2005), states that, schools need to find effective ways of promoting students' welfare on one hand, and helping teachers to deal with students' emotional and behavioural difficulties, on the other hand. As a consequence, schools have to develop student behaviour management practices aimed at addressing students' behaviour problems by using positive or reinforcing interventions, counseling and support (Poulou, 2005). Bierman, *et al*, (2002) also note that any serious attempt to reduce youth and adolescent behavioural difficulties must prioritize prevention efforts with the group presenting early "warning signs" of problematic behaviour. Gensheiner, Ayers & Roosa, (1993) contend that prevention cannot be over-emphasized since school society tends to be more reactive and crisis-oriented rather than proactive to conditions that bring about negative effects.

Schools have responsibility of ensuring the overall development of students, by providing an environment that supports their adjustment to school and to life. This would make students to fully realize their unique individual potential, and in their adults' lives, contribute as citizens of their country, and as well as useful members of their families and communities. The goals of any school disciplinary practice for

assisting in the behavioural development of students must include both the prevention of difficulties and the promotion of positive development outcomes (Poulou, 2011). Therefore, schools' policy on students' behaviour must aim at arriving at decisions that alleviate or solve immediate behaviour problems of the students, and facilitate the full development of their potentialities (Williamson & Biggs, 1975). That is, the focus of schools' disciplinary practices should be developing "the whole person" in the students (Sprinthal, 1980). This contention must be responsible for Bojuwoye's (1997) assertion that, educational institutions have greater roles than just providing for the academic needs of their students, and that, schools are obliged to make provisions for non-academic needs of students if they are to develop the whole person in each of the students. Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor & Schellinger, (2011) also add that, educational systems should graduate students who are proficient in core academic subjects, able to work well with others from diverse backgrounds in socially and emotionally skilled ways, and practice healthy behaviours. In other words, schools have an important role to play in raising healthy students by fostering not only their cognitive development but also their social, behavioural and emotional development. The key issues that need to be addressed in the development of students, among other things include, the development of a vision for one's life that includes defining one's life mission, the development of one's character, dealing with sense of direction and finally, the development of competence that deals with concerns on how well one is able to do something (Hiutt, 1997). Walsh, (1990) notes further that, schools prepare students in the aspects of the development of knowledge and character, and training of mental abilities. The students with behaviour problems in school face many

challenges and their development is affected by physical, biological, physiological, psychological, social and environmental factors (Brown-Chidsey & Cummings, 2007).

The Kenyan Ministry of Education acknowledges the negative impact of student behaviour problems and has instituted several measures to redress the situation, and ensure good behaviour in schools. The Kenyan Ministry of Education (2005) gave schools the powers to institute a number of intervention initiatives including overhauling the existing measures to ensure their appropriateness in terms of their impact in reducing student problem behaviours. For example, the rules and regulations for governing students' behaviours as stipulated by the Kenyan Education Act (1967) were reviewed as well as the methods and procedures for minor and severe disciplinary measures such as minor punishment, suspension and expulsion of students from school. Thus, corporal punishment was legally abolished in all Kenyan schools in 2001 (Mweru, 2010). This is because, all along, these used punitive measures are ineffective because they do not actually address the problem; rather, they only focus on eliminating the behaviours (Wheeler & Richey, 2010; Burke, Ayres & Hagan-Burke, 2004). Scheuermann & Hall, (2012) contend that, the punitive measures are mere threats which do not help the students meaningfully; hence, the behaviour problem remains in the student leading to rise in inappropriate behaviours. Bock & Borders, (2011) reiterate that, punitive methods used in addressing behaviour problems among students are reactive but not preventative in nature, and therefore, the consequences of these punishments often end in increasing the maladaptive behaviours rather than ceasing and or controlling them and promoting positive behaviour replacements.

Apart from the abolishment of corporal punishment, other measures put in place to address behaviour problems of the students include the introduction of school guidance and counseling programme. School guidance and counseling is not only being implemented as intervention strategy to address students' behaviour problems but also to assist students in their academic performance, solve personal problems, career problems and social relationships. These student counseling services are considered developmental rather than therapeutic and thus are aimed at assisting students to learn the techniques and skills involved in problem-solving and long-term planning (Bojuwoye, 1997). Other intervention initiatives introduced in schools to address students' maladaptive behaviours, by the Kenyan Ministry of Education, include, curricular and non-curricular activities to provide instructional and other learning experiences to students. This is meant to assist students to develop in them appropriate knowledge, attitudes and values for proper behaviours in and out of school, for improved academic performance and for ability to plan and build towards future careers. For instance, the National Council of Anti-drug Agency, (NACADA) offers drug education in the primary, secondary schools and tertiary institutions. The formation of school prefects' council, the offering of human rights education, child rights campaign, and leadership education as well as the establishment of students' leadership forums are other measures that have been put in place to address the school problem behaviours (Kenyan Ministry of Education, 2005). In 2009, the Kenya Secondary School Student Council (KSSSC) was formed with a view to making secondary school governance more participatory, that is, students become part and parcel of decision-making to ensure that their interests are taken into consideration in

the administration of schools (Jeruto & Kiprop, 2011). Each school in Kenya is also expected to make available to students a booklet that provides guidelines on standards of behaviours expected of students in the school, how the standards of behaviours are to be achieved, the penalties for breaking rules and reward for good behaviours. Apart from written documents to assist students adjust to school environment, the school authorities are also expected to organize school public forums or “Baraza” (Kiswahili word for “public gathering”) where all teachers and students meet to talk freely or express concerns about problems affecting students in school. This is meant to help address issues that affect students in school as early as possible and to prevent occurrence of behaviour problems.

Finally, each school is also mandated to constitute a disciplinary panel with terms of reference or goals of ensuring student behaviour development along with the student overall development objective of the school. This disciplinary panel is exclusively made up of teachers as a way of emphasizing their roles in students’ behavioural development. The Kenyan school disciplinary panels operate as a judicial system and the decisions concerning students’ behaviour problems are made by a group of teachers. In other words, schools’ decisions which should translate into action(s) and or programme services on student behaviour development are to be made by a collection of individuals rather than just the school principal alone, in spite of the fact that the latter has overall authority over the school. According to Bonito (2011), in most schools, a great deal of decision making is achieved through committees, task forces, and other such groups. This is because the complexity of many decisions requires specialized knowledge in numerous areas, usually not possessed by one

person. Zarate (2009) reiterates that, this requirement, coupled with the reality that the decisions made eventually must be accepted and implemented by many units throughout the school, has increased the use of the group approach to decision making. Generally, group decisions are believed to be superior to the individually made decisions (Zarate, 2009; Bonito, 2011). This is because, when a group of people are involved in a decision making task, they apply a greater accumulation of information and experiences to the decision than that possessed by any one member alone. Also there are greater numbers of approaches to the solution of the problem since each individual group member possesses a unique way of searching for information and analyzing the problem. Moreover, there is greater number of alternatives in a group, since group members combine information to develop unique solutions that no single member can conceive, and most importantly, there is better comprehension of a problem and decision, especially when the group members are to be involved in executing the decision (Gunnarsson, 2010).

A disciplinary panel is composed of small number of people. Each Kenyan secondary school disciplinary panel is made up of between 8 to 10 members on average, though the number may be bigger or smaller depending on the number of teachers in a given school. Disciplinary hearings thus appear to be a typical small social group processes and are expected to incorporate dynamic interactions among panel members, as they discuss disciplinary problems of students that should lead to group decisions rather than individually made decisions. The disciplinary panel decisions concerning behaviour problems of students are made after the panel members have studied the case at hand well enough and sought the opinions of other group members,

considering the factors including, the professional demands and school management expectations. Disciplinary panel members are guided by the terms of references which are sets of expectations for appropriate responses to students' maladaptive behaviours. These terms of references guide the panel members' behaviours including the roles and responsibilities members are to play in order for the panel to accomplish what is expected of it. The panel members make decisions based on the factors associated with disciplinary problems, which include types of disciplinary problem, the behaviour characteristics of the offenders, the effects of the disciplinary problems on the victims and the effects of disciplinary problems on the disciplinary tone or image of the school (Department of Education, 2011). The terms of reference for the disciplinary panel serve as goals which guide members' behaviours in terms of roles and responsibilities leading to decisions of the panel. The immediate goal is to provide appropriate response to student disciplinary problems being treated by the panel. The long-term goal is the contribution to the overall development of students in the school. To ensure good quality interactions and panel decisions that will appropriately respond to maladaptive behaviours of students, several factors taken into consideration in the composition of a disciplinary panel include, fair representation of departments, age, experience, gender, and seniority in administration. In addition, the behaviours of panel members can also be attributable to the individual panel members' exposure in a group setting to dimensions which are considered to be more persuasive or due to comparison of opinions with other members (Straus, Parker & Bruce, 2011). This can influence the group members to shift from their individual opinions and decide to go along with the group (Baron, 2005). The panel's decisions emanating

from the dynamic interactions during disciplinary hearings, lead to initiation of appropriate interventions in problem behaviours being addressed. This means that, disciplinary panels operate like small social groups, and the dynamics of disciplinary panels seem to be similar to those of small social groups. If this assumption is the case, then it would be interesting to explore disciplinary hearing process to understand the nature of dynamic interactions among members.

The concern of this study was therefore to investigate Kenyan schools' disciplinary panels with a view to ascertaining if these panels indeed operate like small social groups with dynamic interactions between members and to explore the nature of factors present during disciplinary hearings which also help the panels to arrive at good quality decisions similar to those of small social groups. For instance, did the factors in the dynamic interactions among disciplinary panel members influence their decision making leading to shifts from pre-disciplinary hearing individually made decisions to post-disciplinary hearing group or consensus decisions? That is, does group polarization takes place in Kenyan schools' disciplinary panel hearings?

1.2: Statement of the Problem

The assumption of this study is that disciplinary panels operate as small social groups in order to arrive at consensus decisions. Many decisions in organizations are made by groups, teams, or committees (Gunnarsson, 2010). This could be because collective decisions are believed to be more superior to individually made decisions. As such, in most schools, a great deal of decision making in most issues is achieved

through committees, task forces, and other kinds of groups (Bonito, 2011). This is because the complexity of many decisions requires specialized knowledge in numerous areas, usually not possessed by one person. There are several advantages of consensus decision over and above individual decisions of a school principal in such an important area of student development as behaviour development. Group decision making makes the most of the combined individual abilities, knowledge and expertise of the group members (Boroushaki & Malczewski, 2010). Robbins & Judge (2011) add that, group decision making generates more complete information and knowledge, offers increased diversity of views and greater creativity among group members, enhances increased acceptance of decisions, and leads to more accurate decisions on a given task. Therefore, with many people dealing with a disciplinary problem, there is more likely to consider various dimensions of the problem. More information and collective wisdom are likely to help arrive at more objective decisions and better recommendations for the overall management of student behaviours.

Several factors operate in the dynamic interactions of small social groups which lead to consensus decisions. These includes, the characteristics of group members such as their personalities (Blamey, McCarthy & Smith 2000), gender (Venkatesh, Morris & Ackerman, 2000), age (Watanabe & Shibutani, 2010), teaching experiences (Egyed & Short, 2006), and other aspects such as the characteristics of a message (Worchel, 1992), the message source (Belbin, 2000), effects of the expert knowledge of the members (Wynne, 1995), school tone factors (Bear, 2005), and cultural factors, (Lee & Daphra, 2008), among others. Based on the information available during disciplinary hearing, disciplinary panel members come to a group decision leading to

recommendations on how best to manage student behaviour problems. Disciplinary panel decisions are made based on whether a disciplinary problem emanates from a prohibited behaviour as laid down in the school rules and regulations, whether the student who commits offence should be disciplined or assisted to learn better behavioural expressions, whether a victim of a disciplinary problem needs to be compensated or whether the in-disciplined behaviour impact negatively on the discipline tone of the school (Department of Education, 2011).

The outcomes of the disciplinary hearing are very important because it is expected to lead to quality decisions for the management of student behaviours in such a way that teaching and learning can proceed in an atmosphere of safety and security. Disciplinary panel decisions may also lead to recommendations on how schools can assist students to adjust to school and to develop optimally. The question is if disciplinary panel operates as a small social group, do the dynamics in the panels lead to group decisions different from individual decisions?

The current study investigated Kenyan secondary school disciplinary panels to ascertain the occurrence of group polarization phenomenon in the Kenyan secondary school disciplinary panel processes – that is, whether or not disciplinary panel members shifted from their pre-disciplinary hearing individual decisions to post-disciplinary hearing group decisions. The other concern of the study investigated was with regard to factors which influenced the shift in decisions of panel members from pre-disciplinary individual decisions to post-disciplinary hearing group decisions and on what bases were the decisions made by the disciplinary panel members.

1.3: Objectives of the Study

The main aim of this study was to find out if the phenomenon of group polarization is evident or features in the Kenyan secondary school disciplinary hearings, and if so, to find out what factors in the disciplinary hearing process are responsible for the group polarization.

The other objectives of the study were:

- To investigate whether or not shifts from pre-disciplinary hearing individual decisions to post disciplinary hearing group decisions did occur on the bases of the different aspects of disciplinary problems (that is, based on the type of the problem, the behaviour characteristics of the offenders, the effect of the disciplinary problem on the victims, and effects of the disciplinary problem on the image or the disciplinary tone of the schools).
- To find out whether or not gender, age, years of teaching experiences and school affiliation, are factors in the shifts from pre-disciplinary hearing individual decisions to the post-disciplinary hearing group decisions, among members of selected secondary schools disciplinary panels in Rongo District of Kenya.

1.4: Research Hypotheses

The hypotheses, for the current study, were formulated on the basis of aim and objectives of the study. The study tested the following research hypotheses:

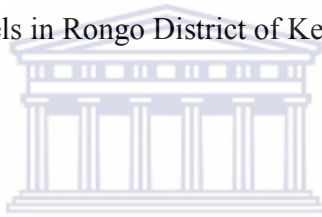
- There are no statistically significant differences in shifts from pre-disciplinary hearing individual decisions to post-disciplinary hearing group decisions by members of selected secondary school disciplinary panels in Rongo District of Kenya.
- Factors related to the types of disciplinary problems, behaviour characteristics of the offenders, the effects of disciplinary problems on victims and the effects on the disciplinary tone of the school are not responsible for the shifts from pre disciplinary hearing individual decisions to the post-disciplinary hearing group decisions, among members of selected secondary school disciplinary panels in Rongo District of Kenya.
- There are no statistically significant differences, on the basis of gender, age, years of teaching experiences and school affiliation, in the pre and post disciplinary hearing shifts in decisions, among members of the selected secondary school disciplinary panels in Rongo District of Kenya.

1.5: Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

- Do panel members of selected secondary schools disciplinary panels in Rongo District of Kenya make shifts from pre-disciplinary hearing individual decisions to the post-disciplinary hearing group decisions?

- Are the shifts from pre-disciplinary hearing individual decisions to post-disciplinary hearing group decisions based on the type of the problem committed, the behaviour characteristics of the offender, the effects of disciplinary problem on the victim and the effects of the disciplinary problem on the image or the disciplinary tone of the school?
- Are gender, age, years of teaching experiences and school affiliations, factors responsible for the shifts from pre-disciplinary hearing individual decisions to the post-disciplinary hearing group decisions among members of selected secondary school disciplinary panels in Rongo District of Kenya?



1.6: Rationale and Significance of the study

Group polarization phenomenon of small social groups exists in many aspects of human life and has been researched in disciplines such as social psychology, law and business (Gutkin & Nemeth, 1997). However, Eide and Showalter (1999) and Freedman (2007) note that research on group polarization in education contexts has been rather very limited. One study on group polarization at an American primary school level by Freedman (2007) investigated decisions, by a group of teachers, on grade retention and promotion. Two other previous studies that investigated evidence of group polarization among small groups or committees in educational contexts were reported by Friedkin (1999). In one of the studies involving university students, the study investigated evidence of group polarization among small groups of students who

were to choose which doctoral programmes to undertake between a programme with low failure rate and another programme with high failure rate but much better academic reputation. The second study was on decisions by a group of students who were to choose between alternative play in a game between two teams – to play in a team that could tie the game or play in a team that could win or lose the game. There is no report of studies in the literature on school committee decisions especially school committees like school disciplinary panels which rely on consensus decisions of the panels for the management of students' behaviours.

School Disciplinary Panels, as in Kenyan secondary schools, are committees of small group of teachers set up to assist schools in the development of students' behaviours. The disciplinary panels are guided by the school's rules and policies on behaviour expectations of students. The disciplinary panels periodically meet on student disciplinary or problem behaviours with a view to addressing personal and environmental factors associated with the behaviours and constituting barriers to or preventing students from meeting school's expectations on behaviours. A school with disciplinary panel makes use of consensus decisions of a small group of teachers instead of that of individual decision of the school principal to manage student behaviours. It is therefore safe to assume that schools' disciplinary panels operate like small social groups with the phenomenon of group polarization taking place in the disciplinary panels. Therefore, it was very important, to the researcher, to investigate the school disciplinary panels to ascertain if group polarization phenomenon is evident in the workings of the secondary school disciplinary panels – to investigate if group

polarization is evident in disciplinary process of disciplinary hearings where decisions are made.

An important rationale for the study also revolved around the factors associated with decision making or factors which influence group polarization in small groups like disciplinary committees or panels made up of small group of teachers. Previous studies only reported on the existence of the phenomenon of group polarization in committees or small groups of teachers or students set up to make decisions or choices but none of these studies reported on the variables of the teachers or the students which could have influenced the group polarization. This aspect was of importance to this study. That is, the study was not only interested in establishing the existence of group polarization among small groups of teachers constituted to make decisions for the purpose of developing student behaviours, the study was also interested in finding out factors which may have influenced group polarization by also studying certain variables of the participants of the study, such as gender, age, teaching experiences and school affiliations.

Studies by Friedkin (1999) and Freedman (2007) reported above employed quantitative approach. Several similar studies (Bowman, 2005; Krizan & Baron, 2007) on group polarization in educational contexts also reported quantitative approaches to the studies. This current study was also interested in finding out how participants of the study experienced or made meanings of the dynamic interactions in their disciplinary committees or panels leading to the group decisions or the outcomes of the disciplinary hearing processes. What meanings or how they interpret their experiences in the group process or the dynamic interactions of the processes of

disciplinary hearings could explain how decisions are arrived at and the nature of group polarization existing in the school disciplinary panels. Therefore, the mixed methods design adopted to carry out the study ensured comprehensiveness in the information gathered for the study (Masadeh 2012); thus also increasing its validity (Haines, 2011); and the inherent strengths that offset the weakness of a purely quantitative or qualitative study (Creswell, 2003; Creswell and Plano Clark, 2011). Moreover, the study answered the research questions comprehensively thus providing better (stronger) inferences that could not be attained using one approach (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003; Gelo, Braakmann & Benetka, 2008), leading to a stronger evidence for conclusion (Yin, 2006) in understanding decision making in school disciplinary panels.

The significance of the study could be with regard to the utility to which the information as to the existence of group polarization in the secondary schools disciplinary panels could be put to. The evidence of existence of group polarization in disciplinary panel process and of the factors influencing group polarization can provide useful information to education and school authorities in Kenya on better ways of managing the interactions among panel members during disciplinary hearings to be more effective in enhancing the quality of decisions. Such information can better inform the composition of the disciplinary panels in terms of gender, age and teaching experiences balance to ensure good quality decisions for better student behaviour management. When the nation has well functional education system where members of the disciplinary panels make good quality decisions for the appropriate management of student behaviours, then, this could lead to better building of the

students' future careers so that they can contribute to the economy of Kenya and the world at large. This role would eventually make the schools to produce students with attributes of responsible adults, good workers, all round family men or women, responsible and contributing citizens to the nation's economy. To summarize, the best disciplinary panel hearing decisions would make the schools develop students behaviourally to be good leaders who are well equipped with good leadership skills for later use in life as the students would be good husbands or wives, good workers, politicians and administrators since they are free from problems.

1.7: Definition of Key Terms

In most cases, different people do not necessarily mean the same thing when they use a particular word, and this can lead to confusion during discussion. Therefore, to avoid ambiguity and ensure a uniform interpretation of terms for clear understanding of this study, the following definitions are offered for clarification:

Group Polarization: It refers to the tendency of group members to increase the extremity of their position following a discussion of a relevant issue (Baron, 2005). The shifting of decision of an individual is said to occur when an initial tendency of individual group members towards a given direction is enhanced following a group discussion. The group polarization is determined through individual's mean differences in opinions before and after group interactions or discussions (Chen, Gustafson & Lee, 2002). In the current study, group polarization is determined

through the differences in the post-disciplinary hearing group decisions from the pre-disciplinary hearing individually made decisions.

Disciplinary Panel: This is small group of teachers or a committee of teachers charged with a specific task of student behaviour development. The term "disciplinary panel" also refers to committee of persons, that is authorized to issue disciplinary charges, to conduct disciplinary proceedings, to settle disciplinary charges, to impose disciplinary sanctions, or to hear appeals thereof in cases involving any violation of the rules (ICE CLEAR U. S., 2008). In the Kenyan context, a disciplinary panel refers to a group of teachers constituted in educational institutions to help address issues related to student behaviour problems.

Behaviour (Disciplinary) Problems: This refers to types of behaviours that inhibit a person's ability to adjust to particular situations, resulting into an individual being dysfunctional and non-productive. Behaviour is considered to be a problem, if it is both persistent and in serious degree contrary to the continued well-being of the individual and/or that of the human community of which the individual is a member (Carson, Butcher & Mineka, 2000).

Secondary School Education: This is the next level after the primary schooling in the Kenyan education system where the students are taught, but before the tertiary, colleges or universities for further education. In the Kenyan education system, the secondary school education begins at the age of 13 or 14. However, due to delayed primary school entry and limited educational schools and facilities, many students especially from rural areas experience late entry into the education system. There are

three categories of secondary schools in Kenya, that is, single-sex boys' and girls' only schools and the co-educational schools (mixed-gender or has both boys and girls). According to Tenkorang & Maticka-Tyndale (2008), these students are mostly adolescents, but some students start schooling late or at times some have interrupted periods of learning, therefore some complete secondary school when they are older than the ideal 18 years.

Decision Making: Decision making includes variety of processes that are all intermediate steps between thought and action which are the precursors to behaviour (Talley, 2011). Decision making depicts a process of adequately reducing uncertainty and doubt about alternatives to allow a reasonable choice to be made from within and among them (Nura & Osman, 2012). In other words, it is the procedure of reducing the gap between the existing situation and the desired situation through solving problems and making use of opportunities (Saroj, 2009). A decision is simply a conclusion reached after consideration, that is, it occurs when one option is selected, to the exclusion of others-it is rendering of judgment. With regards to the context of the study, decision making entails panel members seeking opinions of other members during the disciplinary hearing concerning a student's behaviour problem and weighing options to come up with best decision concerning the problem situation.

1.8: A Structure of the remaining Thesis reports

Chapter 2: The Conceptual and Theoretical Frameworks for the Study

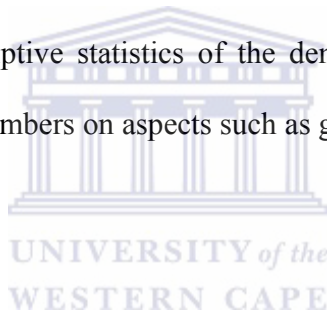
This chapter provides an overview of the conceptual framework followed by the theoretical underpinnings of the study. The conceptual framework is about the concepts of group, group polarization and its mechanisms, group decisions and factors affecting group polarization in decision making. The theoretical framework critically discusses the three theories appropriate for the study. The role of the school in enhancing the overall students' development is explained by the Student Development Theory. It points at the expected function of the school disciplinary panels in making decisions that would ensure the development of the "whole person" in the students, and that this goes beyond solving the immediate behavior problems in the short term, but eventually preparing them for meaningful life after school. The dynamic interactions among panel members, leading to shifts from pre to post disciplinary hearing decisions is explained by both the Social Comparison and Persuasive Arguments theories.

Chapter 3: Review of Related Literature

This chapter presents the review of related literature on group polarization, with specific focus, on how the previous studies were carried out, including, the research designs adopted, the sample employed, instruments used for data collection and the findings of these studies. Furthermore, the gaps in the previous studies are also pointed out, with indications on how the current study would fill these gaps.

Chapter 4: Research Methodology

The chapter provides the methodological framework for the study. The study adopted the mixed methods design, with the quantitative aspect indicating whether or not there were differences between the decisions of the panel members before and after the deliberations. The qualitative part, on the other hand, sought the panel members' feelings and experiences concerning the factors that influenced the shifts in decisions. The chapter also presents information concerning the sample size and sampling procedures, data gathering instruments, data collection procedures (including the ethical considerations), quantitative and qualitative analysis of data. Finally, the chapter presents the descriptive statistics of the demographic variables in terms of distribution of the panel members on aspects such as gender, age, teaching experiences and school affiliations.



Chapter 5: Quantitative Results

This chapter presents the data of the quantitative phase of the study, which were analyzed by testing hypotheses through the application of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The Paired Samples T - Test, was used to statistically test whether there were shifts from pre-disciplinary hearing individual decisions to post-disciplinary hearing group decisions. The One way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to test whether gender, as a variable, was a factor in the shifts from pre to post disciplinary hearing decisions on the four factors associated with the disciplinary problems. The Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) was used to test whether the variables such as age, years of teaching experiences and school affiliations

of panel members were responsible for the shifts from pre to post disciplinary hearing decisions on the four factors associated with the disciplinary problems. The regression analysis was used to test the effects of each of the four factors associated with the problems on the shifts from pre to post disciplinary hearing decisions. For each finding, the implications are discussed.

Chapter 6: Qualitative Results

The chapter presents the qualitative results of the study, which included the transcriptions of the in-depth interviews and the thematic analysis. The transcripts were summarized and organized into patterns, categories or basic descriptive meaning units common to all the participants. These themes captured the essence of various aspects of participants' experiences of the dynamics which took place during disciplinary hearings on disciplinary problems of students. The findings indicate that persuasive arguments factors, social comparison factors and the panel members' age and teaching experiences were responsible for the shifts from pre to post disciplinary hearing decisions.

Chapter 7: Discussions, Conclusion and Recommendations

This chapter focused on the discussion of the study findings. The results of the research hypothesis testing are integrated with the results of the qualitative phase of the study. Thus, this chapter not only provides significant relationships by numbers, but it also presents the possible reasons, feelings and perceptions of these relationships and therefore supports the statistical information. The discussions are done following

the research objectives that had been highlighted earlier. The chapter concludes with the main findings of this study. The recommendations are provided for the various aspects concerning the handling of disciplinary decisions on offenders in secondary schools in Kenya. The recommendations provided are aligned with the role of the disciplinary panels, the composition and implementation of policies that could enhance best decisions for learners with behavior problems.

1.9. Conclusion of the Chapter.

The chapter provided the introductory background to the study as well as the aims and objectives of the study. The chapter discussed the Kenyan secondary school context in which disciplinary panels operate to manage student behaviours. The assumption of the study was that the phenomenon of group polarization could be evident in school disciplinary hearings. Similar characteristic factors responsible for group polarization in small social groups were also assumed to feature in school disciplinary hearings and this study was designed to investigate these assumptions.

The next chapter, Chapter Two, presents the conceptual and theoretical frameworks for the study.

CHAPTER TWO

THE REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1: Introduction

This chapter presents the review of related literature. The first aspect of the review is the presentation of the conceptual understandings and theoretical framework underlying the phenomenon of group polarization in decision-making and the factors in the dynamic interactions among group members responsible for consensus or collective decisions or the phenomenon of group polarization. The discussions also feature the employment of decisions emanating from group interactions for addressing student behaviour problems or for managing student behaviours.

A conceptual framework is used in research to outline possible courses of action or to present a preferred approach to understanding an idea or thought, while a theoretical framework consists of a set of theories, or assumptions which inform both the background and guide the investigation (Orodho, 2006). The conceptual framework examines the concepts in terms of the constructs associated with the concept of group including the meanings of group, types of groups, group formation, group tasks and associated factors influencing group decisions. Thereafter, the theories that informed the study are discussed. Thus, the theoretical framework of a particular study is the supporting mechanism, which is developed from a theory or a combination of theories for understanding the basis or bases underlying the phenomenon under investigation (Orodho, 2006). This is very important because research, in essence, is a process of producing knowledge for finding factual and dependable solutions or answers to

problems or questions (Anaekwe, 2002). It is from the theoretical framework that tentative answers or explanations to the particular research question or problem could be derived.

2.2: The Concept of Group

The term 'group' has been defined differently by several researchers depending on the various approaches to the concept (Benson, 2000). In fact, there is wide disagreement on what defines a group (Gauchat & Casey, 2007). The existing definitions feature certain characteristics such as interpersonal interactions, interdependency, perception of membership (Benson, 2000), goals, motivation, structured relationship, mutual influence (Johnson & Johnson, 2003) but majority still rely on social norms and other social constructions as evidence for group formation, or that the members be engaged in some way over a period of time (Gauchat & Casey, 2007).

This is not a critique of definitional pluralism, however, researchers and theorists are keenly aware of the definitional inconsistencies and carefully define their terms each time they are used (Gauchat & Casey, 2007). On the characteristic of interpersonal interactions, a group can be defined as a number of individuals who are interacting with one another (Boyd, 2008). Group in this context is considered as a collection of individuals who are interacting with each other (Schmuck & Schmuck, 1996; Baccara & Yariv, 2011). Examples of groups in this category are the small informal groups in organizations. The second definition of group is based on the perceptions of membership. By this definition, a group is a social unit consisting of two or more

persons who perceive themselves as belonging to a group (Forsyth, 2006). Hence, group in this context is a unit consisting of a plural number of separate individuals who have a collective perception of their unity and who have the ability to act or are acting in a unitary manner towards their environment (Gondim, 2007). Some examples of groups that fall in this category are women groups, professional association groups like the South African Democratic Teachers Union (SADTU), the Kenyan Union of Journalists (KUJ), the Kenya National Union of Teachers (KNUT) and the Kenya Union of Post Primary School Teachers (KUPPET).

In terms of dependency, a group can be regarded as a collection of individuals who have relations to one another that make them interdependent to some significant degree. According to this definition, the individuals are not a group, except an event that affects one of them affects them all (Glew, 2012). Some examples of groups that operate under this context are the family group and the subject study groups in school like the mathematics group. Johnson and Johnson (2003) and Smith, (2008) have also defined a group within the context of a goal, as a small unit composed of persons who come together for a purpose and consider it meaningful to do so. In other words, such small groups are made for the individuals to achieve specific goals that they are unable to reach individually. Some examples of groups that operate from this perspective are the disciplinary groups, subject discussion groups in school and graduation committee.

With regards to a fourth category of task committees, group has been defined in terms of motivation, as a collection of individuals in which the existence of all (in their given relationship) is necessary to the satisfaction of certain individual needs (Jex & Britt, 2008). In the context of this definition, the individuals are not a group, unless

they are motivated by some personal reason to be part of the group. Other definitions are based on the characteristic of structured relationships, which Ashford, LeCroy and Lortie (2010) regard as a social unit consisting of a number of individuals who stand in definite status and the role relationships to one another and which possess a set of values or norms of its own regulating the behavior of individual members, at least in matters of consequence to the group. According to this definition, the individuals are not a group unless their interactions are structured by a set of role definitions or norms.

Social groups as conceived in psychology reflect the characteristics such as small size, purpose, interactions, interdependency, relations with one another, volition and motivation, etc. Thus, a comprehensive definition of group would be a collection of two or more individuals in face to face interaction, each aware of his or her membership in the group, others who belong to the group, and their positive interdependence as they strive to achieve mutual goals (Johnson & Johnson, 2009). In Kenyan secondary schools, there are disciplinary panels, comprising small groups of teachers specially constituted to address students' behaviour problems. Although, their membership of the group may not be considered as voluntary, nevertheless, the disciplinary panel group shares many other characteristics of a social group. In this regard, the disciplinary panel may be considered to be a social group characterized by dynamic interactions among its members. The panel or committee members are brought together to achieve specific purpose of managing student behaviours and addressing student behaviour problems. The members depend on each other and are

motivated in their interactions and influence of each other in order to achieve the goal(s) set for the disciplinary committee.

There are theoretical assumptions explaining the importance of group membership. Groups generally play a very crucial role in human affairs. Forsyth (2006) suggests four theoretical perspectives that explain the importance of group membership namely, the socio-biological, psychodynamic, social comparison, and the social exchange theories. From the socio-biological perspective, human beings seek out others when frightened so that they can get protection and therefore for survival purpose, humans form groups (Forsyth, 2006). Humans have always valued group membership because the presence of fellow group members or even the awareness that one belongs to a group can make people feel safer and more secure (Brewer, 2007; Gailliot, *et al*, 2008; Park & Hinsz, 2006). Focusing on group membership may reduce feelings of threat because when people remember that they are a part of a group, they feel less alone and more protected. Baumeister and Leary (1995) and Grodzki, (2011) contend that even though people follow their group norms consistently, they may continuously be concerned with their status in the group and be motivated to maintain the approval of others.

From the psychodynamic perspective, people join groups because doing so satisfies basic biological and psychological needs (Forsyth, 2006). Brewer (2007) reiterates that group membership helps individuals accomplish difficult goals and presents a variety of resources. From the social comparison perspective, groups can reward the members with reassurance, social support, and often afford interaction with competent and attractive others and the motivation. This is because joining a given group is

thought to be based on how valuable such membership appears or may be in futuristic terms. Brewer (2007) adds that being a member of a group is beneficial because it impacts the individual psychologically. Before becoming members of a group, people may not heavily consider what group membership means or see the group as a part of themselves, but once people are accepted into groups, they develop identities as group members (Lee, 2009). This eventually gives them more confidence in handling the task presented to them. From the social exchange perspective, people join groups because the rewards are higher and the costs lower in a group than if they go it alone (Forsyth, 2006). Lee (2009) contend that groups help members to secure important outcomes like jobs, education, prosperity, and other resources strongly connected to success in life.

From the above discussions, all the reasons for group membership as suggested by the socio-biological, social comparison, and social exchange perspectives may also be subsumed in the disciplinary panel membership. From the social comparison perspective, groups can reward the members with reassurance, social support, and often afford interaction with competent members. This could be applicable to school disciplinary panels in the sense that the members are able to make quality decisions about students' behaviours because of the possibility of consensus or collective decisions rather than an individual decision. This is because there is a pool of resources, social support and encouragement for making good quality decisions. In addition, from the socio-biological perspective, the disciplinary panel members are more likely to feel secure when handling the student behaviour problems presented to them because of the support and approval they receive from members. This would

lead to quality decisions by the panel members irrespective of the type of the disciplinary problem presented to them for deliberations.

In terms of decision making by a group rather than an individual, many advantages of this abound in the literature. A group can be considered as an aggregate or a pool of knowledge. As Lunenburg (2010) adequately describes, a group has an accumulation of information and experiences which are not possessed by an individual. The gaps in knowledge of one person can be filled by another member of the group (Lunenburg, 2010). Bojuwoye (2002) also asserts that, greater number of approaches to problem solution can be found in groups as compared with individual standing alone. Thus, there could be as many perspectives as well as many methods of solving problems as are the number of group members. There is greater number of alternatives or approaches in groups during decision making. As members gain new information from each other about issues being discussed in the group, they become more knowledgeable and understanding about the issues, they are able to participate together in making decisions on the issue and thus are satisfied with the decision making as it is much more likely to be accurate than by an individual and more likely to address problems more effectively than with individuals working alone (Bojuwoye, 2002).

Moreover, the greater number of alternatives or approaches in groups for decision making, are fostered by increased information and the use of varied decision-making patterns, since group members can identify and evaluate more alternatives than one individual could when confronted with a decision alone (Gunnarsson, 2010; Fan & Liu, 2010). In listening to each other's ideas, group members may combine information to

develop unique solutions that no single member could conceive (Lunenburg, 2010). As a result, through the group deliberations, individuals gain new information, about the behaviour problem being investigated, from the other group members, and the members gain from one another. According to Bonito (2011), the increased complexity of many decisions requires specialized knowledge in numerous areas, usually not possessed by one person. Finally, people tend to support decisions in which they are involved (Lunenburg, 2010). The more people accept a decision and are committed to it, the more likely the decisions are to be implemented successfully (Lunenburg, 2010). Groups therefore, provide better comprehension of a decision because more people have increased confidence in a decision when it is reached by a group. This is particularly more important when group members are involved in executing a decision after critically looking at several other alternatives (Eisenfuhr, 2011).

In summary, there is every reason to believe in the prospect that group decision making as in the case of school disciplinary panels is more likely to ensure that multiple factors are brought up, for instance, alternative perspectives bring better comprehension and new insight as well as integration or better integrative way of understanding decision making. This helps to avoid short comings that could arise from a single perspective.

However, apart from the advantages of group decisions, there is an aspect referred to in the literature as group think (Boateng, 2012) that can have a negative effect on group decision making. Group think is regarded as a mode of thinking that people find themselves in when they are deeply involved in a cohesive in-group, when the

members' strivings for unanimity override their motivation to realistically appraise alternative courses of action (Schoenfeld, 2011). Boateng (2012) reiterates that groupthink is a collective optimism and avoidance which leads to loss of creativity, uniqueness and individual thinking. This is a psychological phenomenon that is described as a mode of thinking that happens when the desire for harmony in a decision making group overrides realistic appraisal of alternatives. Perhaps group think phenomenon is being taken care of in the disciplinary panels as the decisions of the latter are only recommendations for the school authorities to take or not take.

Based on the roles of the group discussed above, the assumptions or principles underlying the use of disciplinary panels and not an individual member to address the students' behaviour problems or manage student behaviours in Kenyan schools, are that the quality of decisions on disciplinary problems would be best enhanced by a group rather than individual (Bojuwoye, 2002). The democratic nature of the decision making process of a group, like the disciplinary panel, should also contribute to addressing appropriately issues related to student behaviour problems and by so doing contributing to the achievement of the school's objective of overall development of students.

Groups, as revealed by the definitions, are of different types and this has implications for the quality of decisions of the groups.

2.3: Types of Groups

Groups may be categorized as follows: the primary group, social group, an educational group, a therapy group, and a task (problem solving) group (Forsyth, 2009). The primary group is the most basic and long lasting group, as it is represented by family members or close friends. We are born into a family group and would not survive without membership in this group and therefore, we get a sense of belonging and support from our primary group memberships. Unlike many other groups that meet on a scheduled and short-time basis, the primary group members remain together and the group is on a long-time basis.

There are many other types of groups, however the types relevant to this discussion and, in particular, to the school disciplinary panels may be the therapy groups and task groups. Therapy groups also called encounter groups are designed to help the members adjust or make changes in their behaviours. This promotes personal growth and adjustment among the group members. The therapeutic process in groups drew heavily upon central traditions of practice within psychotherapy e.g. psychoanalytic, Gestalt and cognitive-behavioural (Smith, 2008). The therapeutic factors in group settings that helps the group members achieve or gain by interacting with others include: installation of hope, universality, providing information and interpersonal learning. The therapeutic gains may also, in part, be due to group members comparing themselves to other members in their motivation for approval and concern for their status in the group (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Grodzki, 2011) - the process described by (Forsyth, 2009) as social comparison. Thus, during group deliberations, individuals who experience negative outcomes can have their self-esteem raised by the

other group members. This eventually reduces the group members' sense of victimization. Moreover, from the groups, the individuals may be coping well despite many difficulties as they encourage other members by symbolizing the possibility of progress (Buunk, Oldersma & De Dreu, 2001). Disciplinary panel groups share many characteristics with therapy groups, in this way because the members are expected to seek information from others in order to make quality decisions regarding the students' problem behaviours.

A task group is also called a problem solving group. This is a team of people joined temporarily or permanently to accomplish some tasks or take part in a collective action. The group is concerned with accomplishing their specific task goals and objectives. The people in a task group are assigned tasks, such as gathering information, evaluating problems and solutions, and/or implementing policies. Task groups need to be structured and managed appropriately, so there should be certain task group roles which define responsibilities of each team member taking part in task group activities. The task roles among members include initiating discussion, seeking information, giving information, seeking opinions, providing opinions, elaborating on others' ideas; clarifying what others have said; seeking compromise when there are differences of opinion; and summarizing what the group thinks (Belbin, 2010). Therefore a school disciplinary panel would be expected to operate like a task group as analyzed above if it is to arrive at decisions which can make for effective management of student behaviours and address student behaviour problem appropriately. In other words, school disciplinary panels would be expected to share

characteristics of both social and task groups with the aim of effective management of student behaviours and ensuring that school students develop positively behaviourally.

Research examining the educational decision making process has been done, both from an individual standpoint, and from a group of individuals who discuss and make decisions about tasks assigned to them (Krantz & Kunreuther, 2007; Freedman, 2007). Generally, literature is in favour of group decisions rather than individually made decision. With regards to decisions in education context made by small groups such as committees, teams or panels like disciplinary panels, studies have revealed that the groups assigned to their members the task of gathering information, critically evaluating the issue associated with their task or objective and make decisions suitable for policy implementation. Studies have also revealed that these small groups are constituted with consideration of factors such as gender, age and other factors that can influence group interactions leading to consensus decisions. As would be expected, the Kenyan secondary school disciplinary panels should operate as a small group with dynamics similar to small social groups. Members should play many roles - both individual and group roles - that should move the disciplinary panel towards accomplishing its mission (Belbin, 2000). Such individual roles would include offering information or opinion, recording information, establishing relationship between ideas, measuring group actions against some objective standard or clarifying ideas, while others stimulate the group to a higher level of activity (Belbin, 2010). Members of the disciplinary panels would be expected to assume roles for building and maintaining the group by ensuring cohesion and support as well as ensuring the accomplishment of group tasks or group objectives (Smith, 2008).

Group decisions are regarded as good quality decisions because they are consensus decisions which are supported and accepted and which members are committed to their implementation. The next section discusses the group polarization phenomenon of small social groups.

2.4: The Concept of Group Polarization

Group members are more likely to hold different opinions about an issue before the group meeting. However, after interactions and exchanges of information during the group meeting, there is a tendency for members to come closer together in their opinions. This group tendency to make consensus decisions is usually referred to as group polarization (Sobel, 2006; Stroud, 2010). Klein and Olbrecht (2011), also describe group polarization as a process where group discussion tends to intensify convergence of group opinions. According to Meyers (1989), Kim and Park (2010), group polarization is the result of shifts to group decisions from individual members' pre-group decisions concerning the group task. In terms of quantitative estimation, group polarization is often determined by calculating the mean difference between pre-group individually made decisions and post-group decisions (Chen, Gustafson & Lee, 2002).

The concept of group polarization has conspicuous importance to the small social groups like the disciplinary panel group in secondary schools that make decisions on the students' behaviour problems. With regards to the context of this study, group polarization can be defined as the tendency of disciplinary panel members to shift towards consensus in their decisions at the close of a group meeting, the position which may be different from which an individual held before the disciplinary hearing

meeting. To fulfill the task of the group, consensus has to be reached on student behaviour problems or on the management of student behaviours.

2.4.1: Decisions as a result of Group Polarization

Group decision making refers to being involved in making decisions (Lunenburg, 2011). A group decision occurs when group members select or settle upon one option from a set of alternatives and collectively consider that option to be the choice of the group (Friedkin & Johnsen, 2011). In any social group, the assumption is that members would hold individual pre group meeting opinions or decisions about the issue to be discussed in the group meeting. Decisions may be regarded as risky/extreme or cautious (Sobel, 2006). Risky or extreme decisions are those decisions on the behaviour of the student which could threaten the student's dignity, safety and fundamental rights (Joubert, de Waal & Rossouw, 2004). These risky decisions can result due to group think (Boateng, 2012) which occurs when members only seek harmony among themselves ignoring better alternatives to address a disciplinary problem. The risky decisions may lead to adverse or negative actions of the school authorities which may not promote the positive growth and development of the students but actually could be detrimental. On the other hand, cautious decisions are decisions which take into consideration the student's dignity, safety and fundamental rights in any action to be taken against the misbehaving student. Cautious decisions take into consideration extraneous circumstances surrounding the misbehaviour and avoid acts which may prevent the positive growth and development of the student. Cautious decisions are also more likely to be beneficial and promote the growth of the offender (s) (Conkle, 2007). Moreover, cautious decisions promote

best ways of seeking alternatives to how best to manage the students' behaviour problems, to enhance their development rather than retarding it.

One negative consequence of group polarization occurs when individuals make risky decisions. This may result because individuals in a group sometimes do not feel as much responsibility and accountability for the actions of the group as they would if they were making the decision alone. The panel members may have a feeling that they have less personal responsibility for the negative consequences of such a decision within the group setting (Zorn, Roper, Broadfoot & Weaver, 2006). With regard to the disciplinary panels, at times certain panel members may hide within the group when making contributions to panel decisions; hence they can take greater chances because they feel they are less likely to be blamed.

Decisions on disciplinary problem of a student will have to take into consideration whether or not the student affected is suffering, or is likely to suffer significant harm. Where this may be the case, it is expected that school's safeguarding policy on behaviour modification would be followed in terms of whether continuing disruptive behaviour might be the result of unmet educational or other needs. Subject to the school's behaviour policy, a student may be sanctioned for misbehaviour if the problem has negative repercussion to the orderly running of the school, or if the misbehaviour poses a threat to another student or member of the public and if it could adversely affect the reputation of the school (Education and Inspections Act, 2006). The legal provisions on school discipline also provide for members of staff with the power to use reasonable force to prevent students committing an offence, injuring themselves or others, or damaging property, and to maintain good order and discipline

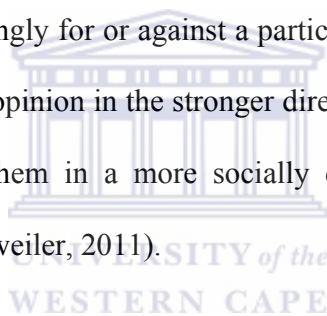
in the classroom (Education and Inspections Act, 2006). This policy focuses particularly on students' social behaviour and acknowledges that a systematic approach is paramount in meeting responsibilities to encourage desirable student behaviours that will stand the students in good stead throughout their lives (Education and Inspections Act, 2006). In the field of social behaviour, the implication is that it is better for students to follow rules because they enjoy living in harmony and see the need for the rules rather than only because they are worried about punishment they might receive for breaking them.

2.4.2: Mechanisms of Group Polarization

Group dynamicists such as Isenberg (1986), Sunstein (1999) and Brown (2000), have developed two schools of thought in an attempt to explain the mechanisms of group polarization. Overtime, the majority of research evidence has come to favour two main explanations for the group polarization phenomenon, the social comparison and the persuasive arguments. According to Young and Chiu (2011), both types of processes are necessary to account for the explanation of the group polarization phenomenon. Both explanations are briefly discussed in turn, while the explicit details of each will later feature in the theoretical framework.

According to social comparison explanations, individuals want to be perceived favourably by other group members, and also to perceive themselves favorably when they are in a group (Sunstein, 1999). Grodzki (2011) contend that group members are continuously concerned about their status in the group and are more motivated for approval by others. This means that once an individual hears what others believe or suggest during group discussion, they then adjust their positions in the direction of the

dominant positions by the other group members (Boyer, 2012). From this perspective, the group discussion offers group members the opportunity to compare their positions and this creates group polarization (Keyton, 2000). Butler and Crino (1992) reiterate that, as members' process information about others in their group, including the others' positions regarding an issue, they infer what the socially acceptable position is, and then attempt to present themselves favourably. This is done by making socially desirable statements and as other group members seek to do the same, a shift in preferences occurs in the direction of greater perceived collective social value. Hence, it implies that as the group interaction continues, an individual will see that others are strongly for or against a particular position in relation to group task and then change their opinion in the stronger direction because they feel that such a change would present them in a more socially desirable light (Isenberg, 1986; Corcoran, Crusius & Mussweiler, 2011).



From the persuasive arguments perspective explanation, individuals freely exchange arguments that are available to them during group discussions (Mercier & Sperber, 2011) and the group members make their final decisions based on the strength or persuasiveness of the revealed arguments (Zhu, 2009). When a group discusses a particular task, the members themselves possess a set of arguments that are predominantly either for or against the decision. However, as the group discusses the issue, these arguments are expressed and lead the members more strongly in the direction of the group's initial tendency (Isenberg, 1986). As a result a given argument may have been considered by at least one or two but not all group members, so that the arguments are collectively and not only partially shared during group

interaction. Therefore, arguments for and against a given course of action are proposed and assessed on their merits (Mercier & Sperber, 2011). The new arguments based on new, credible or correct information provide better understanding, while new insight helps issues to be properly comprehended and thus persuasive.

Therefore, in this study, these two mechanisms influence shifts in decisions among the panel members of a group because the members listen to persuasive arguments from others, and also compare their opinions with others. The process of decision making is one of the most complex mechanisms of human thinking, as various factors and courses of action intertwine in it, with different results (Lizarraga, Maria & Elawar, 2007). Decision making in school disciplinary panels results from interactions between a student problem that needs to be solved and the panel members who wish to solve it within a specific environment, all of which could be influenced by several factors and these are discussed in the next section.

2.4.3: Factors which influence Group Polarization in Decision Making

There are several factors that operate in small social groups which result in group polarization. These factors are discussed below.

2.4.3.1: Personalities of the Group Members

The personalities of the group members can have an important influence on decision making within a group (Barrick, Stewart, Neubert, & Mount 1998; Felps, Mitchell & Byington, 2006). According to Levine and Moreland (1998) and Patalano and LeClair (2011), different personalities are suited to different tasks and aspects of group

life, and thus these differences operate within groups to influence the dynamics that lead to decisions. As a result, group members who are more sociable and likeable by the other members may find it easier to interact with other group members and exert their influence, which eventually lead to decisions in their favor. The differences in the brain orientation among individuals, also explain why some individuals may influence others in decision making (Blamey, McCarthy & Smith, 2000). For example, individuals who are left brain oriented, as it were, might be better suited to more cognitive tasks, while those who are right brain oriented might be more imaginative and creative in generating new ideas or challenging the conventional wisdom. These differences in the personality traits, as explained, may mean that the right oriented persons may give more information that makes others change their opinions. In addition, the different personalities of the group members play a role in enhancing persuasive arguments and social comparison, which leads to shifts in decisions.

Another personality variable that influences changes in decisions is the receivers' self-esteem which is individuals' experience that they are appropriate to life and to the requirements of life (Levine & Moreland, 1998). More specifically, self-esteem is about confidence in the ability to think, cope with the challenges of life, confidence in the right to be happy, the feeling of being worthy, deserving, entitled to assert one's needs and wants and to enjoy the fruits of one's efforts (Crocker & Park, 2002). Previous research indicates that an individual's self-esteem affects his/her changes in decisions and the receivers with low self-esteem are more influenced to change their decisions than the receivers with high self-esteem (Payne, 2007). When long term

self-esteem is measured, and correlated with persuasion, this clearly negative relationship is less frequent and less pronounced (Prislin & Wood, 2005). Hence, the presence of these different types of personalities with varying levels of self-esteem enhances group polarization, and the individuals with high self-esteem are likely to influence others more to change their decisions in group tasks. With regards to the school disciplinary panels, different members may have varying levels of self-esteem which could induce changes in decisions; those with low self-esteem are likely to underrate themselves and are therefore, likely to be influenced more in the decision making (Jarvis, 2000).

The level of authoritarianism of the recipients may also be of significant influence in group decisions (Dionne & Dionne, 2008). Individuals possessing authoritarian personality tend to be highly reliant on the moral authorities of their own membership groups, and are pre-occupied with the relative power and status of the people around them and with their own power and status (Sidanius, Pratto, van Laar & Levin, 2004). Therefore, such individuals tend towards absolute decisions regarding the values they hold concerning a decision and are not easily swayed by messages that contradict the authorities they trusts, even though the messages might be judged by others to be rational and logical. During group deliberations, the individuals who have highly authoritarian personalities react to persuasive messages depending on their perspectives to factors other than the ideas presented by other group members (Rydell, Mackie, Maitner, Claypool, Melissa, Ryan & Smith, 2008). That is, the decision a person makes in a group may not necessarily be because of the validity or the truthfulness of information provided in the group but may be because of the strong

personality of the recipient or the provider of the information. This is with respect to the traits such as strong personality, strong ego, and self-opinionated individual, in terms of how powerful the recipient or the provider of information sees him or herself in relation to other members of the group (Greenwald, 2002). People who are less authoritative are likely to be influenced easily to change their decisions.

Personality of panel members may be conferred based on gender, qualifications, age, experiences or the position of authority held in the school by the members of the panel.

2.4.3.2: Gender of the Group Members

The demographic variable such as gender of a group member may affect decision making especially the differences in shifts in decisions, before and after the disciplinary hearing meetings. From time immemorial, the Kenyan communities have always had a patriarchal society, even though education is a moderating factor. The patriarchy structure being a cultural factor, affects the gender roles in the patterns of decision making, and has consistently been a major feature of the traditional Kenyan society even today. Patriarchy originally was used to describe the power of the father as head of family, and has been common among the African communities, but this term has additionally been used to refer to the systematic organization of male supremacy and female subordination (Hategekimana, 2011). Patriarchy is a system of social stratification and differentiation on the basis of sex, which provides material advantages to males and at the same time places constraints on the roles and activities of females (Asiyanbola, 2005). Moreover, this structure has a set of social relations

with material base which enables men to dominate women (Wamue-Ngare & Njoroge, 2011). According to Lupton (2000), these gender roles as determined by culture are reproduced and maintained in occupations and organizations. Based on the patriarchal nature of African traditional societies, the decision making processes within the family was rarely inclusive of all members. In most cases, women and children, for example, though not formally prohibited by rule, were often presumed to be represented by their husbands and fathers, respectively, and were customarily excluded from participation in the decision-making organ.

However, with regards to the context of this study, the gender roles from the patriarchal structure in the communities where the disciplinary panel members come from may influence the dynamic interactions in the disciplinary hearing and hence the shift in decisions by members of the panel. This is because the situations in school disciplinary panel involve both male and female members participating together in a decision making task. The results of previous research on effects of gender on changes in decisions have somewhat been ambiguous because, although some significant differences have been identified, most of them are minimal (Hatala & Case 2000; Venkatesh, Morris & Ackerman, 2000). The findings indicate that women are more affected by the environment as they look for more information, and dedicate more time to the decision process. However, this may make them change their decisions more easily upon getting relevant information from other panel members. According to Lizárraga, *et al*, (2007), men are more dominant, assertive, objective, and realistic when handling group tasks and this make them experience little shifts in their decisions compared to the women. These differences in shifts in decisions

between men and women have been interpreted based on the incidence of sex-related social norms and stereotypes that are transmitted in the form of values, traditions, and behavioral expectations in the society. The gender factors coupled with some other educational factors probably foment and maintain some of the differences associated with certain aspects of decisions (Bussey & Bandura, 1999).

In addition, other studies have indicated that in group tasks, the male members are more likely than female members of the groups to play prominent roles throughout deliberations (Ellsworth & Mauro, 1998). Gender differences have an influence in the differences in shifts in decisions in the school disciplinary panels, because even if the groups have mixed gender, the males tend to dominate the discussions as compared to the females. Men in the disciplinary panels are viewed to have greater influence in decision making processes and this has effect on shifts in decisions.

Since gender is closely associated with age in terms of traditional pattern of communication, the discussion below provides information as how age of group members influences decision making.

2.4.3.3: Ages of the Group Members

Age is an important factor in decision-making in a group, and it determines whether an individual will influence or will be influenced during a group discussion. According to Watanabe & Shibutani (2010), the decision making processes among the older people are characterized by a lack of flexibility in learning and changing of decisions and have increased cautiousness in making decisions compared with the younger people. That is, older people tend to have strong personality, strong ego or are self-

opinionated. These opinions were supported by Masuda, Sakagami and Hirota (1997), who argue that older people have been stereotyped as being cautious, and they escape from choosing risky or extreme options in decisions. In other words, older people do not change from their old ways easily, while the young individuals on the other hand are very dynamic and often change their opinions and ideas more easily. Moreover, as an individual grows older, he or she constantly adds new information to his or her reference frames, and after these structures have become quite complete at old age, the reception of any new information creates little impression on the individual and results in few drastic behaviour changes. For the young people, however, quite a different picture presents itself, because their attitudinal structures are not well established, and new information may serve to complete a large segment of reference. These young people recognize their inexperience and are easily persuaded to change or are liberal in their view of situations; so they may want to change their decision during group discussion (Watanabe & Shibutani, 2010). In the African traditional system, age is associated with wisdom. Older adults' behaviour in decision making is thus viewed as more reliable and skilled than that of younger adults (Kim & Hasher, 2005). Thus in a group, like in school disciplinary panel, if the information provider is an older person, the tendency would probably be for the younger members to give in to the older members' opinions as a sign of respect.

Age of group members is closely related to teaching experiences. In most circumstances, people who are older have more teaching experiences, and vice versa. The discussion below is about the effect of teaching experiences in decision making.

2.4.3.4: Teaching Experiences of the Group Members

Teaching experience has been found to affect the teachers' ability to handle student disciplinary problems, which could be said to be capable of influencing the quality of decisions made at the disciplinary hearings. Egyed and Short (2006) studied the beliefs of teachers in managing challenging student behaviours. The study compared the actions of more experienced teachers with those of less experienced teachers in dealing with student indisciplined behaviours. The finding indicated that, the more experienced teachers had higher beliefs in their abilities to control their class and manage challenging student behaviours, while less experienced teachers felt ineffective in their ability to deal with student misbehaviour and defiant students. Similar findings were also reported by Onafowora, (2004); Rushton, (2000) and McIntyre (2006) who studied new teachers and classroom behaviour management and found that, most teachers who have just been posted to schools from universities or have few years of teaching experience have little skills in managing student behaviour. These teachers with few teaching experience mostly adopted negative views in handling student behaviour problems. On the other hand, teachers with many years of experiences were found to respond in proficient manner when dealing with students' behaviour problems. In addition, these more experienced teachers focused on the progress of the students and also acknowledged when the students showed an approximation of the expected behaviours.

2.4.3.5: The Characteristics of a Message or information shared during group process

The characteristics of the message determine its persuasiveness. The messages have to be persuasive enough to change the members' attitudes, beliefs, opinions or actions about the problem being discussed. The persuasive messages aim to influence other group members who have their own opinions; therefore, the messages need to be more detailed. When the message presented is persuasive enough to the group members, then it would affect their cognitions and emotions and thus helps them change their opinions towards a particular position regarding opinions on student problem being treated in the disciplinary panel. Essential characteristics of a persuasive message include whether the message is true, valid relevant or appropriate (Kaptein & Eckles, 2010). Another factor is the message framing, that is, whether the message is framed positively or negatively (White, MacDonnell & Dahl, 2011). It has been found that, messages that are negatively framed, are more persuasive than messages that use positively framed arguments in influencing people to change their decisions (Soliha & Dharmmesta, 2012). Rothman, *et al*, (1993) found that negative framing tends to be superior for influencing people with respect to high risk behaviors, but that positive framing tends to be better for influencing low risk behaviours. According to Soliha and Zulfa (2009), messages that inspire fear tends to be persuasive with receivers who have a high self-esteem, but not with those who have low self-esteem. High self-esteem appeals with specific instructions for action tend to be more persuasive than high fear appeals without these instructions (Soliha & Dharmmesta, 2012).

The characteristics of any given message in a group deliberation process always depend on the source of the message.

2.5.3.6: The Message Source

The members of a group perform many roles including group task and group maintenance roles. These are roles which enable group members to work together and move towards the achievement of the group tasks. The roles may include information-giver, opinion-seeker, information-seeker, opinion-giver, elaborator, recorder, evaluator-critic, orientor, or energizer (Belbin, 2010). The source of message characteristic relates to that of the person communicating to others and the way he/she is portrayed by other group members. These message characteristics as identified by Biswas, *et al*, (2006) and Soliha and Dharmmesta, (2012) include expertise, trustworthiness, attractiveness, and credibility. One main characteristic of source of information is in terms of its credibility or the extent to which a source is perceived to have expertise and trustworthiness. Expertise is the extent that the source has mastery of the subject being deliberated upon. Trustworthiness is the extent to which the source is perceived to provide information that is unbiased, honest and the attractiveness and likability or the positive or negative feelings that people have toward a source of information. These characteristics are essential factors that influence the persuasiveness of a message which are capable of making group members change their decisions. According to Belbin (2010), high performing groups need to have the roles spread or balanced amongst the group members for them

to be high performing. In the current study, the attractiveness and credibility of the message source is characterized by the perceived relevance and usefulness of the information to enable panel members to appropriately make decisions concerning the behaviour problems being treated by the panel members.

A message communicator is able to influence other members of the group if the information being conveyed is perceived to be credible and attractive (Soliha & Dharmmesta, 2012). Credibility is judged in terms of the warmth and friendliness, motives, and intention of the communicator as well as the reliability and expertise of the communicator (Biswas, Biswas & Das, 2006). The attractiveness of the source of information may also influence group members especially attractiveness in terms of the competence of the person, the similarity with others' ideas, liking cooperativeness and goal facilitation of the person conveying the message. When a communicator is credible, the greater the discrepancy between the position he advocates and the receivers' initial position, the greater the change. Source attractiveness can also influence the amount of message processing, as is indicated by Chaiken and Maheswaran (1994); Soliha and Dharmmesta, (2012) that, a disliked source can instigate greater processing than a liked source.

Within the school disciplinary panels, a credible source could be a member who is an expert, in terms of qualification and experience (e.g. a behavioural scientist) or an eye witness. Other credible sources of information may be an older panel member respected because of his/her age, or a member of the panel who is of a higher status in the school administration hierarchy than other members. The source of the message

in a group may be regarded as persuasive enough or not depending on the expert knowledge of the members.

2.4.3.7: Effects of the Expert knowledge of the Members

This has to do with the age, experience and qualification of the panel members that would affect the credibility of the information source as perceived by other members. The expert knowledge can influence group deliberations on an extremely subtle level (Blamey, McCarthy & Smith, 2000). Many people seem to listen and shift their decisions because of the members' expertise regarding the information supplied to the group. The people who are regarded as experts may be in certain positions within the school or within advanced age associated with wisdom, experiences in the decision making tasks and hence viewed as more knowledgeable (Wynne, 1995; Blamey, McCarthy & Smith, 2000). However, there could be biases from these experts especially, if the other members do not reflect on the opinions that they give. Moreover, such biases hold the potential of shaping panel deliberations if they are transferred without re-examination into the assessment and evaluation process during decision making on students problems being treated.

2.4.3.8: The Effects of prior knowledge and experience of Group Members

In any group discussion, the members rarely start from a neutral perspective, since some may have prior knowledge of the issue at hand. This can be viewed as strength if participatory democratic ideals are the judging criteria, especially if these opinions

add to the knowledge base of the members and may help them make appropriate decisions. However, prior knowledge and values can also function as biases in the panel deliberations if the members are not prepared to be reflective in their deliberations. According to Levine and Moreland (1998); Blamey, McCarthy and Smith, (2000) the panel decisions can be predicted by the opinion composition of the group members prior to commencement of group meetings like disciplinary hearing. Johnson (1994); Hong and Sternthal, (2010) all indicate that, prior knowledge interact with message relevance to influence information process, and low knowledge conditions increase message process. Petty and Cacioppo (1986); Blamey, McCarthy and Smith, (2000) observe that when prior knowledge was high, then, people processed it to a great extent regardless of the message relevance. Group members with prior knowledge on an issue being discussed tend to resist influence on a counter attitudinal issue and also process the message more (Wood, Phillips & Perdersen, 1995). Craig and Blankenship (2011) found that highly knowledgeable individuals tend to process a pro-attitudinal message more, but the more beliefs people have about the issue, the more persuaded they would be by the message. This is consistent with the notion that prior knowledge can both foster thinking about an issue and also help people bolster their initial opinions. Receivers may refuse to listen to the messages that disagree with their present attitudes or they may misinterpret what the communicator is stating (Blamey, McCarthy & Smith, 2000).

With regards to the disciplinary panels, it could be expected that some members may have prior knowledge of the issues concerning the student behaviour problems to be addressed during a disciplinary hearing, and this may influence how they will process

the information presented to them, which eventually could affect the quality of decisions to be made.

2.4.3.9: Diversity in the Composition of the Disciplinary Panels

Diversity in the composition of panels often reflects the number and type of people belonging to the group (Levine & Moreland, 1998; Blamey, McCarthy & Smith, 2000) and can help moderate the events leading to decisions made within the group. This is because it can make a group member to moderate his or her behaviour after realizing that other members have different opinions which may disapprove of the originally intended opinion. Previous studies suggest that increases in the diversity of group members have been found to influence both group dynamics and performance, and this is highly desirable in discursive processes largely because of its links to representativeness (Blamey, McCarthy & Smith, 2000). However, when a group is very large, then its management to enhance effectiveness can be challenging, but to handle such a group, the leader may divide it into sub-groups and each given task to perform thereby enhance the performance of such groups (Levine & Moreland, 1998).

2.4.3.10: The School Tone Factors

Schools take an active role in setting the tone for how students' behaviour problems are addressed (Bear, 2005). It may also be related to the shared beliefs, dynamics, structure, and reality of a school setting with regards to their tolerance levels in dealing with students' misbehaviour (Day, Sammons, Stobart, Kingston & Gu, 2007). School tone factors could also refer to those working conditions that can contribute to

the change or enhancement of teachers' perceived capability to handle misbehaviour (Moore-Johnson, 2004). In other words, the school tone is with regards to the image the school wants to portray about itself in terms of its discipline, the laws put in place, and, regarding how it should be perceived as helping students behaviourally. The school tone factors stem from the school culture and climate. The school culture can be defined as the norms, beliefs, values, and meaning of people within the school (Deal & Peterson, 1999). The school values are the observable actions of the students and teachers which makes them identifiable with that particular school. Values define the standard by which the individuals in the organization act, determine the quality of the actions and how much the members care about what they are doing (Deal & Peterson, 1999). These values influence and impact on every decision made within each school disciplinary panel. As noted by Cothran, Kulinna and Garrahy, (2009), the school tone factors affect the teachers' efficacy in decision making regarding student behaviours. The norms cover ideas of the rules, reward processes and shared standards or expectations of behaviour that members of the system find socially acceptable. In other words, the school tone is about the sum total of the shared values, ideas and standards of behaviours and attitudes which determine the common identity of those associated with or belong to the school (Deal & Peterson, 1999). The norms would include all that is contained in the students' rules and regulations. These aspects of culture and climate permeate the school hallways in the way the students act alone and together, and the teachers react to students in terms of what they regard as acceptable and what is not, the school climate and control structure of behaviour problems and its goals. The school climate embodies the norms, expectations and

collective aspirations that are closely related to how students' maladaptive behaviour problems are tolerated (Moles, 1990). It also includes the quality and frequency of the interactions between teachers and students, amongst students and the teachers themselves, and between teachers and the parents (Hoffart, 2003). Different schools have varying laws on how they expect the students to behave and it portrays what they consider acceptable as good behaviour. Some administrations have very strict or rigid laws and are high-handed in the way they address students' behaviour problems that occur in school and this greatly affects how their decisions would shift during disciplinary hearing meetings. Other schools, however, are very flexible in the manner in which they handle the same behaviour problems, the teachers may have relaxed attitude and some may be unwilling to actively participate in making very harsh decisions and this equally affects how their decisions would polarize. The school control structure is simply the mechanisms that ensure set goals are pursued. Since schools set the tone for how students' behaviour problems are handled (Bear, 2008) and this could have influence on how the disciplinary panel would treat behaviour problems. Essentially, disciplinary panels functions to ensure that school tones are maintained as they assist students to adopt socially acceptable behaviours and values.

2.4.3.11: The Cultural Factors

The disciplinary panel decisions are not just to affect the individual but they must also have implications for the group to which the individual belongs. The expected influence of the group on each individual's behaviour is an important factor in group decision. In the traditional African society, an individual is expected to submit to

group. The individual exists for the group. The Kenyan community belongs to a culture and the school is expected to reflect this culture. Moreover, this culture influences the behaviour of members of the group. The societal expectation of the group decision traces its explanation from the perspective of the traditional African beliefs and culture (Lee & Daphra, 2008). The African culture is characterized by collectivism (Inglehart & Oyserman, 2004) which purports that the core unit is the group – the individual exists for the society and individuals must fit in the society. According to Oyserman, Coon and Kemmeimeir (2002), individuals in the African society are seen as fundamentally connected to and related through relationships and group memberships, hence the teachers who are members of the disciplinary panel in schools are expected to see themselves as one and must have a common voice in their decisions. Gyekye (1996) adds that, group activities have consistently characterized the African culture. Kagitcibasi (1998) regards the collectivist societies as having diffused and mutual obligations and expectations based on the ascribed statuses. Triandis (1995) contends that, among the African societies, social units have common fate; common goals and common or centralized values. Therefore, a person is simply a component of the society, making the in-group the key unit of analysis.

The African culture is based on the belief that there is no perceptual separation between the individual in the group and other people (Kambon, 1992). The teachers in the disciplinary hearing therefore make decisions with the knowledge that the outcome is not for an individual but for the good of the group. Blondel and Inoguchi (2006) noted that there is an association between an individual and the society in the African culture and it affects the psychological interests (values, self-concept, and

cognitive processes). They suggest that culture influences both content (e.g. how one thinks about oneself) and process (e.g. whether the focus of perception is a salient figure or the relationship among figures). In essence, the community offers the African people, the psychological and ultimate security as it gives them both physical and ideological identity. Therefore, the African emphasizes community life and communalism as a living principle of which the basic ideology is community-identity, and enhances security among the members (Olasunkanmi, 2011). Apart from this, there are age factors from the cultural perspective.

Based on the perspective of the traditional African culture, in a group of people with varying ages, there is always a sense of respect for authority and the older people. Age is a significant cultural variable defining social relationships among the African societies and also forms, the basis for the hierarchical organization of families and communities and even groups (Onwubiko, 1991; Matsumoto, 2007). In traditional African society, age is associated with wisdom or knowledge and skills that the young person has not yet acquired, thus, the older a person is, the more respect and reverence one attracts and the more one is listened to. African societies and cultures accord considerable importance to elders in the form of status and social recognition, and there is still deep respect for legitimate and constituted authority, be it that of head of the family or of a group. The importance of respect for elders is seen amongst the Igbo who compare whoever listens to an elder to a person who consults an oracle (Onwubiko, 1991). The oracles are believed to give the infallible truths, thus the elders are also believed to be wise and their words and instructions are heeded to for the promotion of good behavior among the young. Among most of the Kenyan

communities, there are strong family and clan structures guided by the traditional values, where the older people are respected by the younger people.

With regard to the cultural factors as discussed above, the school disciplinary panel would be expected to manage students' behaviours in such a way as to assist the students to behave with respect to the expected collective identity of their school groups, to respect school authorities and understand that school rules and regulations concerning behaviour expectations are for collective good and from the collective wisdom of the older members of their school society. These considerations should also be expected to influence the decisions of disciplinary panels.



2.5: Ways by which Disciplinary Panel make Decisions

Decision making may be defined as the process of making choices from among alternatives (March, 2010) and is regarded as a type of problem solving (Kim & Hasher, 2005). The term “group decision making” refers to being involved in making decisions (Lunenberg, 2011). Generally, a small social group is expected to make decisions either by expert opinion, by averaging individual members' opinions, by majority vote or by consensus (Payne & Wood, 2002; Csaszar & Eggers, 2011). These ways of making decisions are discussed below.

2.5.1: Decision by Expert

Group decisions are often made by adopting the recommendations of expert members (Soll, & Larrick 2009), who can be designated internal or external subject-matter experts or authorities to make decisions. Such decisions can only be useful in highly

technical or complex decision-making processes. The procedure for this method is to select the expert, let him or her consider the issues, and then thereafter tell the group what the decision is. However, the group members may at times disagree as to what approach they can best use to identify the expert among them. This may make the personal popularity and the amount of power a person has over the group members interfere with the selection of the most expert member (Zastrow & Zastrow, 2008). When the decision is made by authority, then this method is useful for simple, routine decisions, and can be good if very little time is available. The problems of the method are that advantages of group interactions are lost. One person is not always a good resource, there is no commitment to implementing the decision, and that, resentment and disagreement may result in sabotage and deterioration of group effectiveness (Johnson & Johnson, 2005). The decision made by an expert, is only useful when the expertise of one person is superior and little is gained from group discussion. However, it may be difficult to determine who the expert is in a group and in addition, there may be no commitment to implementing such decisions imposed by an individual.

With regards to the decision making in the school disciplinary panels, the expert may be considered as a member in a higher position in school or sometimes it may be a popular member with the others. The latter may result into very inaccurate decisions if the expert has misleading information about the students' behaviour problem being investigated. The method of expert may only be applicable in certain decisions only, of which they could be very few. The other way of making decisions is by averaging individual opinions of the group members.

2.5.2: Decision by Averaging Individuals Opinions

This method consists of separately asking each group member his or her opinion and averaging the results. The group leader or facilitator, for example, seeks the opinions of each member and then takes the most popular opinion as the groups' decision. The group decision may be determined by less than half of the members because no direction is held among members as to what decision the group should make (Johnson & Johnson, 2005). The fact that individual's errors and extreme opinions tend to cancel themselves out under this method, it is usually a better procedure than the expert opinion. The problem with this method is that the opinions of the least knowledgeable and inaccurate members may annul the opinions of the most knowledgeable members. If the implementation of the decision made by this method requires the efforts of all the group members, then the effectiveness of the decision will be slight (Harris, 2009). This method is useful when it is difficult to get group members together to talk or can be useful for simple, routine decisions. However, not enough interactions between members to gain the benefits of group discussion, there may be any commitment in implementing the decision and that unresolved conflict and controversy may damage group effectiveness (Johnson & Johnson, 2005). With regards to decisions being made in the disciplinary panels in secondary schools, this method could lead to very inappropriate decisions being made. This is because the popular decision available to the panel may be from members with inadequate and misleading information concerning the factors associated with the disciplinary problems. In this case, the disciplinary panel members may average wrong popular opinions which would impact on the learners' more negatively than assisting the same

learners to address the problems and achieve growth. The other way of making decision is through the majority vote.

2.5.3: Decision by the Majority Vote

This method of decision making involves using the majority vote like most of the panel members to decide on the course of action (Lunenburg, 2011) which eventually creates a winning and losing team in the voting. This split of the group into the “winners” and “losers” encourages other ways of looking at a problem that fosters blind argument rather than rational discussion, since the members that have been outvoted may not contribute towards influencing the decision (Corey, 2011). This circumstance reduces the quality of the decisions and often creates coalition of individuals who resent losing the vote and may try to regroup, pick up support and overturn the decisions. The majority that carries the day, with regards to the group decision, may have had very little time to critically analyze the issues and comprehend appropriately what could have led to the problem behaviour exhibited by the student. This means that the decision arrived at could be due to the fact that the group wants to get out of the meeting but the students issues could have been all left out.

The decisions in the disciplinary panels arrived at in this way could be prone to too many errors because they could be by mere lobbying and ganging up during the disciplinary hearing meeting. The last way of reaching group decision is through consensus.

2.5.4: Decision by Consensus

Consensus is defined as a collective opinion arrived at by a group of individuals working together under conditions that permit communications to be sufficiently open and the group climate to be supportive for everyone in the group to have felt of a fair chance to influence the decision (Lunenburg, 2011). According to DuBrin (2012), this method stresses the cooperative development of a decision making process with group members working together and attempting to reach an agreement on a solution to a problem. The goal of consensus is a decision that is consented to by all group members, and that full consent does not mean that everyone must be completely satisfied with the final outcome in fact, total satisfaction is rare. The decision is in the overall best interest of the organization and its members (Hartnett, 2011).

Consensus decisions are those which all involved are willing to support, not that everyone fully agrees with the decision, but that everyone, even if they disagree, will put their disagreement aside and wholly support the decision (Lunenburg, 2011). When a decision is made by consensus, all members understand the decision and they are prepared to support it. They can rephrase the decision to show that it is understood, and that all members have had a chance to tell the group how they feel about the decision. To achieve consensus, members must have enough time to state their views and, in particular, their opposition to other members' views and group members need to see differences of opinion as a way of gathering additional information, clarifying issues and enhancing the group to seek better alternatives. If consensus is to be used effectively, then all group members should contribute their

views on the issue and their reaction to proposed alternatives for group action; no one should be allowed to remain silent (Hartnett, 2011).

This method ensures that during the panel hearing meetings, the greater sum total of knowledge and information, greater number of approaches to a problem, participation in problem solving increases acceptance, better comprehension of the decision and, greater commitment of the members to the decision are enhanced (Nazzaro & Strazzabosco, 2009; Schermerhorn, Hunt & Osborn, 2011). This would ensure that the final decisions of the panels are aimed at helping learners to come out of the problems and helps in fostering the whole development of the learners. This way of making and arriving at decisions would ensure high quality decisions about the learners, which is necessary for their development.

From the above discussion, group decision making is consultative (leader consults with group members before making a decision), democratic (the problem is given to the group, and group members are empowered to make the decision), or consensus (in which the leader shares the problem with group members, and together the group leader and members generate and evaluate alternatives and attempt to reach agreement on a solution to the problem) (DuBrin, 2012). Of these methods, the consensus decision is in the overall best interest of the organization and its members (Hartnett, 2011).

The next section presents the discussions on the Theoretical Framework of the Study.

2.6: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.6.1: Introduction

In the previous section, the conceptual framework was presented. This section presents the theoretical framework that underpinned the study. Theory is regarded as a model or framework for observation and understanding that shapes both what we see and how they are seen (Neuman, 1997). It enables the researcher to make links between the abstract and concrete, the theoretical and empirical, thought statements and observational statements and introduce a ground for prediction which is more secure than mere empirical extrapolation from previously observed trends (Merton, 1967; Lunenburg, 2011). Therefore, theory enables the researcher to connect a single study to the immersed base of knowledge to which other researchers contribute, and determine gaps in scientific knowledge, and provide suggestions for further research investigations enabling the organization of research findings and conclusions (Lunenburg, 2011).

This section specifically examines and explores the Student Development Theory that explains the role of school in enhancing the overall development of students, and the theories of Persuasive Arguments and Social Comparison, for the understanding of the mechanism of group decision making. The focus of the current study is specifically on the dynamics within the disciplinary panels leading to decisions concerning the management of student behaviour problems. The secondary school disciplinary panels in Kenya are specifically tasked with the aspect of behaviour development as part of the effort of the school towards the overall development of the students.

The purpose of education is to develop the capacities of students for independent cognitive engagement, meaningful decision making and enhanced emotional development (ACPA & NASPA, 2004). In this regard, schools generally function to develop intellectual, moral and behavioural capacities of students. Schools have a challenge to develop and facilitate the minds of students with comprehensive self-development for the production of forward-looking leaders to spearhead the nation's development in the years to come. This can only be achieved if the development of the whole student is considered, and that schools should ensure that students achieve the standard attributes which comprised critical thinking, leadership skills, moral values, and continuous dedication to improve oneself (Benson, 2009).

The school disciplinary panels are established to assist in the management of students' behaviour by addressing students' disciplinary problems. The disciplinary panel decisions contribute to the learning and overall well-being of the students so that they can develop holistically and contribute meaningfully to their communities and nations. Therefore, with the goal of "education as developing the whole student" (Wolf-Wendel & Ruel, 1999), school disciplinary panels function to address students' behaviour problems for the benefit of the students, the school and their parents, thereby developing the students' learning and intellectual development as well as competencies in life-long learning.

Simple decisions in schools can be, and usually are, made by individual teachers. However, the more complex decisions that involves big amounts of information, different fields of expertise and whose consequences can be of paramount importance for the school, like those of students with behaviour problems, can only be handled by

a group of teachers. In these cases, it is preferred to have group decisions, as it is commonly believed and empirically proven (Bonner, 2004) for quality decisions. Schools' disciplinary panels function as small social groups and make decisions regarding students' behaviour problems. There are many advantages of such group decisions. According to Bojuwoye, (2002) greater number of approaches to the problem is found in groups, because groups employ a greater number of creative problem-solving methods as there are many approaches to and methods of solving specific problems that come from members from various backgrounds and knowledge. Bonito, (2011) adds that, the increased complexity of many decisions require specialized knowledge in numerous areas, usually not possessed by one person. Groups also provide an opportunity for members to critically look at each other's ideas; hence, the group members may combine information to develop unique solutions that no single member could conceive (Lunenburg, 2010). Schermerhorn, Hunt, and Osborn, (2011) summarize that the benefits of group decision making include: more knowledge and expertise is available to solve the problem; a greater number of alternatives are examined; the final decision is better understood and accepted by all group members; and more commitment among all group members to make the final decision work .

The disciplinary panels have a role to manage the behaviour problems so that schools can be conducive environments for proper growth and development of students by ensuring a safe and secure environment. Decisions by disciplinary panels lead to recommendations as to how best to address and or manage students' behaviour problems and influence the positive growth and development of the students both in

the school and later in life. The basis for disciplinary panels can be explained by the student development theory as espoused by Creamer, (2000).

2.6.2: The Student Development Theory

The student development approach was first discussed in the literature in 1937 by the American Council on Education, and later advanced by Thomas & Chickering, in 1984 (Roberts & Banta, 2011). It refers to the application of human development concepts in school settings so that the students can master increasingly complex developmental tasks, achieve self-direction, and become interdependent (Marine, 2011; Newman & Newman, 2011). The theory is a holistic method of educating students that involves every dimension of a student's academic and personal interests and progress, motivation, prior learning and/or experience, as well as capacity within the affective domain.

This theory developed from the early work of psychological theorists such as Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung, in their attempts to describe the growth processes that are common in the students' experiences (Creamer, 2000). Later on, more developments on the theory took place through the work of theorists such as Skinner and Carl Rogers, which influenced the students' affairs, and this paradigm was therefore, used as model to help troubled students with remedial services (Walker, 2008). The theory imposes upon educational institutions, such as schools, the obligations to consider the student as a whole-his or her intellectual capacity and achievement, the emotional make-up, the physical condition, social relationships, vocational aptitudes, skills, and the moral values. It puts emphasis upon the development of the student as a person

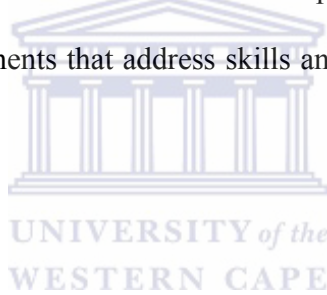
rather than upon his or her intellectual training alone (America Council of Education, 1937).

Moreover, the student development theory supports the notion that the students' ability to think critically can be facilitated when developmental guidelines are recognized and incorporated into teaching strategies in school (Dam & Volman, 2004). The theory addresses three major issues in the education of students related to desired student outcomes. These issues includes development of a vision for one's life, one's character, dealing with concerns of direction and quality of life, and competence that encompasses how well one is able to do something (Huitt, 1997). These views are supported by Walsh, (1990) who advocates for three dimensions of education, that is, the development of knowledge, training of mental abilities, and character that is regarded as the most important. The development of character is defined as engaging in morally relevant conduct, (Sherblo, 2012), or, is regarded as a complex set of relatively persistent qualities of the individual person, with a positive connotation when used in discussions of moral education (Huitt, 2004). However, the primary role of student development is for teachers to teach through experiences, inside and outside the classroom, skills that empower students with self-knowledge and enhance the quality of students' lives now and later. The role of teachers in embracing student development is to move the student toward fulfillment as a realized person and as an effective, contributing citizen of a community and of the world. Walker, (2008) adds that, the theory helps us to understand where learners are within a human development continuum (where they are, where they are going developmentally). Therefore, educational value is enhanced when one uses the theory

to inform practice by designing and providing environments that help students with maladaptive behaviour problems to learn and mature, because the well-rounded development of the whole learner is the primary goal (Creamer, 2000). This theory addresses certain domains of student development.

2.6.2.1: Domains of Student Development

According to Schmidt (2003), the schools role in realizing student potential for healthy growth is focused on the three broad domains of student development, namely, the academic, career and personal and / or social development. Within each of the three stated domains, are components that address skills and understandings needed to help students.

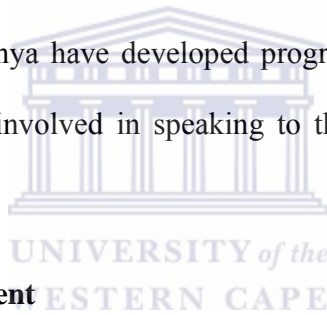


Academic Development

The focus for academic development is on acquiring skills for improving learning and achieving school success, identifying educational goals and developing a plan to achieve them, and relating school to life experiences (Landers, *et al*, 2008). The other aspects here include understanding the relationship of academics to the world of work, and to life at home and in the community. Academic goals support the premise that all students should meet or exceed the local, state and national goals. With regards to the role of schools in Kenya, schools have programmes incorporating school curricular subjects taught to enhance the academic development of the students. The teachers have a role of teaching the curricular contents as they prepare the students for the examinations that would make students lead to the tertiary institutions of learning.

Career Development

This includes programmes to provide the foundation for the acquisition of skills, attitudes and knowledge that enable students to make a successful transition from school to the world of work or further education. The career content area focuses on developing career awareness and employment readiness, acquiring knowledge to identify career goals, and on the acquisition and application of information and skills to achieve career goals (Landers, *et al*, 2008). Consequently, career development goals and competencies ensure that students develop career goals as a result of their participation in a comprehensive plan of career awareness, exploration and preparation activities. Schools in Kenya have developed programmes where they partner with outside agencies who are involved in speaking to the students on their prospective careers after school.



Personal/social Development

The personal/social area addresses the issues of acquiring self-knowledge, interpersonal and personal safety skills, and the application of self-knowledge to career and educational planning, and life roles and events (Landers, *et al*, 2008). This includes programmes to provide the foundation for personal and social growth as students progress through school and into adulthood. Personal/social development, which incorporates moral, behavioural or attitudinal development, contributes to academic and career success by helping students understand and respect themselves and others, acquire effective interpersonal skills, understand safety and survival skills and develop into contributing members of our society. Personal/social development

helps to ensure that students successfully and safely negotiate their way into an increasingly complex and diverse world. Therefore, schools serve as the foundation for commitment to the development of the whole person. Effective learning communities, as schools, are committed to development of behaviour characteristics of justice, honesty, equality, civility, freedom, dignity, and responsible citizenship, and challenge students to develop meaningful values for a life of learning. With regards to the Kenyan schools, there are school guidance and counseling programmes and disciplinary panels that are meant to offer services that enhance these aspects of student development.

2.6.2.2: Principles of Student Development

Student development is interested in the whole person or the development of all aspects of a student's life. The theory of student development provides an understanding of the process of whole-person development and how to compliment this process through school curricular and co-curricular programmes (Evans, Forney & Guido-Dibrito, 1998). The task of the school is to offer students or youth an opportunity for possible stimulation carefully adapted to their needs to help them grow to full maturity so that they can perform their future roles effectively. Student development theory gives indication of how to provide students with an environment and opportunities, for self-awareness and development of skills in the school by which the student learning and or development can be promoted (Nifakis & Barlow, 2007). The theory also regards each individual learner as a unique person who must be treated, taking into consideration physical, social, biological and cultural distinctions because behaviour is a function of the person and the environment (Nifakis & Barlow,

2007). On the basis of this aspect, human values are of the greatest importance; that the common good can be promoted best by helping each individual to develop to the utmost in accordance with his/her abilities.

2.6.2.3: Relevance of the Theory to the Current study

The student development theory purposes to help students grow and develop psychologically, intellectually, physically, spiritually, and socially by structuring the school activities in ways that will give each student the opportunity and potential for such personal growth. The development of students' character is substantially very important just as the development of their intellect (Diamond, 2010). In addition, the theory encourages educational interventions that strengthen skills, stimulate self-understanding and increase knowledge. Therefore, development of students requires consideration of equality, cooperation and collaboration among all parties - students, teachers, parents and school administration. Individual students can also be assisted to build on their own unique developmental processes. According to Kelley-Hall, (2010), whether a student can function successfully in his or her immediate setting will depend on the role demands, supports, and pressures in that setting, and supports available. Bronfenbrenner, (1979) and Leonard, (2011) reiterate that, the developmental potential of a setting will be increased by the number of supportive links that are created between settings. In this regard, the schools' disciplinary panels serve as support structure especially for the behavioural development of students.

Behaviour development thrives better in safe and secure environment. Unfortunately, misbehaviour contributes to unsafe environment for students' development. The behaviour management in Kenyan schools is done by each school's disciplinary panel. There are many advantages for making use of disciplinary panel, a small group of people, for making decisions for the management of students' behaviours in schools. One such advantage is that, a small group will provide a diversity of opinions and variety of perspectives to issues around students' behaviour. The many opinions from small group members are likely to reduce bias while promoting more creative and innovative solutions. Finally, it simplifies complex decisions (Certo, 2005; George & Jones, 2008) while at the same time, take into consideration all dimensions and their inter-relatedness.

Apart from having a theory to anchor the basis for the establishment of disciplinary panels in schools, there are also theories that explain the nature of the workings within disciplinary panels that ensure that they perform their supportive role in student development effectively. These theories are the social comparison theory and the persuasive arguments theory.

2.6.3: Social Comparison Theory

Social comparison theory is one of the theories that explain how decisions are made by members of a small social group, such as a school disciplinary panel. Social comparisons - comparisons between the self and others - are a fundamental psychological mechanism influencing people's judgments, experiences, and behaviour

(Corcoran, Crusius & Mussweiler, 2011). This is a remarkably ubiquitous process which influences how people think about themselves, how they feel, what they are motivated to do, and how they behave (Mussweiler & Epstude, 2009).

According to this theory, each individual member of a small social group is constantly motivated to perceive and present him or herself in a socially desirable manner to other members of the group during discussion (Festinger, 1954; Isenberg, 1986; Schmalisch, Bratiotis & Muroff, 2010). Members of a small group are said to continuously concern themselves with their status in the group and therefore are motivated for approval of others (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). This tendency leads to shift from pre-group individually made decisions to post-group collective decisions or group polarization. The group members invest time, observe and listen to other members' opinions to determine what is correct and to learn to present self in a socially acceptable way (Brown, 1999). Aronson, Wilson and Akert, (2002) assert that, the basis for individual group member to behave this way stemmed from the belief that an individual learns about the worth of his or her abilities by comparing him/herself with other members of the group. Each group member, before joining the group, views him or herself as above average in the strength of support to a particular attitude or societal value (Mahoney, 2012). However, when in group, the dynamics interactions in the group prompt a readjustment of initial response. Zuber, *et al*, (1992); Olbrecht and Bornmann, (2010) contend that, each individual wants to be as good, if not better, as the average group member on a given rated dimension concerning the group task and the perceived positive social dimension is determined to be the dimension that is held by the majority of group members. With regard to the

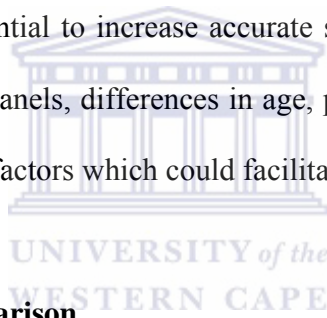
school disciplinary panels, some members would prefer to wait for others' opinions because people do constantly not want to be seen as being opposed to the position that most members hold. Hence, they ensure that one's position in terms of group decision in relation to group task, does not deviate remarkably from the one held by most panel members on the factors associated with the disciplinary problems.

The way the group functions, allows group members to compare their positions in relation to each other. This tendency has implications for the way an individual sees or perceives him or herself, or self-concept which also affects how he or she perceives others or the information supplied by others as well as how the member surrenders or holds on to his or her position (Keyton, 2000). Suls and Wheeler, (2000) add that, when one is in a group, he/she would want to know where other members stand especially on the choices that involve a group conclusion. Aronson, Wilson and Akert, (2002) agree that, individuals generally prefer objective information to evaluate their standing on a given attribute but will, when such information is not available; turn to others for social information, as a result, the interpersonal consequences of social comparison is that people will seek out the views of others similar to themselves. In order to do this, an individual must be continually processing information about how people present themselves and adjusting his or her own self-presentation accordingly. Eventually, when all members of an interacting group engage in the same comparing process, the results are an average shift in a direction of greater perceived social value of the final decision being made.

Generally comparison of opinions can be in three directions of one's abilities, the upward, downward and lateral with other group members (Suls & Wheeler, 2000).

2.6.3.1: Upward Comparison

In this case, individuals in a group generally prefer to compare with others who are thought to be slightly better off or superior to them leading to the notion of upward comparison, a tendency that is stronger when the comparison is made privately (Suls & Wheeler, 2000). Previous studies indicate that when social comparison does not require people to reveal their inferiority to the other, and does not involve the other individuals in the group looking down on them, comparison preferences are more upward than when one has to affiliate with the other (Buunk, 1994; Rowell, 2011). Upward comparisons can increase a person's positive effect because these comparisons have the potential to increase accurate self-understanding. With regard to the school disciplinary panels, differences in age, position and teaching experience among panel members are factors which could facilitate upward comparison.



2.6.3.2: Downward Comparison

Downward comparisons occur in a group when self-enhanced interests prompt an individual to make comparisons with others who he/she considers as inferior or less fortunate to oneself (Suls, 2000). This may result from individuals who are experiencing a decline in well-being and may now compare themselves with others who are thought to be worse off in an effort to improve their well-being especially when instrumental action is not possible (Musswiler & Strack, 2000). As a result, such individuals would be threatened on a particular dimension of the subject of discussion in the group and may therefore prefer to compare with others who they perceive to be worse off on this dimension. There are two versions of downward

comparison process, either with a person who is worse off than the self or with one who is also experiencing problems but is essentially at the same level as the self (lateral comparison) (Suls, 2000). Sometimes, downward comparisons may make individuals under threat feel better about themselves after doing so, because they would be relieved of their stress (Musswiler & Strack, 2000). Consequently, such people benefit from the downward comparison with regards to their mood improvement and eventually self-esteem.

With regard to the current study, there could be panel members with low self-esteem arising from attitude towards work at school, burn outs, and frustration with administration or school management and from generally unhealthy negative feelings, all of which could lead to downward comparison. This would affect the shifts in decisions that these panel members would make concerning the disciplinary problems.



2.6.3.3: Lateral Comparison

In the lateral comparison, the group members compare with others members' opinions, regardless of the positions, but may be interested in knowing others' opinions. In this case, the shifts in decisions occur when an individual member of the group feels a need for solidarity with other group members rather than being an odd one out or not wanting to hold contrary opinion. The members shift decisions due to lateral comparison when they feel the need to support another members' opinion which projects similar principles or values or if a member sees another as like-minded (Suls & Wheeler, 2000), and perceive an opinion giver as defending favourable image of the school or that of the panel.

With regard to the school disciplinary panels, shift in decisions due to lateral comparison could result from how members perceive opinions of the others concerning the behaviour problem of the students being treated.

In summary, the Social Comparison theory highlights how people make decisions by comparing their positions with other members in the group. Lateral comparisons serve self-evaluation, downward comparisons serve self-enhancement, and upward comparisons serve self-improvement (Corcoran, Crusius & Mussweiler, 2011). Due to the fact that, social comparisons are an integral part of our psychological functioning within a group, the current study examined how social comparison among members of school disciplinary panels enabled them to make decisions concerning students' disciplinary problems (Corcoran, *et al*, 2011).

Apart from social comparison theory, there are other theories that explain how decisions are made in a small social group, leading to group polarization. One of these theories is the persuasive arguments theory.

2.6.4: Persuasive Arguments Theory

The Persuasive Arguments Theory suggests that individuals freely exchange arguments that are available to them during group discussions (Zhu, 2009). When an individual hears one or more colleagues' arguments, the individual's thinking is likely to be shifted or realigned towards the arguments of the other colleagues in the group. Prior to the group meeting, different individuals may recall different arguments from a larger culturally available pool and formulate different positions, depending on the number and persuasiveness of the arguments that were available to them prior to the

group meeting. Since supportive arguments available to each member of the group prior to the group meeting may not be evenly distributed among all the members of the group, the group members tend to learn from the discussion about additional arguments that support individual group members favored position.

Group members have different roles to perform, some of which relate to helping the groups perform its tasks, and others relate to maintaining the group and building cohesive relationships among members. Some of the member roles in small social groups like the disciplinary panels include – initiating, contributing or giving information or opinion, some other members may be seeking information or opinion while others coordinate others opinions. Some members of a group may also play the role of summarizing, clarifying, elaborating or evaluating opinions while others encourage others, or comprise with others (Belbin, 2010). When in a group, different types of information and opinions are made available, greater opportunity is given for group members to explore greater dimensions of the group's task (Rensburg, 1996; Mercier & Sperber, 2011). Members provide more alternatives from which to choose than is available to individual member prior to the group meeting.

The basic idea of persuasive-arguments theory is that when a person evaluates alternative X relative to alternative Y, he/she generates arguments, namely, ideas, images or thoughts describing the attributes of X and Y (Burnstein, 1982). This process assumes that there exists a culturally given pool of arguments speaking to each other's alternative. To judge the merits of these alternatives, a person samples or retrieves arguments from the pool. Arguments may vary in availability (the probability of their coming to mind), their direction (towards X or Y), and their

strength of persuasiveness. The persuasive argumentation theorists contend that, individuals share relevant and factual information during group discussions (El-Shinnawy & Vinze 1998), and that, the other group members offer information or opinions helping an individual to view a situation from completely new perspective from what the individual previously held. Both influence the representativeness and exhaustiveness of an argument sample, which means that, they determine the likelihood of new ideas influencing shifts in decisions (Seibod & Meyers, 1986).

The proponents of this view have realized that group members are influenced by the novelty or validity of arguments presented by the other members. Burnstein, (1982) indicates two factors that determine the persuasiveness of an argument, namely the perceived validity and the originality/novelty of the argument. Validity relates to the truthfulness of an argument, that is, whether the argument fits into the person's previous views, while the perceived originality or novelty of the argument is with regards to whether the argument represents a new way of organizing information, or if the argument suggests new ideas that are unexpressed or not possess before (Meyers & Brashers, 1999). Since the arguments are likely to be all in favour of one direction, the group members are motivated to adjust their responses further in that direction in response to the arguments. There are several personality variables that would influence the extent to which an argument would be persuasive (Petty & Wegener, 1998). The factors such as a person's expertise, trustworthiness, attractiveness, likeableness, power, gender, age, position, years of teaching experiences and status can affect the likelihood that a message will be scrutinized (Sergeant & Bradfield, 2004; Olson & Wells, 2004).

However, within the disciplinary panels, the information in the persuasive arguments can, at times, be biased, because certain panel members emphasize position-consistent arguments in group discussions and avoid expressing counter arguments so that they can present the self favorably and confidently before other group members (Vohs, Baumeister & Ciarocco, 2005). Furthermore, as the disciplinary hearings reveal the prevailing position concerning a behaviour problem being supported by most group members, some members may avoid expressing concerns about the prevailing position because of social risks of voicing minority opinions (Bassili, 2003). This eventually, makes such group members to shelve their opinions and shift their decisions to those of other members.

In summary, the Persuasive Arguments theory explains the nature of dynamic interactions within the disciplinary panels that make the members to shift their decisions, due to the pool of arguments that are available to them. These arguments may be in terms of new information about the problem, the credibility of the information, the persuasiveness of the new information and the trustworthiness or credibility of the person presenting the arguments about the issue being discussed by the group.

2.6.5: Justification of the Theoretical Framework of the Study

The three theories discussed above provided the theoretical framework of the study. First, it was important to understand the basis for the establishment of school disciplinary panels in relation to the behaviour development of the students. Moreover, schools have a mandate to ensure that education enhances the broad

development of whole student and focuses not just on their intellectual development but also on students' emotional, social, behaviour development and creative potentials. The cognitive development impacted by teachers through the subject matter, is not enough for the students, but that the overall development is quite paramount in their lives. Most importantly, the theory points to the secondary school disciplinary panels' most important aim; to transform lives which are done by challenging students and supporting their behaviour development along with their intellectual and personal development (Nifakis & Barlow, 2007). This means that schools also emphasize not just students' lives within the confine of the classroom or school, but also beyond. This encourages a desire to elicit meaning and understanding and to engage with the world (Miller, 1991). Therefore, the secondary school disciplinary panels manage students' behaviours by addressing behaviour problems and ensuring students meet expectations in terms of behaviours, with more focus on guiding and shaping their lives to prepare them to be successful citizens later in life. Moreover, it is important for the panel members to understand that the appearance of a student before the disciplinary panel does not mean blackmail. In other words, the disciplinary panels are to provide reformation, rehabilitation, guidance and meaningful correction to these students with behaviour problems in school. The basic educational value is enhanced when one uses theory to inform practice by designing and providing environments that help students both learn and mature. This then explain the basis for schools' disciplinary panels as means of providing safe and secure environment of schools for the facilitation of teaching/learning enterprise to ensure well-rounded development of students. The Student Development Theory therefore, points at the importance of

school disciplinary panels in shaping lives of students, both in and beyond school. Hence, the roles of the disciplinary panel have implications for creating safe and conducive learning environment for behaviours that ensures students' success in school and later in life.

The two theories, Social Comparison and Persuasive Arguments, explain the dynamic interactions within disciplinary panels leading to group polarization. The Social Comparison theory explains the shifts from pre to post disciplinary hearing decisions that occur among members after comparing their opinions with others which can be upward, lateral or downward depending on the panel member to whom the reference in comparison is being made. This means that an individual's decision in the panel is not static but can be changed during the disciplinary hearing meetings. As already discussed in this chapter, the Social Comparison factor alone is not responsible for outcomes of the dynamic interactions within a group or the outcome of the group in terms of group decisions, but that, the Persuasive Arguments Theory can also be used to explain these outcomes.

In summary, the Student Development Theory emphasizes the basis for the establishment of school disciplinary panels, which is to enhance student behaviour development. The Social Comparison and Persuasive Arguments theories explain the dynamics in the disciplinary panels responsible for group polarization. The dynamic interactions results into panel decisions that are employed to manage student behaviour problems. The three theories were therefore applicable in providing the theoretical framework that formed the basis for this study.

2.6.6: Conclusion of the Chapter

This chapter has discussed the conceptual and theoretical frameworks that guided the study. The concepts such as group, advantages of group membership, types of groups, group polarization and its mechanisms, factors influencing group polarization, group decisions and ways of making group decisions, have been discussed. The three theories that underpinned the study have also been discussed. The Student Development Theory focused on the role of the school in enhancing overall development of students and in particular, that of behavioural development of students. Social Comparison and Persuasive Arguments theories have also been discussed with particular reference to how decisions are made to ensure optimum management of students' behaviours. In conclusion, the perspectives discussed above provided a basis for discussing the review of literature.

The next chapter, chapter three, presents the review of previous works on group polarization and the uses of group decisions in moderating behaviours.

CHAPTER THREE

REVIEW OF PREVIOUS STUDIES

3.1: Introduction

This chapter presents review of previous works on group procedures especially studies that employed small groups to make decisions in educational contexts including schools' disciplinary panels. The review is particularly with regard to previous studies' in terms of their aims, approaches to the studies, people studied including the variables studied, data gathering and data analysis, the findings and interpretations (Orodho, 2006). The review of literature is important because it assists in familiarizing the researcher with the previous bodies of knowledge in the area of research as well as in other related areas. It also helps to identify gaps in knowledge as well as weaknesses in previous studies and help to determine what has already been done and what is yet to be studied (Bless & Higson-Smith, 2000). The review also assists the researcher to discover connections, analogies or other relations between different research results by comparing various investigations (Orodho, 2006).

3.2: Previous Research Studies on Group Polarization

Research on group polarization has been shown in a multitude of educational or academic settings, including law, psychology, sociology, and business but not much has been done in educational settings such as schools (Enayati, 2002; Freedman, 2007). Moreover, previous studies on group polarization in decision making among the members of school disciplinary panels is extremely scanty. In fact, from a search of literature, none could be found that addressed group polarization in disciplinary

process in schools either in the secondary schools in Kenya and other developing countries. Furthermore, the only research that could be located that looked at group polarization in relation to school practices focused on decisions regarding grade retention or decisions concerning selecting students in elementary schools in the USA (Freedman, 2007) and selecting course programmes to pursue at the university (Friedkin, 1999).

A number of studies reported on the group polarization in court decisions among panels of judges or juries revealed that shifts in decisions in such group are similar to those that have been reported in other experimental studies (Freedman, 2007). Although, majority of these studies failed to have the level of control associated with experimental studies, their results did suggest that group polarization has a practical existence in small social groups outside of controlled laboratory settings. Since the phenomenon of group polarization has been shown in a variety of situations, it is likely that it may occur in educational institutions where a number of management committees operate as small social groups. El-Shinnawy & Vinze (1998), however, assert that, group polarization has potential role in affecting decision outcomes in disciplinary hearing by a group of teachers. Due to scarcity of literature on group polarization in developing countries, many of the previous works are those reported in western countries, however, a few available in Africa and Kenya are also reviewed.

3.2.1: Previous Studies on Group Polarization in the Western Countries

There are several research studies on decision making among groups of individuals showing strong support for the existence of group polarization. The case examples presented below focused on studies that investigated whether or not shifts in decisions occur after group deliberations.

The earliest study on the existence of group polarization in small social groups is commonly attributed to James Stoner as revealed by the study results from his Master's thesis (Stoner, 1961). Stoner investigated whether or not shifts in decisions occur among people in small group involved in some tasks. The tasks were on hypothetical life situations, and in each of these, an individual had to choose one of two courses of action, one of which was more risky or extreme than the other which was cautious. The participants were presented with ambiguous scenario of choosing a job, and asked to choose between two alternatives, one less attractive but safe job (a job with a moderate salary but high job stability); or more attractive but with some risk (a job with a high salary but high rates of termination). The research approach used was quantitative with a test-retest control design. The sample size of the study was selected using purposive sampling technique and participants were grouped into six-member groups. A Choice-Dilemma Questionnaire was used, and it had a response format in a continuum in which participants were asked to indicate the probability level (1 in 10, or 3 in 10, or 5 in 10, 7 in 10, or 9 in 10), of choosing an alternative. The participants first recorded their decisions in private after which they went into group sessions. The participants discussed in their various groups and then after each had reached a group decision, the participants completed new set of questionnaires for

the post-group response scores. The data was analyzed quantitatively by comparing the pre-group and post-group responses. The results revealed that, shifts did occur in the participants' pre to post-group discussion decisions. From these findings, it was concluded that group polarization was evident in small social groups. From the results, Stoner found that group decisions were significantly more risky than the mean of the individual group members' prior decisions. Therefore, the conclusion was that, group polarization was evident among the participants in all the groups.

It is crucial to mention here that, the participants in the above study were conveniently sampled; therefore, the findings were not very representative enough to be generalized. In addition, the results did not include the opinions of the subjects concerning how they felt and the factors that influenced the shifts in decisions.

These results as indicated by Stoner's results were confirmed by other researchers, not only in the United States of America, but also in different countries and cultures. From these other studies, another aspect of the shifts in group task decisions emerged. Apart from the evidence of extreme or risky shifts revealed by Stoner's findings, other studies showed that group members might also make more cautious decisions (Nordhoy, 1962). According to results of studies (Nordhoy, 1962; and Stoner, 1968), the group effects were not consistent for all the 12 items used by Stoner. A review of results presented from Stoner's thesis indicated that, on one item that dealt with marriage, Stoner's subjects were consistently more cautious in their post-group decisions. The findings, based on studies carried out by other researchers such as Rabow, *et al*, (1966) and Stoner, (1968), have reported that groups shift toward cautious decisions.

Another study by Friedkin (1999), investigated whether or not, shifts from the mean initial individual opinions to mean final opinions of groups of students occurred during interpersonal group discussions on certain issues at the University of California, in the United States of America. The issues discussed related to sports, course programme and surgery. The sports issue involved a choice between alternative plays in a game between two college teams (one option was to play in a team that could tie the game or the other option was to play in a team that could either win or lose the game). The course programme issue involved a choice between two PhD programmes (to pursue one programme that has a low failure rate, or to pursue the other programme that has a high failure rate but, a much better academic reputation). The surgery issue involved a choice or decision on two courses of medical treatment (to choose between the two options of treatments, one treatment that entails little risk but a drastic curtailment of lifestyle, or the riskier treatment that might bring about complete cure). Quasi-experimental research approach, with pre and post-tests research design, was adopted for the study. The sample size of the study consisted of 200 selected students, put in 50 groups of four members each. Data was collected by use of the questionnaires. In the questionnaire, the respondents were restricted to one of the 20 probability values 0.05, 0.10, 0.15, 0.20..., 1.0 in making their choice of decisions for both the pre and post-group responses. Before engaging in interactions with other members, every member of each group privately recorded their individual pre-group response score regarding each of the issues. Thereafter, the students discussed the issues and upon reaching group decision, privately recorded their final opinions based on the outcomes of group discussions.

Quantitative analysis was done and the initial pre-discussion responses were compared with the responses after group discussions, to ascertain whether or not there were shifts in decisions on the issues. The results indicated that there were significant shifts from the pre-individual decisions to post group decisions on the three issues. This indicated that group polarization was evident among small groups of university students given certain group tasks. The results of the study were reliable because the instruments used reported a reliability coefficient of 0.71 consistent with results of other similar studies. However, the study did not investigate the influence of other variables such as gender, age, school category and experiences in the shifts from pre to post-group decisions. Moreover, qualitative data related to the participants' interpretations of the experiences of the dynamic interactions in the group leading to group decisions, were not collected.

Bowman, (2005) studied attitude change in discussions of access to higher education. The study examined whether an interactive group process in which the public deeply considers a particular issue would yield shifts in participants' understanding of and opinions about access to higher education. The sample size consisted of 468 community members (60% females, and 40 males) in 10 counties of the USA. The participants were expected to complete individual pre-discussion responses before the group sessions. The pre-discussion questionnaire (i.e., "pre-test") asked participants to rate their agreement with seven statements (e.g., "Scholarships should generally be given to students with the highest grades and test scores") on a five-point Likert scale (1 = "strongly disagree," 2 = "disagree," 3 = "neutral," 4 = "agree," 5 = "strongly agree"). The post-test instructions informed participants that some of the items would

be identical to those on the pre-discussion questionnaire, but they should not refer to their previous responses. Data was analyzed quantitatively by obtaining the absolute value of the differences between pre-test and post-test response scores for each respondent on each item of the questionnaire. The statistical analysis was carried out by using paired t-tests to compare the pre and post-discussion response scores, and determine whether the participants' opinions shifted after group discussions. The comparison on five of the seven items yielded significant differences ($P < 0.05$) between responses to the pre-test and post-test responses. This was an indication that group polarization was evident in the groups.

Freedman, (2007) investigated whether or not shifts from the pre to post-group decisions occurred among a group of teachers making decisions on whether or not to promote students to the next grade level or to retain them in their current grade levels. This study was conducted among teachers in selected elementary schools in a suburban community in Florida in the United States of America. A quantitative approach with the Pre-test Post-test quasi-experimental research design was adopted for the study. The sample that participated in the study consisted of fifty (50) teachers drawn from 5 schools. The teachers were recruited, with the requirement of having taught at least for 1 full year as a classroom teacher in grades 5 or beyond. Each school had a committee that consisted of an average of 10 members who took part in the grade retention decision of the affected students. The instruments such as the demographic questionnaire and the Modified Retention Decision Simulation Exercise Questionnaire were used to collect data. The Modified Retention Decision Simulation Exercise was adapted from the Stoner's original Choice Dilemmas

Questionnaire (Freedman, 2007). This questionnaire had three parts, each describing a hypothetical student along with the student's characteristics with each part chosen purposefully, to represent a variety of student characteristics that mostly influence grade retention decision outcomes as determined through follow-up analyses. The respondents indicated their decisions on a continuum scale of acceptable probabilities. The continuum contained five options from where participants were to choose from, whether, there is 1 in 10, or 3 in 10, or 5 in 10, or, 7 in 10 or 9 in 10 chances that the student whose case was presented would benefit from grade promotion. The participants completed the questionnaires individually before the first group meeting to indicate their pre-group responses concerning grade retention decision of a particular student in question, and then embarked on group discussions involving a debate on the students' cases presented to them. The participants in their different schools reviewed each student's case presented to them and analyzed all the factors, after which they came up with a post-group decision on whether the student concerned was to repeat current grade or to be promoted to the next grade. After the group deliberation, a section of the original Retention Decision Simulation Exercise instrument, that asked participants to indicate whether they would retain or promote the student based on characteristics provided, was removed from each questionnaire and substituted with an additional component adapted from past group polarization research. From the statistical analyses, by the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) with repeated measures, the results revealed that the teachers shifted from their individual pre-group decisions to new post-group decisions [$F(1, 49) = 4.434, P < 0.05$]. This result, therefore, indicated that group polarization in decision making took place

among the groups of teachers. It was also noted that certain factors in the group decisions must be responsible for the group polarization and that these factors significantly impacted on the quality of decisions emanated from the group discussions and the decisions as to whether or not to retain or promote students.

Although the study revealed evidence of group polarization among small group of teachers involved in making decisions about grade retention or promotion, the study did not investigate possible factors (such as participants' gender, age or teaching experiences) which could have influenced the shifts in decisions. The study also lacked qualitative data on the feelings of or the meanings the teachers made of their experiences in the group. Such qualitative data probably could have explained the results better.

Krizan & Baron (2007) also investigated whether group polarization occurs due to the way members of a group identify with other members in a group task. The tasks involved Choice Dilemma Questionnaire scenarios indicating the acceptable level of risk or caution they would advise. The sample size consisted of 83 selected elementary psychology students randomly selected from the School of Psychology at the University of Iowa. The students were required to indicate their responses on five scenarios on a Choice Dilemma Questionnaire (CDQ). The participants arrived at the laboratory in groups ranging in size from 3 to 5, and were randomly assigned to either a control or experiment-discussion group. The participants responded to the CDQ on aspects such as: whether they liked members of the group, whether they were interested in what other group members said, whether they respected other group members, and also, whether, they identified with other members of the discussion

group. Each scenario had a 10 point scale on which the participants were expected to indicate their level of acceptance. The participants in both the control and experimental groups responded individually to the items on the questionnaire. Thereafter, those in the experimental group were involved in their group tasks for about 20 minutes, after which they indicated their post-group response scores, while those in the control group completed the questionnaires again but without discussions. The data was analyzed quantitatively and the group polarization scores for each participant were calculated by subtracting the pre-test score from the post-test score for both groups. The results indicated that there were significant shifts from the pre to post-group decisions on the five scenarios in the experimental group that had discussions, while those in control group did not experience much shifts from pre to post-group decisions. This indicated that group polarization was evident as a result of group discussions. The results further indicated the nature of shifts in decisions, that, the average pre-test decisions reported by participants were risky as compared to the subsequently presented cautious decisions after group discussions.

In this study, the quantitative approach was used and the results validated. However, the shifts in decisions were on general issues not addressing educational problems. In addition, the results lacked a qualitative component to bring out the participants experiences during the group process.

Kinga, Hartzelb, Schilhavya, Melonec & McGuireds' (2010) studied whether or not group polarization was evident among groups of people making decisions on satisfaction, personal preferences on certain social responsibility issues. The participants first indicated their pre-group individual responses on a choice-dilemma

judgment task concerning an organizational social responsibility issue. Thereafter, the participants embarked on group discussions, and responded again to the same but new choice-dilemma judgment task concerning an organizational social responsibility issue. The results indicated that, the participants' pre-individual decisions shifted dramatically toward the less socially responsible options after group discussions. The significant difference between group decision outcomes and group members' personal preferences indicated that group polarization was evident. The above study also indicated that group polarization is evident in small social groups, but it did not indicate the effects of the demographic variables of participants on shifts from pregroup to post-group decisions.

Keck, Diecidue & Budescu, (2011) studied the distinctions between individual decisions and group decisions on prices of certain commodities. The sample comprised 240 undergraduate students (90 male, 150 females) with an average age of 20.7 years from a large university in the USA. The students were randomly assigned to either control or experimental groups and were expected to make decisions on the price lists of certain commodities individually. Thereafter, the students in experimental groups entered into discussions to make decisions on the price lists leading to post-group decisions price list of commodities. The pre-group price lists figures were compared with the new post-group price list for the participants in both the control and experimental groups. The results indicated significant differences between pre-group individual decisions and group-decisions, ($F [1, 42] = 11.78, P < 0.005$) for the participants in the experimental groups. This indicates that group

polarization was evident in the experimental groups that engaged in interactions as compared to control groups where participants did not interact with each other.

The studies reviewed above investigated shifts in decisions among people in groups in educational settings. Quantitative approach was adopted in all the studies, but none reported the participants' experiences regarding factors that influenced the shifts from pre-group to post-group decisions. The current study, therefore, filled this gap in literature by investigating participants' feelings about or the meanings they made of their experiences regarding factors that influenced the shifting of their decisions. In addition, the results of these previous studies did not include the investigation on the effects of the demographic variables such as gender, age, and experiences in the shifts in decisions. The current study filled this gap also by analyzing the shifts in decisions on the basis of different characteristics of the participants (gender, age, teaching experiences and school affiliations). The current study was, designed to investigate decision making by schools' disciplinary panels and the importance of the decisions for the management of students' behaviours. None of the previous studies reviewed, investigated decisions by schools disciplinary panels or how decisions of school disciplinary panels are employed in the management of student behaviour development.

In terms of factors influencing group polarization in decision making, Abraham, Hinke & Frans, (2007) studied the role of social comparison in evaluating the quality of students' friendships and social relationships. The sample comprised 133 (38 males and 65 females) first-year medicine students of one university in USA. The Social Comparison Orientation (SCO) questionnaire was used to measure the social

comparison. The SCO questionnaire consists of 11 items such as ‘I always pay a lot of attention to how I do things compared with how others do things’ and ‘I never consider my situation in life relative to that of other people’. The items were measured using 5-point scales (1 = ‘strongly disagree,’ 5 = ‘strongly agree’). The participants were exposed to interviews where they shared their experiences in forming friendships and building up a new social network. These students were questioned about their social activities in the past month of their first year, how relevant they found several aspects of their social activities, and how satisfied they were with their social activities. In addition, they were asked about aspects of social activities they envied in others or feared when looking at others. Based on the information that was gathered with these interviews, two interview fragments were created, an upward version and a downward version. The results indicated that, the participants found that the upward target gave a much more positive description of their social lives than the downward target did [$F(1, 95) = 446.56, P < 0.001$]. A second result revealed that, compared to the upward condition, the participants in the downward condition rated the target as worse off relative to themselves [$F(1, 89) = 132.53, P < 0.001$]. Thus, individuals are affected by what they see in others, but only when they have a strong dispositional tendency to compare themselves with others. The above study indicated how social comparison made participants to view themselves. However, a qualitative aspect describing the participants’ experiences was not researched. The current study filled this gap by including participants’ feelings and experiences regarding shifts in their disciplinary hearing decisions.

Hertel, Niemeyer & Clauss, (2008) studied the effects of social comparison on motivation gains of inferior people in group tasks. The sample comprised 125 male students of average age 24 years from the University of Kiel, randomly distributed in six experimental groups. In the first trial, all participants worked individually and indicated their decisions on a 7-point scale regarding how capable they felt they were of performing a given task. Thereafter, the participants worked with a superior person enabling upward social comparison on the same task and rated themselves on the same but new 7-point scale on how capable they felt they were of performing the task after social comparison. The participants' pre-group responses were compared with the post-group responses. The findings indicated that, significant motivation gains in participants decisions occurred after the upward social comparison as compared to decisions made when working alone before the comparison. The conclusion was that, upward comparison with a superior other person triggered significant motivation gains in participants decisions.

Kinga, Hartzelb, Schilhavya, Melonec & McGuired, (2010) studied the influence of social comparison on peoples' decisions, satisfaction, and personal preferences. The study adopted an experimental design, and the sample comprised 169 MBA students of a university in USA randomly assigned to five or six-person groups giving rise to thirty groups. All groups were homogeneous with respect to gender to eliminate the confounding factors from gender difference. The participants first indicated their pre-group individual responses on a choice-dilemma judgment task concerning an organizational social responsibility issue. Thereafter, the participants embarked on group discussions, and responded again to the same but new choice-dilemma

judgment task concerning an organizational social responsibility issue. The results indicated that, after group discussions, the participants' pre-individual decisions shifted dramatically toward the less socially responsible options. The significant difference between group decision outcomes and group members' personal preferences resulted from social comparison with others during group deliberations.

Lorenza, Rauhutb, Schweitzera & Dirk Helbingb, (2011) investigated how social comparison affected the changes in peoples' decisions. The study involved 144 students placed in 12 control and experimental groups, each group consisting of 12 students. In the control groups, the students responded to certain knowledge questions without any interaction with each other, while in the experimental groups, students could reconsider their response to factual questions after having interacted with other students. The decisions for the students in both control and experimental groups were compared, and the findings were that, social comparison promoted a convergence of responses after group discussion in the experimental groups. This means that the social comparison influenced the participants to shift their opinions after the group deliberations. Similarly, Trautmann & Vieiders' (2011) study also found that social influence among people in group discussions enhanced changes in individual opinions.

Apart from the influence of social comparison in the shifts in decisions, other studies have reported the role of persuasive arguments. Meyers' (1989) study actually tested the predictive validity of persuasive argumentation with regards to the shift in group decisions. The quantitative pre-test post-test research design was adopted. The participants of the study involved 73 male and female undergraduate students enrolled

in the communication classes at the Illinois University. Three items from the Choice Dilemma Questionnaire were utilized. These included one risky shift item-(a chemistry student deciding which graduate school to attend), and one cautious shift-(a man with a stomach ailment about to board a plane for a vacation). Participants were randomly assigned to five-member groups. The participants individually indicated the pre-group responses on the level of probability as to whether they would accept 1 in 10, 3 in 10, 5 in 10, 7 in 10, or 9 in 10 that the decision to attend graduate school or boarding a plane with a stomach ailment. The participants then went into groups and were provided with writing paper and told to indicate all the arguments they could think of for each dilemma problem. The members were issued with fresh CDQ items again and after coming to a consensus, they recorded the post-group responses for each item. The pre and post-group response scores were then compared and the statistical analysis indicated that shifts in the decisions occurred after group meetings. From the post-hoc results, the discussion arguments were found to have increased the shifts in decisions after group discussions.

Zuber, Crott & Werner, (1992) investigated the influence of persuasive arguments on group decision task which involved rating arguments about 20 given football items. The sample comprised 225 male law and economics students who were exposed to three argument conditions. Responses were made on a questionnaire with a probability scale. The respondents completed the questionnaire three times, their individual pre-discussion preferences, the group decision, and the individual post-discussion preferences. The discussion took place face-to-face and without restrictions; discussion time was 15 min. After the group decision, each subject was

asked his post discussion preferences as well as the corresponding rank order. At every assessment of the individual preferences, the subjects were asked to rank the remaining alternatives according to their personal preferences. The three decisions were then compared to ascertain the influence of persuasive arguments. First, the results indicate that group polarization was evident in this task, because the subjects shifted from their pre-discussion preferences to different post-discussion preferences (3.38 vs. 3.59, $P < 0.05$). The results further revealed that after arguments shared among group members the final group decisions showed a shift toward more extreme decision (3.39 vs. 3.59, $P < 0.05$), from the pre-group decisions. Because the decisions after the group discussions were significantly different from the pre-group discussions, therefore, the arguments brought up during group deliberations could have been responsible for the shifts in decisions.

Tormala, Briñol & Petty, (2006) investigated the effects of source of persuasive messages presented and their confidence about the messages. The findings indicated that, the credibility of message determined how the message would be perceived by the people, for example, participants had greater confidence in their thoughts after learning that the source was high rather than low in credibility. Similarly, Tormala, Briñol & Petty, (2007) studied the roles of source credibility on the perceptions of people regarding their new thoughts about a given task. The study found that, source of the message was rated as more trustworthy in the high-credibility source group ($M = 5.11$, $SD = 1.97$) as compared to the low-credibility group ($M = 3.41$, $SD = 1.65$), [$F(1, 86) = 19.89$, $P = 0.001$]. The study also found that, attitudes towards the persuasive messages were more favourable in the high ($M = 6.14$, $SD = 1.57$) rather

than low ($M = 5.17$, $SD = 1.45$) credibility groups, [$F(1, 86) = 9.69$, $P = 0.004$]. Thought confidence was also assessed after the source credibility manipulation in both the pre-message and the post-message condition and credibility only affected thought confidence in the post-message condition.

Wayne's (2011) study investigated the effects of persuasive message on group decision making among people interacting face-to-face. The study tested the degree to which individuals agreed with the arguments presented in the persuasive message and the extent to which individual group members influenced each other during group discussion. The study found that, participants showed more message agreement at the conclusion of group discussion, after an elaborative processing of the persuasive message as compared with responses made individually. The findings also indicated that the credibility of group members influenced the participants to change their decisions after group deliberations. These findings confirm the results of the earlier studies that novel and valid arguments have a very positive relationship to group polarization effect that occurs during group discussions and this confirms it as one of the factors in the group polarization effect.

Etienne, Korzilius, Vennixa & Jacobs, (2011) investigated the influence of persuasion on peoples' beliefs, attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control on actions. The study findings indicated that the pre-group individual responses were significantly different from the post-group collective responses. This can be interpreted that, persuasive messages during group discussion influenced shifts in beliefs and attitudes of the participants.

Tajeddin, Safayeni & Connellys' (2012) study, examined how group decision processes are affected by the perceived emergent expertise of a group member. The findings indicated that, the emergence of expert recognition at the group level shifts the balance of individual influence on the group decision in favour of the expert. The study concluded that, the group decision scheme changes as the perception of expertise emerges in the group. Andiliou, Ramsay, Murphy & Fast, (2012) studied the persuasion process when students read a persuasive message with an intratextual structure. The findings indicated that, the students' perceived knowledge increased after reading the intratextual persuasive message, and their topic beliefs strengthened differentially. It was concluded that, the message's structure had an impact on persuasion outcome.

Li Lu & Poppy, (2012) summarized findings from 65 studies on group decision making using the hidden profile paradigm. Through four literature search methods, 144 published and unpublished studies were identified. A computerized bibliographic search was conducted in several databases using the following keywords: common information bias, hidden profile, information sampling, confirmation bias, shared information, distributed information, information sharing, information pooling, unshared information, group decision making, and unique and common cues. The findings were that, the extent to which group members are thorough in mentioning the available unique information and focus on unique information are important predictors for decision quality. Most recently, the Albarracina, Wallaceb, Hartc, & Browns' (2012) study also confirmed that persuasive arguments based on new information influence shifts from pre-group individually made decisions to post-group decisions.

From the above reviewed studies on the influence of social comparison and persuasive arguments on group polarization, it can be observed that, most of them adopted quantitative approaches with large sample sizes that enhances generalizability of their findings. However, the qualitative component to reveal the verbal experiences of the participants regarding the dynamics in the group interactions was lacking. Therefore, the current study filled this gap by bringing in the qualitative component which led to more comprehensive results on the phenomenon being investigated.

3.3.2: Dimensions of student disciplinary problems on which school disciplinary panels make decisions

Jobert, *et al*, (2004), state that positive behaviour management at school has two very important goals, namely to ensure the safety of staff and students and to create an environment conducive to learning and teaching. On these bases, policies on students' behaviours in schools, therefore, stipulate behaviours that are acceptable and those that are not acceptable. According to the Department of Education (2011), a school's policy on student behaviours is first and foremost an indication that students are expected to live by rule-guided behaviours to enable them have respect for themselves and others and to live amicably with one another. Student behaviours that are disruptive or result to disciplinary problems significantly affect the fundamental rights to feel safe, to be treated with respect and to learn (Mabena & Prinsloo, 2000). Therefore, school policies on behaviours are essentially meant to protect the rights of every member of the school and to ensure safe and secure school environment. School policies on student behaviours expect students to show respect and courtesy

towards teachers, school authorities and other fellow students (Department of Education, 2011). Policies on student behaviours in school are therefore, in effect, the reflections of the country's supreme laws protecting citizens against behaviours that could threaten the dignity, safety and fundamental rights of people (Jobert, *et al*, 2004). Students who misbehave tend to perform poorly in school, tend to be absent frequently from school, are often found to abuse or threaten their teacher and student misconducts adversely affect other students' safety, security and success in education (Andrew & Taylor, 1998; Moloi, 2002).

To enforce school policies on behaviour and to ensure that the environment of the school is made conducive for teaching and learning, school policies on behaviour also contain indication of sanctions for student misbehaviours. According to the Department of Education (2011), reasonable disciplinary penalty needs to be imposed on students who mis-behave to prevent them from injuring themselves or other students or damage school properties. Disciplinary procedure in school is essentially about positive behaviour management aimed at promoting appropriate behaviour, developing self-discipline and self-control in students (Squelch, 2000). Sanctions or punishment, however, represents a facet of discipline that involves actions taken in response to inappropriate behaviour in order to correct or modifies behaviour and to restore harmonious relations in the school (Jobert, *et al*, 2004). To ensure that these goals are achieved, the Department of Education (2011) recommends that decisions of student disciplinary behaviours should be based on four aspects or dimensions which include:

- The types of disruptive behaviour presented at the disciplinary hearing – (whether or not the behaviour is acceptable or not acceptable, mild or very serious misbehaviour), as indicated in the school rules and regulations or policies on student behaviours;
- The general evaluation of the offending student in terms of the latter's pattern of behaviour over time – (whether or not a first or habitual offender, or offence made in error);
- The effect(s) of disruptive behaviour on a victim or victims – (whether or not harm, abuse or violation of rights of victim has been committed and there is need for redress); and,
- The effect of the disruptive behaviour on the disciplinary tone of the school – (whether or not disruptive behaviour constitute embarrassment to the school or likely to paint the school's image in rather very negative way.

Schools, however, are often not rigidly adhering to the Department of Education (2011) suggestions. According to Bear, (2008) schools are often flexible in the manner in which they handle some problems and teachers' attitudes to disciplinary problems also affect decision making on student disciplinary problems. This study investigated decision making of the Kenyan secondary school disciplinary panels on the bases of the four dimensions identified.

3.3.3: Gender differences in shifts in decisions

A number of studies have revealed that gender is a major factor in the shifts from pre-group individually made decisions to post-group decisions among individuals in group

tasks. Propp, (1995) found that in group discussions, the contributions by men receive more attention from other group members and have a greater effect on group members' decisions than the same contributions by women. Studies by Schneider and Cook (1995) and Carli (2001) revealed that men tend to be more influential than women in group decision tasks as men are seen as capable of forcing their own wishes in the final decisions, while women make more supportive remarks in such decisions. Karakowsky & Elangovan (2001) examined male and female decision making under risk and uncertainty at both the individual and the group levels. The study involved 163 undergraduate students who responded to four decision-making scenarios individually and in groups of varying gender composition. The results suggested that relative to men, women do not fare well in mixed-gender contexts. Ohtsubo, Masuchi and Nakanishi (2002), also agree that females in the minority position in a group discussion comply with the majority faction more easily than males.

LePine, Hollenbeck, Ilgen, Colquitt, & Ellis, (2002) found significant gender differences in the nature of decisions that are made in group deliberations, that men, relative to women, are more assertive, controlling, aggressive, independent, adventurous, and competitive, in their attempt to make decisions while women are more tender-minded and emphatic. This means that men often influence decisions outcomes in mixed-groups, while women tend to easily shift their decisions. Powers & Reiser, (2005) however, explain that gender differences occur because men have more perceived social power than women; hence women tend to be more likely to conform to men than are men to women. Liu, Lim, and Zhong's, (2007) study found that, when women perform a group decision-making task, they foster cooperation and

connection within the group, and tend to reserve their opinions and compromise their stands to complete the task while maintaining a peaceful atmosphere. Men on the other hand, tend to contribute somewhat independently and ignore other's idea; hence they are likely to influence the females to shift their decisions. The results also revealed that men have fewer concerns on whether the fierce discussion would ruin the harmony among group members.

Van Leijenhorst, Westenberg & Crone,(2008) studied gender and age influences on risky decision making. The study tested whether the development of decision making under risk is related to changes in risk-estimation abilities. Participants (N = 93) between ages 8-30 participated in the study. The study found out that, at all ages, females were more risk-averse than males in their choice of decisions. Similarly, Pawlowski & Atwal (2008) studied risky decision making among males and females. The participants were exposed to two conditions of making decisions of catching a bus and crossing a busy road. The observations for the study were carried out at a single bus stop which students habitually use to get to the University of Liverpool campus. The results indicated that, males were more likely than females to cross busy roads when it was risky to do so. Apesteguia, Azmat and Iriberris' (2011) study also reported similar findings that, during group decision making tasks, women are less aggressive while men are more aggressive in their strategies.

On the contrary, Maccoby, (1998), however, refuted the commonly held belief that females are more easily influenced than are males during group decision making. According to Maccoby (1998), females are not necessarily more easily influenced by others than are males, but that female to female interactions might involve more

conflict-avoidance style than male to male interactions. The findings reported that some gender differences might be masked unless males and females are observed in group settings that allow them to show their natural interaction styles.

3.3.4: Age and teaching experience differences in shifts in decisions

Age has also been identified as a factor which could influence shifts in decisions from pre-group individual decision to post-group decisions. Previous studies indicate that there are differences in shifts and on decisions made in group tasks on the basis of ages of the members. Studies have revealed that older persons study factors more closely and judge the quality of their decisions after undertaking the appropriate strategies (Hershey & Wilson, 1997). The adults look for information critically and therefore place value on the factors that affect a decision, while majority of young people are viewed as lacking in knowledge and experience in certain decision areas and they place little value on the factors that affect the decision. There are studies that have investigated decision making abilities of young people compared with adults, which indicate that young people make more risky decisions than adults (Schlottmann, 2000; Harbaugh, Krause, & Vesterlund, 2002; Levin, Hart, Weller & Harshman, 2007). Manning, Carroll & Carp, (2004) investigated the influence of age on judicial decision making by analyzing 544 age bias rulings and 1,592 decisions in cases handed down in the federal district courts in the USA from 1984 to 1995. The findings indicated that the youngest judges were least sympathetic in their decisions (made more extreme or risky decisions) while the oldest judges were the most sympathetic in their decisions (made more cautious decisions).

Lizarraga, Maria, & Elawar (2007), found significant differences in the decisions made by the young people compared to the older ones. Younger people were found to experience greater shifts in their decisions, while the adults to a lesser extent. This was explained by stating that the youths felt significant pressure from emotional and social aspects in their decisions, and shifted their decisions easily. Mossière & Dalby (2008) asserts that differing life experiences, confidence, cognitive processing, or views of the justice system may explain age differences in the shifts in decisions in a group process. Because of lack of maturity to follow through with conviction, younger group members are more likely to be more fluid in their decisions. In contrast, the older age groups chose a verdict with more confidence and they show consistency, which demonstrates their more crystallized, or solidified, view of the justice system.

Chen & Ma (2009) investigated the role of anticipated emotions in risky decisions of young and older adults. The participants were asked to make a choice between an alternative that may have either a very positive or a very negative consequence and an alternative that was relatively safe. They then rated their anticipated emotions if the results turned out to be positive or negative. The findings indicated that, older adults' decisions were significantly influenced by anticipated positive emotions, while those of the younger adults' were associated by anticipated negative emotions.

Similarly, Mata, *et al*, (2011) investigated age differences in risky decision making. The sample comprised 4093 participants who made decisions on certain behavioural tasks thought to measure risk taking. The results indicated that age-related differences vary considerably as a function of task characteristics, in particular the

learning requirements of the task. Specifically, older adults were more risk averse when learning led to risk-seeking behaviour, as compared to younger people who made risky decisions. Rana, Murtaza, Noor & Rehman, (2011) studied the effects of demographic factors such as, age and gender on risk preferences and risky decision-making behaviour on investments. The investment decision making behaviour in risky situation was taken as dependent variable while, the demographic factors (age and gender) were considered as independent variables. The findings indicated that, in terms of gender, females were more sensitive to the risky decisions, whereas, male investors' preferred more risk in their decisions. The findings also indicated that, as age increased, risk perception decreased.

Most recently, Rolison, Hanoch & Wood, (2012) investigated decision making among older and younger adults. The findings indicated that, younger adults were more willing to take greater risks, while older adults were more cautious when their decision making was based on initial perceptions of risk, rather than learning following some experience with a task. Albert & Duffy (2012) investigated decision making among older and younger adults in a lottery game. Both the older and younger adults completed a paired lottery choice task used in the experimental economics literature to elicit risk aversion after which they also indicated their responses on discount rates. The findings indicated that the older adults were more risk averse than young people in the lottery game ($P < 0.04$).

Age is related to teaching experiences and the latter could also influence shifts from pre-group to post-group decisions. Some previous studies have investigated the influence of teaching experiences on the quality of group decisions. Swanson,

O'Connor & Cooney, (1990) studied how the expert and novice teachers solve common classroom discipline problems. The sample size comprised 48 teachers, of which, 24 were novice teachers whereas the expert group consisted of 24 teachers. The mean chronological age of expert teachers was 46.5 years while that of the novice teachers was 28.8 years. The mean years of classroom experience was 20.8 years for expert teachers and 0.5 years for novice teachers. 19 females and 5 males composed the expert group and 17 females and 7 males made up the novice group. The findings indicated that, expert teachers were more frequent in their use of direct or external strategies and, thus, are more likely to rely on certain behavioral principles for intervention than novice teachers. The findings also indicated that, problem solving processes and solutions to classroom discipline problems separate expert and novice teachers. Overall, the study finding indicated that, expert teachers have a well-established procedural plan for solving discipline problems and may therefore divert more of their attention to adequately defining the problem when compared to the novice teachers. Westerman, (1990) also studied the decision making approaches of the expert and novice teachers, and found that, experts demonstrated an ability to combine or integrate new information, and they were constantly aware of behavioural cues of students unlike the novice teachers.

Egyed & Short (2006) found that dealing with student misbehaviour is a fundamental skill that experienced teachers manage efficiently. Similarly, other studies reported that, less experienced teachers lack self-efficacy (Rushton, 2000); doubt their capability (Onafowora, 2004); lack the knowledge (Almog & Shechtman, 2007); and are unaware of the necessary resources (De la Torre Cruz & Arias, 2007) to

successfully manage their students problems. Day, Sammons, Stobart, Kingston, &Gu, (2007) also found that, less experienced teachers are found to struggle more in managing students misbehaviours in schools. Tsouloupas's (2011) study investigated the actions of more experienced teachers compared with those of less experienced teachers, with respect to their efficacy in handling student misbehaviour. The finding was that more experienced teachers had higher self-beliefs in their abilities to control their class and manage challenging student behaviours, while less experienced teachers felt ineffective in their ability to deal with student misbehaviours in school.

From the above reviewed previous studies, age and years of teaching experiences of panel members seem to be significant factors when it comes to the task of making quality decisions to manage student behaviour.



3.4: Research Studies in Africa and Kenya

A search of literature carried out both in Kenya and other African countries revealed that there are only group studies within other contexts but none focused on the dynamic interactions and decisions in school disciplinary panels. Specifically, no study was found that focused on the shifts in decisions among the panel members of the Kenyan secondary schools.

3.5: Summary and Conclusion of the Chapter

This chapter discussed previous studies on group decisions, group polarization and factors in the dynamic interactions of small social group which may influence group

decisions. In particular, the chapter reviewed literature on the phenomenon of group polarization especially in education and related settings and the factors which influence group polarization in small groups. The review revealed that, group polarization do occur in educational settings where small groups such as committees, teams and panels are employed to make decisions.

Almost all the studies reviewed adopted quantitative approaches, with questionnaires used for data collection and data analysis done quantitatively to reveal shifts from pre to post-group responses regarding group members' decisions. Studies did not collect qualitative information regarding the feelings of or the meanings group members made of their experiences in the group and particularly regarding factors responsible for influencing the shifts from their pre-group to post-group decisions. The current study adopted the mixed methods approach (using both the quantitative and the qualitative approaches) to collect data. The two methods were meant to collect comprehensive information concerning group polarization under investigation for better understanding of the phenomenon.

Some of the studies reviewed adopted the pre and post test control and experimental designs. The studies were mainly interested in establishing whether or not group polarization did occur. The studies did not explore individual differences of participants especially as these could have affected group polarization. There could have been individual differences in both groups in both sessions and since not the same subjects were in both conditions, the results could have not yielded a more reliable data due to individual differences. This might have lowered the reliability of the results obtained from these studies. The current research adopted the one group

pre-test post-test quasi experimental design where the same subjects indicated their responses before the disciplinary session and after the session indicate their responses to how they made their decisions.

From the findings of the reviewed studies, it is evident that group polarization in decision making occurs during group deliberations and that the factors such as group members' motivation for approval of others and their concern for their status in the group (all described as social comparison) and persuasive arguments (engendered by provision of new or additional information in group discussions or perceptions of credibility of information) are quite influential in enhancing group polarization.

Finally, no study was found in the literature that specifically focused on investigating group polarization in disciplinary hearing process. However, a number of studies reviewed revealed evidence of group polarization in small groups in school settings and the employment of small groups to make decisions rather than the individual. The current study was designed to ascertain the existence of group polarization in decision making by school disciplinary panels and it also established factors within the disciplinary hearing process that could be responsible for group polarization.

The next chapter, chapter 4, provides the methodological framework for the study. This includes presentations on the research design, participants, and data gathering methods adopted for this study.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1: Introduction

This chapter presents an overview of the research methodology adopted for the study. The chapter describes the research design, study participants (population and sample), instruments for data collection, procedures for data collection including ethical considerations, and data analysis. The central concern of this study was to find out evidence of the existence of the phenomenon of group polarization in decision making by members of the disciplinary panels of selected secondary schools in Rongo District of Kenya. The study also investigated factors which may be responsible for the group polarization. The following research questions guided the investigation:

- Are there shifts from pre-disciplinary hearing decisions to the post-disciplinary hearing decisions among members of selected secondary schools disciplinary panels in Rongo District of Kenya?
- Are the shifts in decisions on the bases of the type of the disciplinary problem committed, the behaviour characteristics of the offender, the effects of disciplinary problem on the victim(s) and the effects of the disciplinary problem on the disciplinary tone or image of the schools?
- Are variables such as gender, age, years of teaching experiences and school affiliations, factors responsible for the shifts from pre-disciplinary hearing individually made decisions to the post-disciplinary hearing group decisions

among members of selected secondary school disciplinary panels in Rongo District of Kenya?

Three hypotheses were also tested in the study.

4.2: Research Design

According to Babbie & Mouton (2001), a research design is described as a plan or blueprint of how the researcher intends to conduct the research. A research design is also regarded as a detailed plan of how a research study is going to be conducted or how it was conducted from data collection to analysis of the data (De Vos & Fouché, 1998). Hyusamen (1993) contends that a research design is a framework that explains how data was collected and analyzed in an investigation. The research design provides the most valid and accurate answers for research questions (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001).

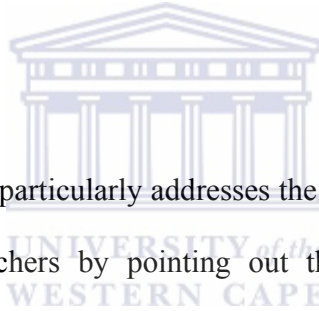
When developing a research design, the researcher must make a series of decisions along four dimensions such as the purpose of the research, the paradigm informing the research, the context within which the research is carried out and the techniques used to collect data (Durrheim, 2006). The research questions entailed the collection of qualitative data while the hypotheses necessitated the collection of quantitative data. Thus mixed methods design adopted for the study is described in the next section.

4.2.1: The Mixed Methods Research Design

The mixed methods design is a research design in which the investigator collects and analyzes data, integrates the findings, and draws inferences using both qualitative and

quantitative approaches in a single study or a program of inquiry (Tashakori & Creswell, 2007). Creswell & Plano Clark (2007) defined mixed methods as:

“a research design with philosophical assumptions as well as methods of inquiry. As a methodology, it involves philosophical assumptions that guide the direction of the collection and analysis and the mixture of qualitative and quantitative approaches in many phases of the research process. As a method, it focuses on collecting, analyzing and mixing both qualitative and quantitative data in a single study or series of studies. Its central premise is that the use of qualitative and quantitative approaches, in a combination, provides a better understanding of research problems than either approach alone” (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007).



The mixed methods design particularly addresses the concerns of both the quantitative and the qualitative researchers by pointing out that all human inquiry involves imagination and interpretation, intentions and values but must also necessarily be grounded in empirical, embodied experience (Morgan, 2007). Tashakkori & Teddlie, (1998) further contend that the mixed methods design is based on approach of what works based on shared meanings and joint action. The researcher used both the quantitative and qualitative data in an attempt to confirm, cross-validate, or corroborate findings within a single study (Creswell, 2003). Creswell (2009) adds that, some authors refer to this comparison as confirmation, disconfirmation, cross-validation or corroboration.

Within the mixed methods design, there are two models regarding the timing of collection of data using both the Quantitative and Qualitative phases, that is, the

sequential and the concurrent models, where the former refers to the application of the phases at different times, and the latter involves application of the phases at the same time. The study adopted the Concurrent Triangulation Model.

4.2.1.1: The Concurrent Triangulation Model

In this model, both the quantitative and qualitative data are collected and analyzed at the same time, happening in one phase of the research study and the researcher therefore gives equal priority and weights to both components (Hanson, Creswell, Plano Clark & Creswell, 2005). Ideally, the priority would be equal between the two methods, but in practical application the priority may be given to either the qualitative or the quantitative approach (Creswell, 2009). With regards to treating both data, the triangulation which is the combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon, was adopted (Creswell, 2003). According to Creswell (2009), triangulation helps in obtaining different but complementary data on the same topic, and to best understand the research problem which eventually helps to bring together differing strengths and non-overlapping weaknesses of quantitative methods (large sample size, trends, generalization) with those of qualitative methods (small sample, details, in-depth). This model is very useful when a researcher wants to expand quantitative results with qualitative data to make it richer and it, therefore, makes researchers to be more confident of their results, stimulates the creation of inventive methods, new ways of capturing a problem to balance with conventional data

collection methods, and may also help to uncover the deviant or off-quadrant dimension of a phenomenon (Creswell, 2009).

The mixing during this model, usually found in an interpretation or discussion section, is to actually merge the data, integrate or compare the results of two data bases side by side in a discussion. This method can result in well-validated and substantiated findings and in addition, the concurrent data collection results in a shorter data collection time period as compared to one of the sequential approaches (Creswell, 2009).

The Concurrent Triangulation Model is displayed in the figure below.

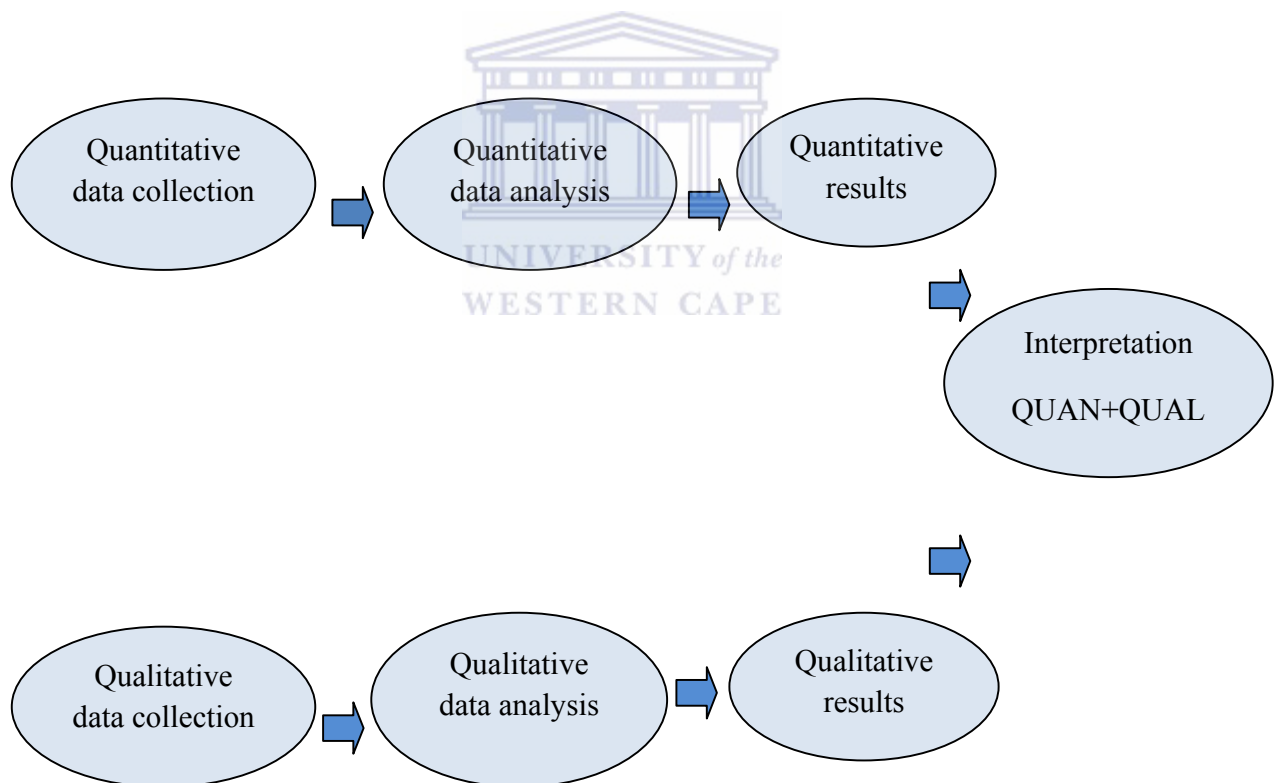


Figure 4.1: The Concurrent Triangulation Model (Creswell, Trout & Barbuto, 2002).

The researcher adopted this model for this study because there was need to estimate quantitatively the shifts from the pre to post disciplinary hearing decisions of the panel members. The disciplinary panel members' reported experiences regarding the factors they considered might have influenced the shift in pre and post disciplinary hearing decisions, constituted the qualitative data for this study.

As with any other research design, the mixed method has strengths and weaknesses.

4.2.1.2: Strengths and Weaknesses of Mixed Methods Design

There are strengths and weaknesses in using the mixed methods design. The research design has several strengths, of which some of them are discussed as follows. First, the most important rationale for the adoption of the design is for the complementarity of the different methods or approaches, because the different methods or approaches would be used to extend the breadth, depth and range of inquiry, hence, the results from one method or approach would help to develop or inform the other method (approach). While quantitative methods are very tightly constrained by the requirements of statistical testing with limited number of variables that can be assessed, qualitative methods on the other hand is very resource intensive, the depth and breadth of the data gathered from any sizeable sample is typically vast, permitting multiple analyses of processes and interactions. Therefore, a related way in which qualitative and quantitative methods can complement each other is that, whereas quantitative research provides relatively thin norm-referenced data from different people and populations, qualitative research yields thick data about individual differences. Johnson & Onwuegbuzie (2004) and Morgan (2007) contend that the use

of both quantitative and qualitative methods provides more insights and understanding that can be missed if only one method is used.

Second, within this design, the quantitative methods will ensure precise, reliable, replicable measures (McGrath & Johnson 2003), while the qualitative aspects would make for the situation of data collection and interpretation of data within the context of the study (Willig & Stainton, 2008). Therefore, combining the internal validity of the quantitative approach with the external validity of qualitative approach can thus be a productive way of mixing the methods, in other words pictures, words, and numbers are used to add meaning to each other (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

Third, the use of quantitative and qualitative methods provides more insights and understanding that can be missed if only one method is used, and finally the researchers can test theories effectively by formulating grounds for relevance and verification.

However, the mixed methods design is not without its weaknesses. One of the weaknesses is that the design is still fairly new to the research arena and there are difficulties which need to be further clarified such as how the quantitative data can be qualitatively analyzed, paradigm mixing and interpretation of conflicting results (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Second, conducting a mixed methods research can be difficult for a single researcher to manage due to the quantity of work especially in concurrent study designs (Greene & Caracelli, 2003).

However, the advantages of mixed methods research far outweigh its disadvantages. Hence, despite its weaknesses, mixing quantitative and qualitative techniques together

makes it possible to arrive at a richer and a more complete description covering fairly all aspects of the phenomenon. It also ensures that all aspects are investigated unlike when only one method is used (Creswell, 2003).

The study needed to establish the occurrence of group polarization, by investigating the shifts from the pre to post disciplinary hearing decisions by members of the disciplinary panels. The second phase of the study was to investigate the reported experiences of panel members during disciplinary hearings regarding the factors which may have influenced their shifts in the pre and post disciplinary hearing decisions. Therefore, the Concurrent Triangulation model adopted for the study had two phases. In the first phase of the study, shifts in decisions were investigated on the bases of four aspects associated with the disciplinary problems. These factors were the type of disciplinary problem, behaviour characteristics of the offender, the effects of disciplinary problem on victim and the effects of the problem on the disciplinary tone of the school.

The main purpose of the second phase of the study was to seek information regarding selected panel members' experiences and the factors which made them shifted from the pre to post disciplinary panel hearing decisions. The results obtained from data collected in phases 1 and 2 are integrated in the discussion chapter to present a more elaborated picture of the study findings.

4.3: Population and Sample

4.3.1: Population

A population in a research study is a group of individual persons, objects, or items from which samples are taken for measurement (Maheshwari, 2011). Asthana & Bhushan (2007) contend that the term “population” refers to all the members of any well-defined class of people or it is "the entire group of people that a particular study is interested in (Brown, (2006). In other words, population refers to people found in a particular group the researcher is planning to generalize to. The population for this study comprised secondary school teachers in Rongo District of Kenya. From the population of secondary school teachers are drawn school disciplinary panel members and therefore, teachers are the best informants for this study. Teachers who are members of the disciplinary panels are those who experience the dynamic interactions of the disciplinary hearing and therefore, are rich sources of information for the study. The disciplinary panels’ role in the school is to contribute positively to the behaviour development of the students in the school. Moreover, since teachers are not only in the schools for the educational or academic development of the latter, the teachers therefore are appropriate informants or subjects for this study.

There were a total of 45 secondary schools in Rongo district of Kenya as at the time the research was carried out. These secondary schools were of three categories including single-sex boys’ only schools, single-sex girls’ only schools, and co-educational (boys’ and girls’) schools. With each school having an average of

between 7-8 teachers in each school's disciplinary panel, therefore, a total of 360 teachers constituted the actual population of the study.

While it was not possible to interview all the teachers, the researcher drew a sample from whom information was collected for the study (Sekaran, 2003).

4.3.2: Sample and Sampling Methods

A sample can be defined as the elements of the population which are considered for inclusion in a research study (Strydom & De Vos, 1998). Of the 360 teachers, 21% were selected for the study. This 21% comprised the 78 teacher-members of the disciplinary panels in the 10 secondary schools. This sample size was considered to be adequate, based on the information indicated in the published tables which provide the sample size for a given set of criteria (Bragg, 2011).

4.3.2.1: Demographic Statistics

Demographic information about respondents includes the characteristics of participants such as age, school category, years of teaching experiences, and gender. For the purpose of this study, the biographic statistics were with regard to the participants' gender, age, teaching experiences, and school category (affiliation) of the panel members, and these are presented in the following figures.

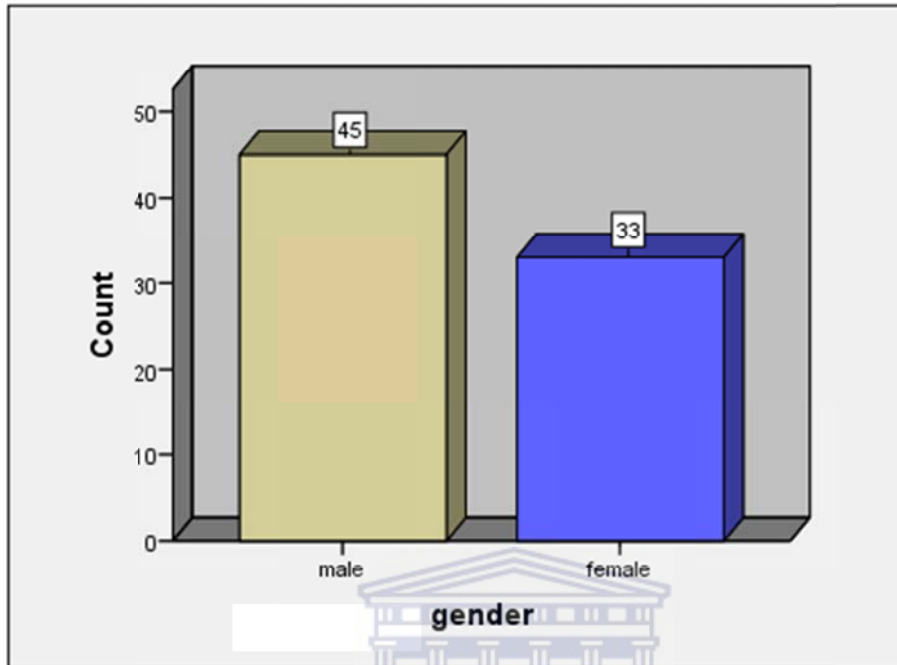


Fig. 4.2: Participants by Gender

The information displayed in the Figure 4.2 above indicates that forty five (45) males and thirty three (33) female teacher-members of the disciplinary panels participated in the study.

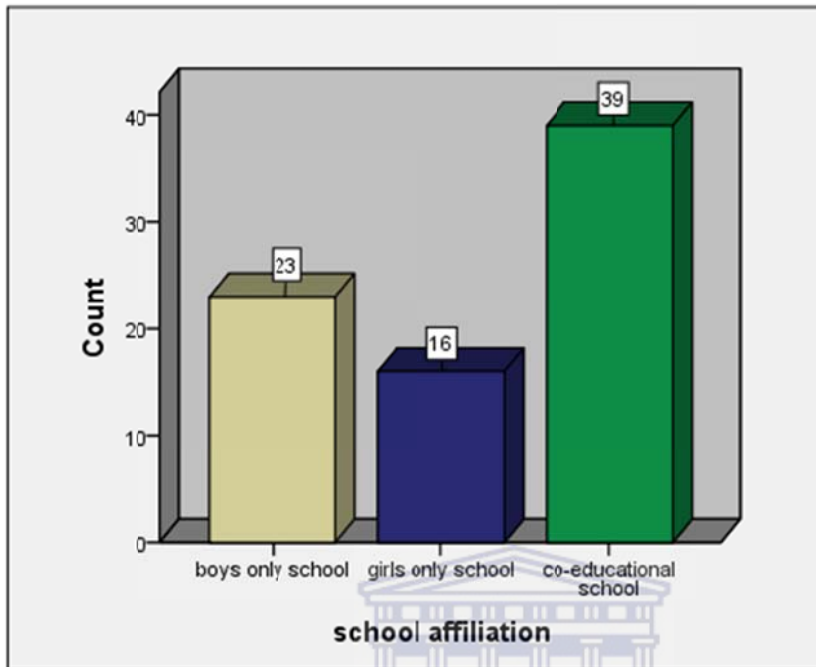


Figure 2

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The information displayed in the Figure 4.3 above indicates that there were:

- Thirty nine (39) panel members from the co-educational schools,
- Twenty three (23) panel members from boys' only schools, and
- Sixteen (16) panel members from girls' only schools, who participated in the study.

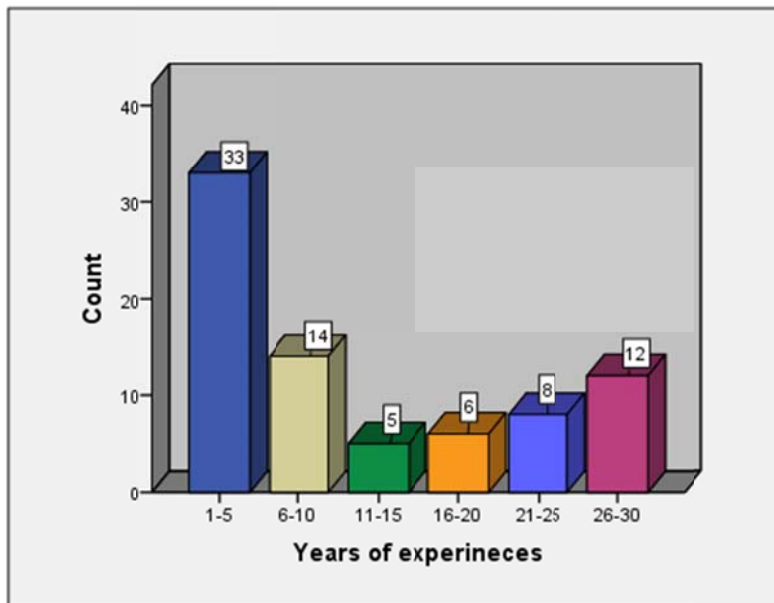


Figure 3



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The information displayed in the Figure 4.4 above indicates that, there were:

- Thirty-three panel members with 1-5 years of teaching experiences,
- Foutreen panel members with 6-10 years of teaching experiences,
- Five panel members with 11-15 years of teaching experiences,
- Six members with 16-20 teaching experiences,
- Eight members with 21-25 years of teaching experiences, and
- Twelve panel members with 26-30 years of teaching experiences who participated in the study.

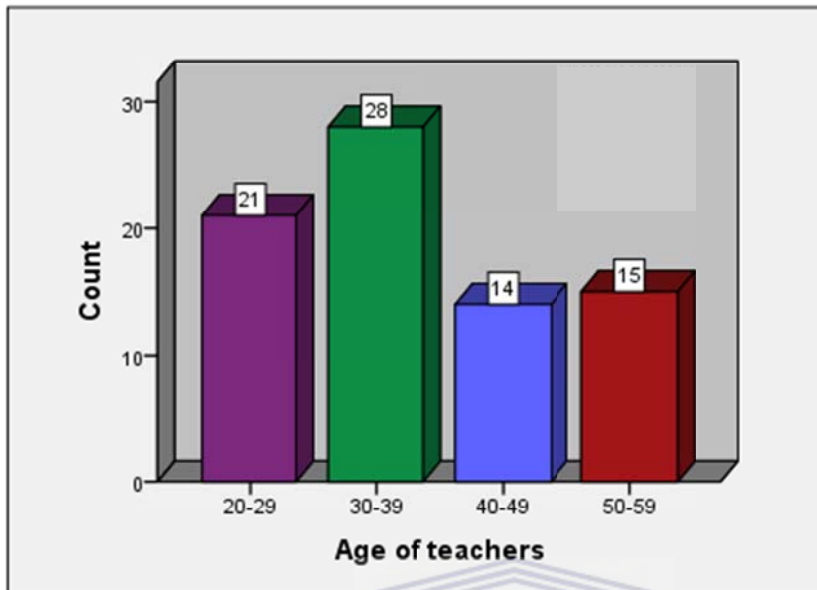


Figure 4

Fig. 4.5: Participants by Age Groups

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The information displayed in the Figure 4.5 above indicates that there were:

- Twenty-one panel members in the 20 to 29 years old age group,
- Twenty-eight panel members in the 30-39 years old age group,
- Fourteen panel members in the 40-49 years old age group, and
- Fifteen panel members in the 50-59 years old age group, who participated in the study.

Sampling of the participants was carried out for both quantitative and qualitative phases of the study. The quantitative sampling was for the sample size of the teachers from where the quantitative data was obtained, while the qualitative sampling was for the number of panel members who were interviewed. The sampling procedures for both phases were carried out as outlined below.

4.3.2.2: Quantitative Sampling

A sample size of 78 panel members from ten secondary schools in Rongo District of Kenya was selected to participate in this study using the stratified random sampling technique. According to Baker (2002), stratification is simply the process of splitting the population into strata (or smaller sub-groups) according to factors that are correlated with the factor under study. The stratification in the quantitative sampling of this study was necessary because the three categories of schools were not of equal number, and therefore, one cannot select equal number of participants from the three school categories for the study. This sampling technique was adopted to ensure that members of each category of schools are well represented in the sample for the study. This method involved dividing the population into homogeneous subgroups and then taking a simple random sample in each subgroup (Wamocha, Nasongo & Injendi, 2012). The objective of the technique was to divide the population into non-overlapping groups (strata) $N_1, N_2, N_3 \dots N_i$, such that $N_1 + N_2 + N_3 + \dots + N_i = N$. Then from here, a simple random sample of $f = n/N$ in each strata was obtained (Sitter, 1992). The only requirement for stratification is that each item in the population must fall into one and only one stratum. Having set up strata, a simple random sample is drawn from within each stratum and the correct representation of the related factors in

the sample assures a lower overall sampling error (Baker, 2002). The use of the stratified random sampling technique ensured that specific groups were represented proportionally, in the sample (e.g., by gender, school category), by selecting individuals from strata list (Black, 1999). The use of strata reduced error in sampling, and increased the gain in precision because overall population total can be estimated very efficiently.

Because there were a total of 45 secondary schools in Rongo district of Kenya, power analysis which recommended that at least 20% of the target population to be taken as the sample of the study, was used in the selection of the sample size (Brown, 2007; Bragg, 2011). Hence, from 45 secondary schools, 10 schools were selected as the sample size, which resulted to 22% of the population. The school categories, size and distribution of schools were the factors taken into consideration when selecting the participating schools. The selection of the sample size, $n = (10)$ for the schools that participated was carried out as follows.

From a total of 45 secondary schools found in Rongo district, 24(53.3%) were co-educational schools, 15(33.3%) were boys' only schools and 6(13.3%) were girls' only schools. The selection of the schools involved in the study was done as indicated below.

For the boys' only schools, $15/45 \times 100 = 33.3\% \times 10 = 3.33$. This was approximately 3 schools.

For the co-educational schools, $24/45 \times 100 = 53.3\% \times 10 = 5.3$. This was approximately 5 schools.

For girls' only schools, $6/45 \times 100 = 13.3\% \times 10 = 1.3$. This was approximately 2 schools.

Of the 10 sampled secondary schools, eight of them had eight members in each of their disciplinary panel groups, while the remaining 2 schools had 7 members in each of their respective panels and this gave the total sample size of the panel members for the quantitative phase to be 78. This final sample of the 78 panel members that participated in the study was not treated as one homogeneous group because they were from different schools and the uniqueness of each school was maintained.

4.3.2.3: Qualitative Sampling

For the qualitative phase of the study, a sample size, (n) of ten (10) panel members was selected for interviews using the purposive sampling technique. According to Teddlie & Yu (2007), purposive sampling techniques are primarily used in qualitative studies and may be defined as selecting units (e.g., individuals, groups of individuals, institutions) based on specific purposes associated with answering a research study's questions. Maxwell (1996) and Drezner (2009) contend that purposive sampling is a type of sampling technique in which, particular settings, persons, or events are deliberately selected for the important information they can provide that cannot be gotten as well from other choices. The sample size of ten panel members for interviews was considered to be adequate, for the current study because for the phenomenological studies, sample size recommendations range from 6 to 10 for qualitative research (Morse, 1994; Mason, 2010). When selecting the ten teachers, factors such as the age, years of teaching experience, gender, positions of

responsibility in school and school categories of the panel members were taken into consideration. In other words, the panel members of different age groups, both male and females, young and old in age, least experienced to more experienced, some from the co-educational, boys' only, and girls' only schools were sampled.

4.4: Research Instruments

The data for the current study was collected by means of questionnaires and structured interviews. Quantitative data was collected using questionnaires so that the estimate in behaviour change could be made. The type of information that was collected was with regards to the estimates of shifts in decisions, in quantitative terms, from pre disciplinary hearing to post disciplinary hearing on four dimensions, the type of disciplinary problem, behaviour characteristics of the offender, the effects of disciplinary problem on victim and the effects on the disciplinary tone of the school. In addition, qualitative data was collected by conducting interviews with selected panel members who provided information on the factors they considered to have influenced the shifts from pre to post disciplinary hearing decisions while addressing the behaviour problems.

4.4.1: Questionnaires

The questionnaires that were used in this study were the “Demographic Questionnaire” (DQ), the “Modified Choice Dilemma Questionnaire” (MDCQ) and

the “Follow up Questionnaire” (FQ). The content of each of the questionnaires is presented below.

4.4.1.1: Demographic Questionnaire (See Appendix, A)

The Demographic Questionnaire, also called a demographic survey was used. The demographic questionnaire was developed by the researcher in order to obtain information on the participants’ personal demographics. The demographic questionnaire collected information relevant to the variables of the participants studied. These include, gender, age, years of teaching experiences, and school categories (affiliations).



4.4.1.2: Modified Choice Dilemma Questionnaire (See Appendices B & C)

The Modified Choice Dilemma Questionnaire (MCDQ) is an instrument that was used for quantitative estimation of the changes in decisions from pre to post disciplinary hearing. The original Choice Dilemma Questionnaire was developed by Stoner (Ronay & Kim, (2006) and is among the most frequently used techniques for estimating, in quantitative terms, changes in decisions by individuals before and after group deliberations to ascertain if dynamic interactions in the group have influenced shifts in group members’ decisions (Freedman, 2007; Appelt, Milch, Handgraaf & Weber, 2011). The MDCQ is a self-administered questionnaire which can be used with participants aged eight years old to adult age (21 years and above). The questionnaire was adopted to give response options where the panel members rated themselves individually, before the disciplinary hearing meetings on their decisions

based on four dimensions - the type of the disciplinary problem presented for disciplinary hearing, the behaviour characteristics of the offender, the effects of disciplinary problem on the victim and the effects of the disciplinary problem on the disciplinary tone or image of the school (pre-group responses). The same questionnaire was completed again after the disciplinary hearing meetings (post-group responses).

Responses to MCDQ are coded along a continuum scale of acceptable probabilities adapted from the Stoner's choice dilemmas (Stoner, 1961; Freedman, 2007). Each Choice-Dilemma was accompanied by the standard instructions to choose between odds of 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 or 9 chances in the lowest odds of success acceptable in order to recommend an opinion concerning an offending behavior or violation (Freedman, 2007). That is, the Modified Choice Dilemma Questionnaire had options from where panel members were to indicate whether there were one in ten chances, three in ten chances, five in ten chances, seven in ten chances or nine in ten chances that the offender was indisciplined. The disciplinary panel members were asked to choose from one of the options of five probability levels to indicate their decision. The decisions on the five options on the MDCQ were made along the four dimensions:

- Whether or not the discipline problem was unacceptable according to the school rules and regulations (or school's disciplinary policy),
- Whether or not the offending student is an indisciplined offender and therefore, he/she is guilty,

- Whether or not the victim's rights have been violated or that the victim has suffered harm, and,
- Whether or not such disciplinary problem negatively affect the image of the school or has seriously embarrassed the school.

The participants were given five options from which to choose. These response options were:

1. a 1 in 10 chances, or,
2. a 3 in 10 chances, or,
3. a 5 in 10 chances, or,
4. a 7 in 10 chances, or,
5. a 9 in 10 chances.



The greater the chance selected by the participants, for example, 7 in 10 chances or 9 in 10 chances, the more likely they would be in their decisions that: by the behaviour tendency of the offending student, he/she was grossly in-disciplined; by the type of the disciplinary problem committed, it is unacceptable; by the effect of the disciplinary problem on the victim, the latter has been unjustifiably violated and need redress; and that by the effect of the problem on the disciplinary tone of the school, such in-discipline behaviour does impact negatively on the image of the school. The selection of a 7 or 9 in 10 chances option in a decision, suggest the more likely extreme or risky decision.

On the other hand, if the lower probability or chance was selected, for example, 1 in 10 chances, or 3 in 10 chances, then the more likely they would be in their decision

that: by the behaviour tendency of the offending student, he/she had not committed serious or grievous infraction; by the type of the disciplinary problem, it was tolerable or could be overlooked with mild warning; by the effect of the disciplinary problem on the victim, the latter has not been seriously harmed and simple apology would serve as redress; and that by the effects of the problem on the disciplinary tone of the school, such behaviour problem was unlikely to impact negatively on the discipline tone or the image of the school. The selection of a 1 or 3 in 10 chances option in a decision, suggested the more likely cautious decision or less likely extreme decision. Further details, including an example, are located in the MDCQ in the appendix B.

The participants completed the MCDQ twice. First before the disciplinary hearing to indicate their individual pre-disciplinary hearing decisions on each of the four factors associated with the discipline problem. Then after disciplinary hearing, each of the participants was given a new but similar MDCQ to complete again to indicate their decisions after the disciplinary hearing. During data analysis, the two decisions of each participant (before and after disciplinary hearing) were compared to ascertain if there has been a shift from the pre to post disciplinary hearing decisions or if they remained the same.

4.4.1.3: Follow-up Questionnaire (See Appendix, D)

The aim of this questionnaire was to gather relevant information regarding the factors that the participants of the study thought could have influenced their decisions causing the shifts from the pre to post disciplinary hearing decisions. The questionnaire

contained categories of factors which could possibly be in the dynamic interactions among members of the disciplinary panel during disciplinary hearings, causing shifts from pre-disciplinary hearing individually made decisions to post-disciplinary hearing group decisions. The questionnaire had four items which sought to establish the extent to which the factors influenced shifts in decisions. In other words, the questionnaire requested participants to report their experiences during disciplinary hearings as to the extent to which factors associated with social comparison, persuasive arguments and the nature of the discipline problem (or behaviour problem) being treated by disciplinary panels influenced the shifts in their decisions. The panel members' opinions were indicated on the questionnaire after the disciplinary hearings by indicating a value from (1 being "very little extent", or 2, or 3, or 4, or 5, or 6, or 7 being "very great extent"). After rating themselves on how they were influenced during the disciplinary hearing, they then responded by picking a response to indicate the strength of their opinion.

According to De Vos & Fouché (1998), it is important for the quantitative instruments used in research to meet the criteria of being reliable and valid. The questionnaires were tested for validity and reliability to ensure that the instruments measured what they purported to measure (Ogunniyi, 1992) and that they would provide consistent results in two or more similar situations. The properties of these questionnaires are discussed below.

4.4.2: Validity and Reliability of the Quantitative Instruments

4.4.2.1: Validity of the Questionnaires

Validity can be defined as whether a measuring device measures what it was intended to measure, the degree to which a test measures what it purports to measure or the accuracy or the usefulness of a test (Orodho, 2006). Validity could also mean whether the instrument measures what we want to measure (Kerlinger, 1986). It is vital for a test to be valid in order for the results to be accurately applied and interpreted (Cohen & Swerdlik, 2002). The face validity (the degree to which an instrument measures the characteristic or trait of interest) and content validity (the degree to which the instrument fully measures the construct of interest) of this study instruments was ensured. The validity of the instruments was ascertained by making clear statements about the aspects on the sub-scale that influenced the panel members' decisions, and this was confirmed by a panel of judges who are psychologists and experts in group dynamics.

For the Follow up Questionnaire, also, the face and content validity of the instrument was ascertained by making clear statements about the aspects on the sub-scale concerning the factors that enhanced the shifts from pre to post disciplinary hearing decisions. This was also confirmed by a panel of experts in group dynamics.

4.4.2.2: Reliability of the Questionnaires

Reliability of a test is the consistency of the measurement (Kerlinger, 1986) or the degree to which that instrument produces equivalent results for repeated trials (Van

Zyl & Van Der Walt, 1994). It can, therefore, be said that the greater the consistency of the results, the greater the reliability of the measuring procedure. Internal consistency which refers to the extent to which items on the test or instrument are measuring the same thing was carried out on the instruments using the split-half reliability (Kaplan & Saccuzzo, 2001). With regard to the instruments used for the current study, internal consistency was used to ascertain the reliability of the Modified Choice Dilemma Questionnaire and the Follow up Questionnaire.

For the past studies where the Modified Choice Dilemma Questionnaire with more than ten items was used, the internal consistency reliability estimate (r) of a minimum of 0.6 is recommended (Freedman, 2007). Clark & Watson (1995), contend that for the internal consistency reliability, Cronbach's alpha ranging from 0.60 to 0.90 is considered acceptable. However, when there is small number of items in the scale (fewer than ten), then the Cronbach's alpha values can be quite small, then a minimum of 0.4 is recommended by Briggs & Cheek, (1986).

For the current study, the internal reliability co-efficient estimate obtained for the Modified Choice Dilemma Questionnaire was 0.608, which was considered to be adequate, because it is above the minimum value. For the reliability of the Follow up Questionnaire, the internal consistency reliability estimates for this questionnaire was calculated and found to be 0.695, which is quite acceptable because a minimum of 0.6 is recommended (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994).

4.4.3: Semi-Structured Interviews

According to Babbie & Mouton (2001), the qualitative interview is a commonly used data collection method in research. Interview is conducted to elicit information that cannot be observed, and to get the feelings, thoughts, and the meanings that people attach to events. Interview process-allows the researcher to observe and ask questions, thus providing opportunity to look at issues as if through the eyes of the participants (Bojuwoye & Akpan, 2009). Greeff (2005) contends that semi-structured interviewing is more appropriate when one particularly intends to pursue a specific issue. The interview ensures that a rapport is highly established between the interviewer and the members being interviewed, and one can probe for more complete answers when a respondent gave brief answers or one that does not respond to the question. Other advantages are that interviews bring a relatively natural conversation which produces richer, fuller, more genuine, more realistic information on interviewees. It also ensures a high rate of returns as the feedback is immediate (Orodho, 2006).

To assess the panel members' perceptions and feelings on the factors that they considered to have influenced shifts from pre to post disciplinary hearing decisions, the semi-structured interviews were used. The semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to follow up ideas, to probe responses and investigate motives and feelings of the participants (Bell, 2005; Eliahoo, 2011). Other advantages of semi-structured interviews are that the main questions of the interviews can be listed beforehand and also, during the interviews, the interviewer is able to rearrange the listed questions according to the reactions of the interviewees (Hancock, Windridge & Ockleford,

2009). The Semi-structured interview questions used in the current study consisted of 8 broad questions (See Appendix, E).

4.5: Data Collection Procedures

Humans were involved as participants of this study. For this reason, there is need to adhere to ethical standards when involving people in a research. The doctoral proposal of the study was submitted to the ethics committee of the university. The proposal gives details of the study, the people to involve and the conditions of participation. Satisfied that the appropriate ethical standards would be adhered to, the University of the Western Cape Research Ethics Committee gave clearance for the study. Similar information about the nature of study was given to the Ministry of Education Kenya, about the study to obtain clearance in order to carry it out in secondary schools under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education.

The researcher first made introductory visits to the selected secondary schools in Rongo district to seek permission from the school principals and to also make appointments with the panel members on their days when they would hold their disciplinary hearing meetings. On arrival at each of the selected schools on the actual day of data collection, the researcher was introduced to the chairperson of the school disciplinary committee who in most cases was the Deputy Principal, according to Kenyan public secondary schools management organization and structures. The information in the consent forms was read to the participants, the aims of the study well explained, upon which the terms of confidentiality, anonymity, research, choice and the right to privacy was clarified to them. The participants also had the rights to

choose to participate in the study, after being informed of all the relevant facts. The participants were also told that they could withdraw their participation from study at any time if they did not want to continue anymore. The participants were also assured of confidentiality of the information because no names of schools or participants were used in the study, and the schools were identified by means of numbers such as 1, 2, 3, 4, and so on. The participants were informed that they would receive necessary feedback on the findings of the study when completed, and the Ministry of Education Kenya, would also receive a copy of the condensed thesis. The participants of the study were also assured that the research would be reported accurately and that the findings would not be available to anyone not concerned with the study.

The participants volunteered to participate, and they were issued with consent forms to indicate that they freely consented to be involved in the study. Each of the participants signed the consent forms and the signed consent forms were collected by the Deputy Principal, after which, the disciplinary panel was set to begin handling the cases of the students' behaviour problems presented to them. The researcher then gave the MDCQ questionnaires to the panel members just before the disciplinary hearing began. The participants were then expected to indicate their pre-disciplinary hearing individual decisions about the behaviour problems presented and to respond on the four dimensions namely, the type of the disciplinary problem committed, the behaviour characteristics of the offender, the effects of disciplinary problem on victim and the effects on the disciplinary tone of the school. Then, later after the disciplinary hearing meetings, each participant was issued with fresh MDCQ questionnaires to indicate post disciplinary hearing group decisions on the same four dimensions after

having interacted with other panel members. The participants were also informed that some of them would be selected for one-on-one individual interviews after the disciplinary hearing and that the information would be tape recorded. The interview data would complement the ones obtained by the questionnaires.

The procedure for data collection was divided into two phases, the first being quantitative component which involved all the participants and the second one, the qualitative component, only for selected participants. All the 78 participants completed the questionnaires for quantitative information while only selected 10 members of the panels were interviewed for the qualitative data gathered for the study.

This is described below.



4.5.1: Phase 1: Quantitative Component

During the first phase, just before the disciplinary hearing meetings began, all participants were given the Demographic Questionnaire and the Modified Choice Dilemma Questionnaire (MCDQ). In the Demographic Questionnaire, the participants indicated information such as their age, gender, number of years teaching experience and school category. The MDCQ was administered twice. First, before the disciplinary hearing, panel members were given MDCQ to indicate their pre-disciplinary hearing individually made decisions, and later after the disciplinary hearing meetings, the panel members were given new MDCQ questionnaire forms to indicate their post-disciplinary hearing decisions. The administration of the questionnaires was done in person, and this ensured a higher return rate. Moreover, personal administration ensured that the respondents could seek clarity on parts of the

questionnaire that they could not understand (McNabb, 2008). The researcher then collected the completed MCDQs' from the members and coded them with similar numbers for the participants as the ones for the pre-disciplinary hearing. In addition, the panel members were given Follow up Questionnaires in which they indicated their responses to the items concerning their experiences in the disciplinary hearings and particularly about factors which they thought might have influenced their decision making. These questionnaires were also collected after the participants completed them. After this the researcher proceeded to phase two, which consisted of the qualitative component.

4.5.2: Phase 2: Qualitative Component

At the end of the disciplinary hearing meetings, the researcher interviewed panel members purposively selected for this purpose. The interview was done in a separate room where the participants were free to give their views. The importance of the second phase was to complement the information that was obtained by the questionnaires. A total of 10 panel members were interviewed, with a participant sampled from every school disciplinary panel selected. At the beginning of the interview sessions, the participants were told about the study, and requested volunteers to be interviewed. Participation was voluntary and the participants were assured about confidentiality, anonymity and were told that they could withdraw their participation at any time if they were not comfortable with the interview sessions. Upon obtaining permission from the selected participant, the interview sessions were recorded using a digital tape recorder. The researcher interviewed the selected participants on their feelings and experiences concerning the factors that could have

prevailed during disciplinary hearings and influenced the shifts from pre to post disciplinary hearing decisions as were guided by the interview schedule. Each of the interview sessions lasted about 30 to 45 minutes, thereafter, the participants was given an opportunity to ask questions. The participants were debriefed after the interview sessions.

4.6: Data Analysis

Since the research adopted the Mixed Methods design, the data analyses entailed both quantitative and qualitative data processing. The information obtained from the Modified Choice Dilemma Questionnaires provided the estimates in shifts from pre to post disciplinary hearings decisions, which was used to test the research hypotheses. Estimates of changes in decisions were done on four dimensions: type of the disciplinary problem, behaviour characteristics of the offender, effects of disciplinary problem on the victim and the effect of the problem on the disciplinary tone of the school. The Follow-Up Questionnaire sought to establish the extent to which the dimensions influenced shifts from pre to post disciplinary hearing decisions on two aspects: the extent to which the panel members felt that the other members' arguments which were brought into the disciplinary hearing meeting about the problem treated were weighty or superior to their own and the extent to which the panel members engaged themselves in comparing their opinions with others before making their own decision. The quantitative data obtained for the study were used to test the study hypotheses. The information obtained from the qualitative data was used to answer the research questions.

4.6.1: Phase 1: Quantitative Analysis

The quantitative analyses involved the use of inferential statistics. The inferential statistics allows the researcher to present the data obtained in research in statistical format to facilitate the identification of important patterns and to make data analysis more meaningful. Such tests estimate the probability of a significant difference between the parameters of two or more populations under study (Bless & Higson-Smith, 1995). Data from the MDCQ and the Follow up Questionnaires were entered, coded, cleaned and analyzed by means of the Statistical Package in the Social Sciences (SPSS). The statistical tests such as Paired Samples T-tests, one way Analysis Of Variance (ANOVA) with Scheffe's Post Hoc Comparisons, Multivariate ANOVA with Scheffe's Post-Hoc Comparisons and Regression Analysis, were employed to test the hypotheses.

4.6.1.1: Paired Samples T-tests

This Paired samples T-tests allows researchers to test whether or not differences exist between pairs of data typically taken from two repeated measures (Tredoux & Durrheim, 2002). It assumed under the null hypothesis that there are no differences between pre-group and post-group response scores of the respondents. In the current study, the test was used to ascertain whether or not there were shifts from the pre to post disciplinary hearing decisions of the panel members.

4.6.1.2: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

The ANOVA is used to test for differences between the means of groups (Park, 2009). The test results can indicate if the mean scores of groups are statistically significantly

different. . In the current study, this statistical test was used to ascertain whether or not there were statistically significant gender, age, teaching experiences and school affiliation differences in the shifts from pre to post disciplinary hearing decisions among panel members.

4.6.1.3: Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA)

The Multivariate analysis of variance is an extension of the ANOVA to include two or more dependent variables in the analysis. In the current study, there were four dependent variables on which shifts in decisions among panel members were made. These are on the bases of type of the disciplinary problem, behaviour characteristics of the offender, effects of disciplinary problem on the victim, and effect on disciplinary tone of the school. The MANOVA test results list four commonly used tests namely the Pillai's trace test, Wilk's lambda test, Hotellings, and Roy's largest root test. Of the four, the Wilk's lambda test is the most preferred, because it is the strongest of the four multivariate tests (Howell, 2002).

The statistical test was meant to test whether there were statistically significant differences on the basis of school affiliations, age, and teaching experiences among panel members of the selected Kenyan secondary schools in the shifts from pre to post disciplinary hearing decisions, based on the four dimensions already indicated.

4.6.1.4: Multiple Regression Analysis

The Multiple Regression Analysis allows researchers to find a combination of independent variables that maximally predict a dependent variable (Tredoux & Durrheim, 2002). The statistical test can be used when we have a set of independent variables (say x_1 , x_2 , x_3 , x_4 , etc) each of them correlates to some known extent with a dependent variable (y) for which we would like to predict values. This statistical test was used to ascertain the extent to which each of the four dimensions (type of the disciplinary problem, behaviour characteristics of the offender, effects of disciplinary problem on the victim, and effect on disciplinary tone of the school) influenced shifts from the pre to post disciplinary hearing decisions among the participants.

4.6.2: Phase 2: Qualitative Analysis

The raw data produced from the ten tape-recorded interviews were transcribed and read thoroughly, to check for any incomplete, inconsistent or irrelevant data (Willig & Stainton, 2008). The transcriptions were analyzed thematically using the process described by Terre Blanche & Durrheim, (1999). That is, the researcher (1) read through the transcribed interview many times over, made important notes and brainstormed. At the end the researcher already was conversant with the data such that it was possible to discover some trends or patterns, where and which interpretations are likely to be supported by the data and the irrelevant ones; (2) the content was summarized, but also organized based on the comments, quotations and direct illustrations from the respondents. The themes were related to the factors that the respondents perceived to have influenced them to shift their decisions during disciplinary hearing meeting; (3) the researcher coded the data. At initial coding, the

researcher examined the data for its potential theoretical importance. The line-by-line coding fostered close scrutiny of the data minimized forcing them into pre-conceived categories, but interrogating each bit of data for its conceptual analyses. Later, in the focused coding, it took the most frequent and significant initial codes to study, sort, compare and synthesize large amounts of data and the codes became categories to explore and analyze. Lastly (4), when the interpretations are put together, the researcher went through to perform the weighting, ordering and connecting the parts. The researcher went through to check for contradictory points in the interpretations, the parts were just summaries only, instances where the data was over interpreted and also to check if there were any instances where the researcher got carried away by prejudices.

4.6.3: Trustworthiness of the Qualitative Data

This is about bringing objectivity to the qualitative data, the truthfulness or credibility of the data. The aim of trustworthiness in a qualitative inquiry is to support the argument that the study results are worth paying attention to (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Bruce & Mazulewicz, 2008). To ensure this, the current study adopted the four criteria proposed by Guba, in Shukla (2012) such as credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability.

4.6.3.1: Credibility

This seeks to ensure that the study measures or tests what it is actually intended. Lincoln and Guba, (1985) argue that ensuring credibility is one of most important factors in establishing trustworthiness. In the current study, the researcher has

confidence that the results are accurate from the development of an early familiarity with the environment. This was achieved by visiting the participating schools prior to the actual commencement of the study gaining an adequate understanding of the environment and to establish a relationship of trust between the parties (Erlandson, 1993). Later after the data collection, the researcher went back to the schools to sample interpretation on correctness of the information. Secondly, during the interview process, the researcher employed strategies to help ensure honesty in informants when contributing data. In particular, each person interviewed was given opportunities to refuse to participate in the study so as to ensure that the data collection sessions involved only those who were genuinely willing to take part and prepared to offer data freely. Third, the researcher involved the use of probes to elicit detailed data and the researcher returned to matters previously raised by an informant and extracts related data through rephrased questions. Fourth, the researcher employed the peer scrutiny of the research. Opportunities for scrutiny of the research by colleagues, peers and academics was welcomed, as were feedback offered to the researcher at the presentations (e.g. at conferences, departmental and Faculty research seminars) that were made over the duration of the research. The questions and observations enabled the researcher to refine his methods, to develop a greater explanation of the research design and to strengthen his arguments in the light of the comments made. Lastly, the researcher employed the examination of previous research findings to assess the degree to which the study results are congruent with those of past studies. Silverman, (2000) considers that the

ability of the researcher to relate his or her findings to an existing body of knowledge is a key criterion for evaluating works of qualitative inquiry.

4.6.3.2: Transferability

This was with regards to the extent to which the findings of one study can be applied to other situations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The researcher used a detailed description of phenomenon in question to allow comparisons to be made. This was provided to allow readers to have a proper understanding of the research, thereby enabling them to compare the instances of the phenomenon described in the research results with those that they have seen emerge in their situations (Merriam, 1998).

4.6.3.3: Dependability

This relates to the reliability issues that, if the research were repeated in the same context, with the same methods and participants, then similar results would be obtained (Sheraton, 2004). In the current study, dependability has been addressed by having the methodological procedures of the research reported in detail, thereby enabling a future researcher to repeat the work, to gain the same results.

4.6.3.4: Confirmability

According to Sheraton (1994), confirmability is the qualitative investigators' comparable concern to objectivity. In other words, that, as much as possible, the research findings are the results of the experiences and ideas of the informants, rather than the characteristics and preferences of the researcher. Miles & Huberman, (1994)

considered that a key criterion for confirmability is the extent to which the researcher recognizes the shortcomings in the study's methods and their potential effects. In the current study, the researcher acknowledged and explained the reasons for favoring the research design used and the weaknesses in the techniques actually employed are admitted.

4.7: Conclusion of the Chapter

The chapter provided the methodological framework of the study. A Mixed Methods Design was utilized in order to provide a complementary information concerning shifts in decisions among the members of the disciplinary panels, and the factors responsible for the shifts from pre to post disciplinary hearing decisions. More specifically, the Concurrent Triangulation model was applied, with the quantitative and qualitative phases of the study taken at the same time, and equal weights given to both approaches. The chapter also provides information with regard to the various stages of the research process such as sample size and sampling methods, data gathering instruments, data collection procedures, and data analysis.

The next section of this thesis report presents the results.

CHAPTER FIVE

QUANTITATIVE RESULTS

5.1: Introduction

This chapter presents the results of analyses of quantitative data collected for this study. The results pertain to those presented as descriptive statistics and the summary results of inferential statistical analyses performed to test research hypotheses advanced for this study. The research hypotheses are about the significance of the shifts in decisions and the variables responsible for the shifts from the pre to post disciplinary hearing decisions by members of disciplinary panels of selected secondary schools in Rongo District of Kenya. The first set of statistical analyses were conducted to find out whether or not shifts did occur in decisions of members of the disciplinary panels at the end of the disciplinary hearing meetings. That is, whether or not the pre disciplinary hearing individual decisions shifted to different post disciplinary hearing group decisions. Data analyses were done by the use of statistical tools including the Paired Samples T-Test, One way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA), and Multiple Regression Analysis with the aid of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

5.2: Hypotheses Testing

Each hypothesis was tested after identifying the appropriate statistical test to use depending on the variables investigated. The hypotheses were tested, at the 95% level of confidence. The results of the three hypotheses tested are presented below.

5.2.1: Shifts in decisions from before to after the disciplinary hearing meetings on the problems treated

Hypothesis 1

There are no statistically significant shifts in decisions by members of selected Kenyan secondary school disciplinary panels, before and after the disciplinary hearing meetings

The intention of this hypothesis was to ascertain if the panel members did shift their decisions by the end of their deliberations on student disciplinary problems from the earlier decisions they made individually about the problems before the group deliberated on it. The study investigated decision making on four aspects or dimensions of students problems brought to disciplinary hearing meetings. These four factors associated with the disciplinary problems, on which decisions were made, include the following:

- The nature of the disciplinary problem, (that is, whether the disciplinary problem was considered serious enough to warrant sanctioning whoever was responsible for the problem). For example, whether or not the disciplinary behaviour is acceptable according to the school rules and regulations, whether or not the behaviour is expected of school pupils or whether or not the behaviour is tolerable.
- The behaviour characteristics of the offender (that is, from the general assessment of the behaviour tendency or tendencies of person(s) responsible for the disciplinary problem, whether or not the offender was a known trouble maker or first offender. Also regarding this aspect of disciplinary behaviour, the panel

- members made decisions with respect to whether or not the offending student was generally perceived as ill-behaved, or a habitual offender, or a first time offender.
- The effects of disciplinary problem on the victim (that is, if the rights of victim(s) has/have been violated, whether the victim has been hurt or if the victim has been careless and might have encouraged the offence by inappropriate behavior tendency or if the victim is generally well behaved).
 - The effect of the behaviour problem on the disciplinary tone, or image of the school. With regards to this factor the panel members made decisions on the bases of whether or not the behaviour problem is the type that negatively impact on the discipline tone of the school, or if the behaviour problem can embarrass the school considering its effects on the image of the school.

The factors on which decisions are made, indicates the manner by which disciplinary panels manage students problems. Disciplinary problems are disruptive behaviours that significantly affect fundamental rights of students to feel safe, to be treated with respect and to learn (Mabebe & Prinsloo, 2000). Schools have positive behaviour management aimed at promoting appropriate behaviour and developing self-discipline and self-control in students (Squelch, 2000). Thus, on the bases of four factors described below, schools take actions in response to inappropriate students' behaviours in order to correct or modify behaviour and to restore harmonious relations.

First, on basis of the type of disciplinary behaviour problem, schools have policies indicating both acceptable and unacceptable behaviour of students, that is, the kind of persons the students are expected to be behaviourally while in school. This offers

guidance and ensures that students behave in a way that does not jeopardize the teaching and learning environment of the school. The school principals and teachers are thus responsible for developing the behaviour policy in the context of this framework, which provide detailed guidelines on the standards of behaviours expected of students. Furthermore, schools outline how these expected standards should be achieved, and are responsible for imposing reasonable disciplinary penalty in response to poor behaviour among students. Moreover, schools provide the school rules, disciplinary penalties for breaking the rules and rewards for good behaviour among students (Department of Education, 2011).

On the basis of the behaviour characteristics of students, schools have expectations of the images of how their students should be like. It is important for students to know what the consequences of inappropriate behaviour or misconduct are (Joubert, de Waal & Rossouw, 2004) because, when they conduct themselves in a way unacceptable to the majority at a school, the majority expects offending students to be called to order. Therefore, schools' behaviour policies set out guidelines on actions to be taken against students who are found to have made malicious accusations against the other students and school staff.

With regard to the effects of disciplinary problem on the victims, schools endeavour to provide to students a free atmosphere, a place of learning free of threats and barriers. This is because a student's disciplinary behaviour problem can be a barrier to other students' and teachers in school. The teachers are mandated to use reasonable force to prevent the students' committing an offence, injuring themselves or others, or damaging property, and to maintain good order and discipline in the classroom

(Department of Education, 2011). This can be in the form of extreme or reasonable penalty (extreme/risky decisions), mild penalty or no penalty or warning (cautious decisions).

Finally, based on the effect of the disciplinary problem on the school's image, every school has an image to protect; thus, the students are expected to behave in a much disciplined and socially acceptable manner. This is important because parents want their children to learn in good schools free of disciplinary problems.

The shifts from the pre disciplinary hearing individual decisions to post disciplinary hearing group decisions were investigated, based on the dimensions of the problems described above, using the Paired Samples T-Tests. The Paired Samples T-Tests is an appropriate test for estimating differences in responses to the same instrument in two different occasions or times (Kerlinger, 1986; Asquith, 2008). For the purpose of this study, the test was employed to estimate the differences (if any) between the pre and post disciplinary hearing decisions by members of selected secondary school disciplinary panels in Rongo district of Kenya.

For the determination as to whether or not decisions made individually by members of the panel shifted by the end of the disciplinary hearing meeting, the Modified Choice Dilemma Questionnaire (MCDQ) was given to members of the disciplinary panel before disciplinary hearing meeting for them to indicate their decisions on each of the four factors of the disciplinary problem they were to deliberate on at the disciplinary hearing meeting. After the disciplinary hearing meeting, members were again given another new MCDQ similar to the first one, for them to indicate their new decisions in

terms of the dimensions of the problems after the disciplinary hearing meeting. The response scores on the MCDQ administered before disciplinary hearing was calculated to indicate the estimate of decisions before disciplinary hearing. The response scores on the MCDQ administered after the disciplinary hearing was also calculated to indicate estimates of decisions after the disciplinary hearing. The differences in the two estimates were then calculated.

The Probability level (or *P*-value) set for the test of hypothesis using the Paired Samples T – Tests was at the ninety five percent (95%) level of confidence for two-tailed statistical tests. Thus if the *P*-value from the test results is smaller, then the results are significant. Small *P* – Values or less than five percent probability level ($P < 0.05$), suggests that the null hypothesis is unlikely to be true (Brandstätter & Kepler, 1999; Park, 2009), and, therefore, the hypothesis should be rejected since there are significant differences between pre and post disciplinary hearing decisions, indicating that group polarization has taken place. However, if the results indicate a *P*-value of significance greater than 0.05 ($P > 0.05$), then this is an indication that there are no significant differences between the pre and post disciplinary hearing responses of participants regarding their decisions on the factors associated with the disciplinary problems the panels treated and, therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted.

Seventy-eight (78) participants from ten (10) selected Kenyan secondary school disciplinary panels responded to the study instrument – the Modified Choice Dilemma Questionnaire (MCDQ) - before and after disciplinary hearing meetings. The Paired Samples T-Test was used to test the hypothesis as to whether or not there were statistically significant differences between the estimated means of the pre- and post-

post responses scores of participants across the four aspects of the disciplinary problems brought to disciplinary hearing meetings. The pre and post disciplinary hearing mean response scores on the MCDQ by all participants of this study and the estimated differences in mean response scores on the bases of the factors associated with disciplinary problem by which decisions were to be made, are presented in Table 5.1 below.



Table 5.1: Results of Paired Samples T-test performed on pre and post response scores on MCDQ by members of Kenyan Secondary School Disciplinary Panels

Factors associated with the problems	Pre-and Post-Mean response score (N = 78)	Estimated differences between Pre-and Post-Mean response scores(N = 78)	Std Error Mean	t-value	df	Sig.
The type of the disciplinary problem	Pre: 5.13	2.54	0.296	2.59	77	0.000*
	Post: 2.59		0.236			
The behaviour characteristics of the offender	Pre: 5.77	3.38	0.262	3.30	77	0.000*
	Post: 2.39		0.248			
The effects of disciplinary problem on the victim	Pre: 5.44	2.00	0.246	5.79	77	0.011*
	Post: 3.44		0.187			
The effect on of the problem on the disciplinary tone of the school	Pre: 4.87	1.10	0.243	7.47	77	0.041*
	Post: 3.77		0.152			

***P < 0.05**

From the results displayed in the Table 5.1 above, the pre-group response scores were 5.13, 5.17, 5.44 and 4.84 for the four aspects-the type of the disciplinary problem, the behaviour characteristics of the offender, the effects of the disciplinary problem on the victim and the effect of the problem on the disciplinary tone of the school respectively. The post-group response scores were 2.59, 2.39, 3.44 and 3.77 for dimensions of the type of the disciplinary problem, the behaviour characteristics of the offender, the effects of disciplinary problem on the victim and the effect of the problem on the disciplinary tone of the school respectively. The pre-response scores were larger in sizes than the post-response scores, indicating that the panel members made risky decisions before the disciplinary hearing meetings but at the end of disciplinary hearings, cautious decisions were made. The evidence of shifts in decisions is an indication that group polarization took place and that the dynamic interactions among members of the Kenyan secondary school disciplinary panel, during disciplinary hearings, may have influenced the shifts in decisions.

From the statistical analysis, all *P*-values indicating the significance of the differences between the pre and post disciplinary hearing decisions are less than 0.05 ($P < 0.05$) for all the four aspects associated with the disciplinary problems. Therefore, the null hypothesis stating that there are no statistically significant differences in the shifts in decisions by members of selected Kenyan secondary school disciplinary panels, before and after deliberations on students' disciplinary problems, was therefore rejected. This means that, the panel members' pre disciplinary hearing individually made decisions shifted to new post disciplinary hearing group decisions after treating the behaviour problems. This is an indication of evidence of the occurrence of the

phenomenon of group polarization in the disciplinary hearing process. The decisions shifted on all the four dimensions of the disciplinary problem. It seems that it is only on the aspect of the effect on disciplinary tone of the school that the least shifts were recorded. This could mean that the panel members might not have been willing to compromise on the integrity, on the image or disciplinary tone of the schools.

5.2.2: Participants variables and effects on the shifts from pre to post disciplinary hearing decisions

Hypothesis 2

There are no statistically significant differences on the bases of gender, age, years of teaching experiences and school affiliation, in the shifts from pre to post disciplinary hearing decisions by members of selected Kenyan secondary school disciplinary panels

To appropriately test for the effects of each of the variables studied, hypothesis 2 was split into three sub-hypotheses. This enabled the effects of each variable in the shifts in decisions to be studied separately. The sub-hypotheses were tested as follows:

5.2.2.1: Participants' gender and effects on the shifts from pre to post disciplinary hearing decisions

The first sub hypothesis

There are no statistically significant gender differences, in the shifts from pre to post disciplinary hearing decisions, between members of the selected Kenyan secondary school disciplinary panels

The aim of the hypothesis was to ascertain if gender played any significant influence in the shifts from pre to post disciplinary hearing decisions by members of the disciplinary panels. That is, in testing the hypothesis, the intention was to ascertain if the patterns in the shifts from pre to post disciplinary hearing decisions by members of the selected Kenyan school disciplinary panels were along gender lines or based on gender affiliations.

The shifts from pre to post disciplinary hearing decisions by each gender group were investigated on the bases of the four factors associated with the disciplinary problems treated by the disciplinary panels. These factors include the type of the disciplinary problem, the behaviour characteristics of the offender, the effects of disciplinary problem on the victim and the effect of the problems on disciplinary tone of the school.

The pre and post disciplinary hearing response scores on the MCDQ as well as the estimated mean differences in response scores for each gender group were found on the basis of the factors associated with disciplinary problems on which decisions were

to be made. The descriptive statistics for these data analyses results are presented in Table 5.2 below.

Table 5.2: Pre and post disciplinary hearing response scores and the estimated mean differences for male and female respondents

Factors	Gender	N	Means pre and post-response scores		Estimated mean differences between the pre - and post response scores
			Pre	Post	
The type of the disciplinary problem	Males	45	6.64	5.25	1.39
	Females	33	3.29	6.02	2.73
The behaviour characteristics of the offender	Males	45	4.87	4.07	0.80
	Females	33	3.35	5.67	2.32
The effects of disciplinary problem on the victim	Males	45	5.13	2.59	2.54
	Females	33	2.60	6.59	3.99
The effect of the problem on disciplinary tone of the school	Males	45	5.98	2.56	3.42
	Females	33	2.20	5.77	3.57

According to the information displayed in Table 5.2 above, the estimated pre disciplinary hearing response scores of male members of the disciplinary panels were generally relatively higher than those of their female counterparts in each of the four factors on which decisions were to be made. The information also showed that the

post disciplinary hearing response scores of male members were generally lower than those of their female counterparts. This is an indication that the male members did not have to shift from their original pre-disciplinary hearing individually made decisions as compared with their female counterparts. Furthermore, the female panel members seem to have bigger mean differences between their pre and post disciplinary hearing decisions as compared to the male panel members.

To test whether there were stastically significant differences in the pre and post disciplinary hearing decisions between the male and female respondents, a one way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was performed on the scores. The one way ANOVA statistical test was performed to test this hypothesis at the 95% level of confidence. The summary results of the one way ANOVA are presented in Table 5.3 below.

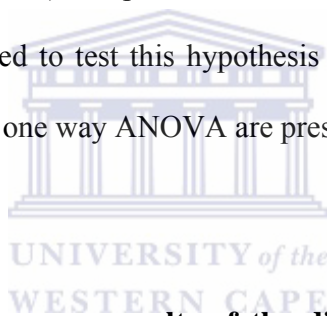


Table 5.3: ANOVA summary results of the differences in the pre and post disciplinary hearing response scores of male and female respondents

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between groups	437.91	1	437.91	13.96	0.000*
Within groups	2383.89	76	31.37		
Total	2821.80	77			

* $P < 0.05$

From the ANOVA results presented in the Table 5.3 above, the probability level of $P = 0.000$ is less than 0.05 ($P < 0.05$). This is an indication that significant differences exist in the shifts from pre to post disciplinary hearing decisions between the male and female members of the selected Kenyan Secondary School disciplinary panels. Therefore, the null hypothesis which stated that, there are no statistically significant differences, in the shifts from pre and post disciplinary hearing decisions, between male and female members of the selected Kenyan secondary school disciplinary panels, has been rejected.

Examination of the sizes of the mean response scores as presented on Table 5.2 revealed that mean differences for female members are larger than for the male members. This is an indication that female members made greater shifts from pre to post disciplinary hearing decisions than their male counterparts. The results may be an indication that female members of the disciplinary panels were more willing to shift from their pre disciplinary hearing individual decisions to the post disciplinary group decisions probably because they were more influenced by the significant factors in the dynamic interactions of the disciplinary hearings.

To determine which of the four factors contributed more to the gender differences in the shifts from pre to post disciplinary hearing decisions, a Multivariate ANOVA test of between subjects was carried out, and the results are presented in the Table 5.4 below.

Table 5.4: Multivariate ANOVA tests of between subjects for gender differences in the shifts from pre to post disciplinary hearing decisions

Source	Estimated measures regarding shifts in the pre and post disciplinary hearing decisions on the bases of factors associated with disciplinary problems	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected model	Type of the disciplinary problem	30.84	1	30.84	9.51	0.003
	Behaviour characteristics of the offender	82.11	1	82.11	19.30	0.000
	Effect on the disciplinary tone of the school	14.91	1	14.91	3.17	0.059
	Effects of disciplinary problem on the victim	6.00	1	6.00	1.96	0.165
Intercept	Type of the disciplinary problem	861.61	1	861.61	265.59	0.000
	Behaviour characteristics of the offender	648.06	1	648.06	152.28	0.000
	Effect on the disciplinary tone of the school	824.75	1	824.75	175.55	0.000
	Effects of disciplinary problem on the victim	689.08	1	689.08	225.93	0.000
Gender	Type of the disciplinary problem	30.84	1	30.84	9.51	0.003*
	Behaviour characteristics of the offender	82.11	1	82.11	19.30	0.000*
	Effect on the disciplinary tone of the school	14.91	1	14.91	3.17	0.059
	Effects of disciplinary problem on the victim	6.00	1	6.00	1.96	0.165
Error	Type of the disciplinary problem	246.55	76	3.24		
	Behaviour characteristics of the offender	323.43	76	4.25		
	Effect on the disciplinary tone of the school	357.04	76	4.69		
	Effects of disciplinary problem on the victim	231.79	76	3.05		
Total	The type of the disciplinary problem	1212.00	78			
	Behaviour characteristics of the offender	1144.00	78			
	Effect on the disciplinary tone of the school	1252.00	78			
	Effects of disciplinary problem on the victim	964.00	78			
Corrected Total	Type of the disciplinary problem	277.38	77			
	Behaviour characteristics of the offender	405.53	77			
	Effect on the disciplinary tone of the school	371.94	77			
	Effects of disciplinary problem on the victim	237.79	77			

*** $P < 0.05$**

The results in the Table 5.4 above indicate that, there were statistically significant differences in the shifts from the pre to post disciplinary hearing decisions between the male members and female members of the disciplinary panels in two factors associated with the problem treated, that is, the type of the disciplinary problem [$F(1, 76) = 9.51; P = 0.000, P < 0.05$], and the behaviour characteristics of offender [$F(1, 76) = 19.30; P = 0.003, P < 0.05$], but not in the effects of the problem on disciplinary

tone of the school [$F(1, 76) = 3.17; P = 0.059, P > 0.05$], and effects of disciplinary problem on the victim [$F(1, 76) = 1.96; P = 0.165, P > 0.05$]. The female members in comparison to the male members of the panels made significant shifts from their pre to post disciplinary hearing decisions on two of the four factors associated with disciplinary problems on which decisions were to be made. These are the type of the disciplinary problem treated and the behaviour characteristics of offender. However, there seems to be comparatively similar estimated differences in the shifts from the pre to post disciplinary hearing decisions between male and female panel members on the other two factors, the effects of problem on disciplinary tone of the school and the effects of disciplinary problem on the victim.



5.2.2.2: School categories and effects on the shifts from pre to post disciplinary hearing decisions

The Second Sub hypothesis

There are no statistically significant differences in the shifts from pre to post disciplinary hearing decisions among the disciplinary panels of the three categories of Kenyan secondary schools

The aim of this hypothesis was to test if school affiliation played significant role in influencing shifts from the pre to post disciplinary hearing decisions. To achieve this aim, the pre and post-disciplinary hearing response scores on MCDQ as well as the estimated mean difference in response scores for each category of schools were found

on the basis of the factors associated with disciplinary problems on which decisions were to be made. The results are presented in Table 5.5 below.

Table 5.5: Estimated measures of the shifts in pre and post disciplinary hearing decisions on the basis of categories of schools

Factors associated with the problems	School affiliations	N			Estimated differences between the pre and post group scores	Std Error
			Pre-response score	Post-response score		
The type of the disciplinary problem	Boys' only schools	23	7.12	3.56	3.56	0.386
	Girls' only schools	16	3.45	6.83	3.38	0.668
	Co-educational schools	39	7.52	4.07	3.45	0.375
Behaviour characteristics of the offender	Boys' only schools	23	2.54	7.43	3.89	0.492
	Girls' only schools	16	4.53	8.03	3.50	0.476
	Co-educational schools	39	7.45	3.93	4.22	0.251
The effect of the problem on the disciplinary tone of the school	Boys' only schools	23	5.45	6.39	0.94	0.456
	Girls' only schools	16	5.05	5.47	0.42	0.698
	Co-educational schools	39	4.95	7.39	2.44	0.561
The effects of disciplinary problem on the victim	Boys' only schools	23	4.34	7.95	3.91	0.625
	Girls' only schools	16	3.46	7.54	4.08	0.636
	Co-educational schools	39	7.56	3.52	4.04	0.654

According to the information displayed in Table 5.5 above, there are almost similar estimated differences between the pre and post disciplinary hearing response scores by the panels of the three categories of schools on three factors, the type of the disciplinary problem, the behaviour characteristics of the offender, and the effect of

the problems on disciplinary tone of the school. However, the estimated differences between the pre and post disciplinary hearing response scores of the panels of the three categories of schools are quite significant on one aspect of the problem treated- the effect of the problem on the disciplinary tone of the school. The panels in the single-sex schools (boys' and girls' only schools) had smaller shifts from the pre to post disciplinary hearing decisions, while the panels in the co-educational schools reported bigger shifts. The information also showed that the pre disciplinary hearing response scores of the panels in the co-educational schools were generally higher than those in the single-sex (boys' and girls') only schools.

Therefore, there was need to test whether or not there were statistically significant differences in shifts from pre to post disciplinary hearing decisions among the panels in the three categories of schools, the single-sex-boys' only schools, single-sex girls' only schools and the co-educational schools based on the four factors associated with the disciplinary problems. The Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) statistical test was performed. The MANOVA test results lists four commonly used multivariate tests namely the Pillai's trace test, Wilk's lambda test, Hotelling's test, and the Roy's largest root test (Stevens, 1992). These four different multivariate tests may give different results when used on the same set of data, although the resulting conclusion from each is often the same. However, the Wilk's lambda test is the most preferred, because it is the strongest of the four multivariate tests (Howell, 2002).

After performing a significant multivariate test for a particular main effect or interaction, the univariate (F) obtained was examined for each dependent variable to

interpret the respective effect. In other words, the specific dependent factors that contributed to the significant overall effect are identified, and in this case a test of between subjects was carried out (Rencher, 2002). The estimated shifts from the pre to post disciplinary hearing decisions of the panels of the three school categories were compared using the MANOVA statistical test and the results are presented in Table 5.6 below.

Table 5.6: The MANOVA results of the significance in the pre and post shifts in decisions among disciplinary panel members of the three school categories

Effect		Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.
School affiliation	Pillai's Trace	0.214	2.18	8.00	146.00	0.32
	Wilk's Lambda	0.793	2.20	8.00	144.00	0.30
	Hotelling's Trace	0.251	2.22	8.00	142.00	0.29
	Roy's Largest Root	0.206	3.75	4.00	73.00	0.18

* $P < 0.05$

From the MANOVA test results in the Table 5.6 above, there are no statistically significant differences in the pre and post disciplinary hearing shifts in decisions among the disciplinary panels of the three categories of Kenyan secondary schools (Wilk's Lambda test : $[F (8, 114) = 2.20, P = 0.30, P > 0.05]$, hence the null hypothesis which stated that there are no statistically significant differences in the pre and post disciplinary hearing shifts in decisions among the disciplinary panels of the three categories of Kenyan secondary schools, has been accepted. This means that

the shifts from the pre to post disciplinary hearing decisions of the panels of one category of school was not significantly different from any of the other category of schools' disciplinary panels. That is, school categories were not of any significant factor in the shifts from pre to post disciplinary hearing decisions by members of the selected Kenyan secondary school disciplinary panels.

Further analysis to investigate the differences in the shifts from pre to post shifts disciplinary hearing decisions by the disciplinary panels of the three categories of schools on the basis of factors associated with the disciplinary problems treated, was performed using the tests of between-subjects (in this case, tests of between disciplinary panels). The results of tests of between subjects are presented in the Table 5.7 below.



Table 5.7: Tests of between subjects for the pre and post disciplinary hearing shifts in decisions among panel members on the basis of school affiliation

Source	Estimated measures regarding shifts in the pre and post disciplinary hearing decisions on the bases of factors associated with disciplinary problems	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected model	Type of the disciplinary problem	12.35	2	6.17	1.74	0.181
	Behaviour characteristics of the offender	18.41	2	9.20	1.78	0.175
	Effect of problem on the disciplinary tone of the school	28.18	2	14.09	3.07	0.052
Intercept	Effects of disciplinary problem on the victim	9.20	2	4.60	1.51	0.227
	Type of the disciplinary problem	767.79	1	767.79	217.27	0.000
	Behaviour characteristics of the offender	588.14	1	588.14	113.94	0.000
School affiliation	Effect of problem on the disciplinary tone of the school	737.84	1	737.84	160.97	0.000
	Effects of disciplinary problem on the victim	591.46	1	591.46	194.06	0.000
	Type of the disciplinary problem	12.35	2	6.176	1.74	0.181
Error	Behaviour characteristics of the offender	18.41	2	9.206	1.78	0.175
	Effect of problem on the disciplinary tone of the school	28.18	2	14.09	3.07	0.049*
	Effects of disciplinary problem on the victim	9.20	2	4.60	1.51	0.227
Total	Type of the disciplinary problem	265.03	75	3.53		
	Behaviour characteristics of the offender	387.12	75	5.16		
	Effect of problem on the disciplinary tone of the school	343.76	75	4.58		
Corrected Total	Effects of disciplinary problem on the victim	228.58	75	3.04		
	Type of the disciplinary problem	1212.00	78			
	Behaviour characteristics of the offender	1144.00	78			
Corrected Total	Effect of problem on the disciplinary tone of the school	1252.00	78			
	Effects of disciplinary problem on the victim	964.00	78			
	Type of the disciplinary problem	277.385	77			
Corrected Total	Behaviour characteristics of the offender	405.538	77			
	Effect of problem on the disciplinary tone of the school	371.949	77			
	Effects of disciplinary problem on the victim	237.795	77			

*** $P < 0.05$**

The results in the table above indicate that, there were no statistically significant differences in shifts in decisions among disciplinary panels of the three categories of schools on three factors associated with the disciplinary problems, including the type of the problem [$F(2, 75) = 1.74; P > 0.05$], the behaviour characteristics of the

offender [$F(2, 75) = 1.78; P > 0.05$] and the effects of disciplinary problem on the victim [$F(2, 75) = 1.51; P > 0.05$]. However, the differences in the pre and post disciplinary hearing shifts in decisions were only significant with regard to decisions on the effect of behaviour problem on the disciplinary tone of the school [$F(2, 75) = 3.07; P = 0.049, P < 0.05$]. These results indicate that significant differences in shifts in decisions among the members of the disciplinary panels of the three categories of schools only occurred on the basis of the aspect of the effect of disciplinary problem on the disciplinary tone of the school. This could be an indication that, generally, the disciplinary panels were more particular about the effects of behaviour problems on the disciplinary tones of their schools. Disciplinary panels protect the image of their schools and ensure that student behaviour problems do not embarrass the schools.

Since different schools view disciplinary problems differently resulting to differences in shifts in their decisions, it was therefore necessary to make a follow up on this significant result to determine where the differences occurred (or which category of schools was responsible for the difference) and this was done using the Scheffe's Post Hoc Multiple Comparisons test. The Scheffe's Post Hoc test compared the estimated differences in the pre and post disciplinary hearing shifts in decisions among the disciplinary panels of the three categories of schools on the factor of the effect of the problem on the disciplinary tone of the school. The Scheffe's Post Hoc Multiple Comparison results are presented in the Table 5.8 below.

Table 5.8: Scheffe's Post Hoc results on shifts in pre and post disciplinary hearing decisions based on school categories on the aspect of effect of the problem on disciplinary tone of the school

Factor	(I)School category	(J)School category	Mean differences in shifts in decisions (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
Effects of the problem on the disciplinary tone of the school	Boys' only	Co-educational	1.50*	1.241	0.000*
		Girls' only	0.52	1.312	0.297
	Co-educational	Boys only	1.50*	1.241	0.000*
		Girls' only	2.02*	1.406	0.000*
	Girls' only	Boys only	0.52	1.312	0.297
		Co-educational	2.02*	1.406	0.000*

***P < 0.05**

The Scheffe's Post Hoc test results in the Table 5.8 above indicate that differences in the shifts from pre to post disciplinary hearing decisions were only observed when co-educational schools' panel decisions were compared with those of all single-sex schools (boys' only or girls' only) on the factor of the effects of the disciplinary behaviour on the disciplinary tone of the school. Generally the results indicate that the disciplinary panels in the three categories of schools made different shifts in their pre and post disciplinary hearing decisions. This could be because of the differences in disciplinary problems treated or differences in the ways each category of schools' disciplinary panels viewed disciplinary problems in relation to school's images or disciplinary tones of the schools.

5.2.2.3: Ages of members of disciplinary panels and effects on shifts from pre to post disciplinary hearing decisions

The third sub hypothesis

There are no statistically significant differences, in the shifts from pre to post disciplinary hearing decisions, on the bases of the age groups of members of the disciplinary panels of selected secondary schools in Rongo district of Kenya

The main aim of this hypothesis was to find out if age was a factor in the shifts from pre to post disciplinary hearing decisions among members of the disciplinary panels. That is, the intention was to compare the shifts in the pre and post disciplinary hearing decisions of members of one age group, with the pre and post disciplinary hearing shifts in decisions of members of other age groups.

For the purpose of this study, four age groups were identified and these include: age groups of 20-29 (n = 21), 30-39 (n = 28), 40-49 (n = 14), and 50-59 (n = 15). The pre and post-disciplinary hearing response scores on the MCDQ as well as the estimated mean differences in response scores for each age group of participant were found on the basis of the factors associated with disciplinary problems on which decisions were to be made. The descriptive statistics for this analysis of results are presented in Table 5.9 below.

Table 5.9: Estimated measures of the shifts in pre and post disciplinary hearing decisions on the basis of age groups of members of the disciplinary panels

Factors associated with the problems	Age groups (years)	N	Pre-response score	Post-response score	Estimated differences between the scores	Std. Error
The type of the disciplinary problem	20-29	21	7.41	3.56	4.45	0.412
	30-39	28	6.95	2.05	4.90	0.520
	40-49	14	5.11	3.55	1.56	0.245
	50-59	15	2.30	3.65	1.35	0.212
The behaviour characteristics of the offender	20-29	21	7.87	2.56	5.31	0.754
	30-39	28	5.54	1.95	3.59	0.652
	40-49	14	2.58	5.56	2.40	0.562
	50-59	15	2.21	4.10	1.89	0.423
The effects of disciplinary problem on the victim	20-29	21	7.54	2.36	5.18	0.785
	30-39	28	7.87	3.81	4.06	0.654
	40-49	14	6.10	3.42	2.60	0.524
	50-59	15	2.55	3.14	0.59	0.230
The effects of the problem on the disciplinary tone of the school	20-29	21	6.98	3.32	3.66	0.575
	30-39	28	6.58	4.27	2.31	0.533
	40-49	14	1.69	3.69	2.00	0.521
	50-59	15	1.22	3.26	2.04	0.458

The information displayed in Table 5.9 above indicates that for decisions on all aspects of disciplinary problems, members of the age group 20-29 years, in comparison to other age groups, had highest estimated measures regarding the differences in the shifts from pre to post disciplinary hearing decisions. The information on the table also indicates that members of the second lower age group,

30-39 years, also made relatively high estimated measures regarding the differences between the pre and post disciplinary hearing decisions.

Except for decisions on the effects of disciplinary problem on the disciplinary tones of schools, members of disciplinary panels of age group 50-59 years had the least estimated measures regarding the differences between the response scores of pre and post disciplinary hearing decisions. The information on Table 5.9 also indicates that members of the second highest age group, 40-49 years, also had low estimated measures regarding the differences between their pre and post disciplinary hearing response scores.

The Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) statistical test was performed to test whether the estimated mean differences in the pre and post disciplinary hearing decisions, on the basis of the age groups, were significant. The MANOVA test results involve four commonly used multivariate tests namely the Pillai's trace test, Wilk's lambda test, Hotelling's test, and Roy's largest root test all of which may give different results when used on the same set of data, although the resulting conclusion from each is often the same (Stevens, 1992). However, the Wilk's lambda test is the most preferred, because it is the strongest of the four multivariate tests (Howell, 2002).

After obtaining a significant multivariate test for a particular main effect or interaction, the F, for each dependent variable was examined to interpret the respective effect. In other words, to identify the specific dependent variables that contributed to the significant overall effect, and in this case a test of between subjects was carried out.

The estimated shifts in the pre and post disciplinary hearing decision mean scores on the bases of the four age groups of the participants were compared using the MANOVA statistical test and the results presented in Table 5.10 below.

Table 5.10: MANOVA results of the significance in the pre and post disciplinary hearing shifts in decisions among panel members on the basis of age groups

Effect		Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.
Age groups of the panel members	Pillai's Trace	0.718	5.738	12.00	219.00	0.000*
	Wilk's Lambda	0.360	7.400	12.00	188.00	0.000*
	Hotelling's Trace	1.570	9.117	12.00	209.00	0.000*
	Roy's Largest Root	1.247	2.605	4.00	73.00	0.000*

* $P < 0.05$

From the MANOVA results in the Table 5.10 above, there are significant differences in shifts from the pre to post disciplinary hearing decisions among the members of selected school disciplinary panels on the basis of the age groups (Wilk's Lambda (λ) test : $F(12, 188) = 7.40, P = 0.000, P < 0.05$). Hence, the null hypothesis which stated that there are no statistically significant differences, in the shifts from pre to post disciplinary hearing decisions, on the basis of the age groups of members of the disciplinary panels of selected secondary schools has been rejected. This means that there are differences in the shifts from pre to post disciplinary hearing decisions by members of the four age groups.

Further analysis of data was performed by use of tests of between-subjects to locate where the differences lie on the basis of the factors associated with the disciplinary problems. The results presented in the Table 5.11 below.

Table 5.11: The MANOVA results for tests of between – subjects for pre and post disciplinary hearing shifts in decisions on the basis of age groups of the panel members

Source	Estimated measures regarding shifts in the pre and post disciplinary hearing decisions on the bases of factors associated with disciplinary problems	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected model	Type of the disciplinary problem	117.68	3	39.23	18.19	0.000
	Behaviour characteristics of the offender	155.89	3	51.96	15.40	0.000
	Effects of disciplinary problem on the victim	150.03	3	50.00	16.67	0.000
	Effect of the problem on the disciplinary tone of the school	34.49	3	11.49	4.19	0.010
Intercept	Type of the disciplinary problem	469.376	1	469.376	237.480	0.000
	Behaviour characteristics of the offender	330.536	1	330.535	111.427	0.000
	Effects of disciplinary problem on the victim	502.608	1	502.608	162.683	0.000
	Effect of the problem on the disciplinary tone of the school	375.153	1	375.153	139.488	0.000
Age group of teachers	Type of the disciplinary problem	117.68	3	39.23	18.19	0.000*
	Behaviour characteristics of the offender	155.89	3	51.96	15.40	0.000*
	Effects of disciplinary problem on the victim	150.03	3	50.00	16.67	0.000*
	Effect of the problem on the disciplinary tone of the school	34.49	3	11.49	4.19	0.000*
Error	Type of the disciplinary problem	142.307	72	1.976		
	Behaviour characteristics of the offender	213.579	72	2.966		
	Effects of disciplinary problem on the victim	222.444	72	3.089		
	Effect of the problem on the disciplinary tone of the school	193.644	72	2.689		
Total	Type of the disciplinary problem	1212.00	78			
	Behaviour characteristics of the offender	1144.00	78			
	Effects of disciplinary problem on the victim	1252.00	78			
	Effect of the problem on the disciplinary tone of the school	964.00	78			
Corrected Total	Type of the disciplinary problem	277.385	77			
	Behaviour characteristics of the offender	405.538	77			
	Effects of disciplinary problem on the victim	371.949	77			
	Effect of the problem on the disciplinary tone of the school	237.795	77			

* $P < 0.05$

The results displayed in Table 5.11 above indicate that, statistically significant differences exist among the disciplinary panel members of the four age groups regarding the shifts from the pre to post disciplinary hearing decisions on the four factors associated with disciplinary problems on which decisions were made, including, the type of the disciplinary problem [$F(3, 72) = 18.19; P = 0.000, P < 0.05$], the behaviour characteristics of the offender [$F(3, 72) = 15.40; P = 0.000, P < 0.05$], the effect of the disciplinary problem on the victim [$F(3, 72) = 16.67; P = 0.000, P < 0.05$], and effect of the problem on the disciplinary tone of the school [$F(3, 72) = 4.19; P = 0.000, P < 0.05$].

Further data analysis was carried out to locate exactly where the differences lie. To do this, the Scheffe's Post Hoc Multiple Comparisons test was used for the analysis. The Table 5.12 below presents the results of this Post Hoc test.

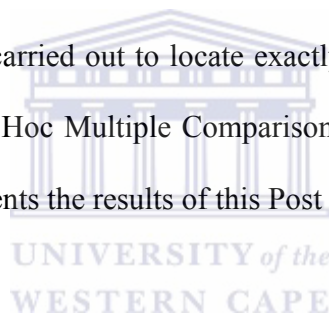


Table 5.12: Scheffe's Post Hoc results on pre and post disciplinary hearing shifts in decisions on the basis of panel members' age groups

Dependent variable	(I)Age group	(J) Age group	Mean Differences in shifts in decisions (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
The type of the disciplinary problem	20-29 years	30-39	0.45	0.422	0.365
		40-49	2.89	0.526	0.000*
		50-59	3.10	0.722	0.000*
The behaviour characteristics of the offender	30-39 years	20-29	1.72	0.263	0.019*
		40-49	2.91	0.422	0.000*
		50-59	1.70	0.652	0.023*
The effect of the problem on the disciplinary tone of the school	40-49 years	20-29	1.66	0.563	0.035*
		30-39	0.31	0.524	0.754
		50-59	0.04	0.632	0.958
The effects of disciplinary problem on the victim	50-59 years	20-29	4.59	0.410	0.000*
		30-39	3.47	0.220	0.000*
		40-49	1.01	0.426	0.065

* $P < 0.05$

The results as displayed in the Table 5.12 above indicate that statistically significant differences exist among the disciplinary panel members of the four age groups regarding their shifts from pre to post disciplinary hearing decisions on all the four factors associated with disciplinary problems on which decisions were to be made. This means that age is a factor in the shifts from the pre to post disciplinary hearing decisions. That is, age of the panel members could have influenced the differences in shifts from the pre to post disciplinary hearing decisions.

The results reveal that panel members of the age groups 40-49 years and 50-59 years did not experience significant shifts from pre to post disciplinary hearing decisions, as compared to those in 20-29 and 30-39 years of age categories who experienced large shifts in their decisions. Since the panel members in the 20-29, and 30-39 years of age categories experienced large shifts in their decisions, it could mean that the members of these age groups were probably influenced significantly by the factors in the dynamic interactions among members of the panels during disciplinary hearing, as compared to those in the 40-49 and 50-59 years of age categories. It could also mean that members of the younger age groups were more willing to shift while those in the 40-49 and 50-59 age groups were reluctant to shift from their pre to post disciplinary hearing decisions.



5.2.2.4: Teaching experiences of members of disciplinary panels and effects on shifts from pre-disciplinary hearing to post-disciplinary hearing decisions

The fourth sub hypothesis

There are no statistically significant differences, in the shifts from pre to post disciplinary hearing decisions, on the basis of the teaching experiences of members of the disciplinary panels of selected secondary schools in Rongo district of Kenya

The hypothesis was meant to ascertain whether or not years of teaching experiences played any significant role to influence the shifts from pre to post disciplinary hearing

decisions of the panel members. Comparisons were made of the estimated measures of decisions to indicate the differences between the pre and post disciplinary hearing decisions by panel members of the different categories of teaching experiences and on the basis of the four factors associated with disciplinary problems on which decisions were to be made. The participants were clustered into six groups on the basis of their teaching experiences, 1-5 years, 6-10 years, 11-15 years, 16-20 years, 21-25 years and 26-30 years.

The pre and post-disciplinary hearing response scores on the MCDQ as well as the estimated mean differences between the two response scores for each teaching experiences group were found on the bases of the factors associated with disciplinary problems on which decisions were to be made. The results are presented in Table 5.13 below.

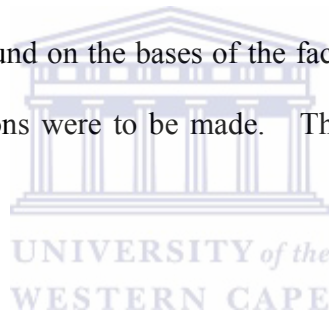


Table 5.13: Estimated measures of the shifts from the pre to post disciplinary hearing decisions on the basis of categories of teaching experiences of the panel members

Factors associated with the problems	Categories of years of teaching experiences	N	Pre-response score	Post-response score	Estimated differences between the scores	Std. Error
Type of disciplinary problems treated	1-5	33	6.52	2.56	4.26	0.624
	6-10	14	7.85	3.20	4.65	0.698
	11-15	5	4.56	6.68	2.12	0.521
	16-20	6	3.34	5.58	2.24	0.533
	21-25	8	2.45	4.05	1.60	0.421
	26-30	12	2.34	3.67	1.33	0.402
The behaviour characteristics of the offender	1-5	33	6.87	1.56	5.31	0.654
	6-10	14	7.75	2.95	4.80	0.682
	11-15	5	2.50	5.69	3.19	0.524
	16-20	6	3.32	5.92	2.60	0.445
	21-25	8	2.67	4.02	2.02	0.325
	26-30	12	2.21	4.23	1.35	0.425
Effects of problem on the disciplinary tone of the school	1-5	33	8.12	1.94	6.18	0.785
	6-10	14	6.25	3.81	2.44	0.654
	11-15	5	7.42	3.06	4.36	0.658
	16-20	6	4.63	7.13	2.50	0.556
	21-25	8	4.42	5.76	1.34	0.425
	26-30	12	2.25	3.26	1.01	0.411
Effects of disciplinary problem on victim	1-5	33	7.45	3.12	4.33	0.584
	6-10	14	6.58	4.27	2.31	0.533
	11-15	5	6.98	4.10	2.08	0.755
	16-20	6	3.23	6.56	3.33	0.654
	21-25	8	1.68	3.64	1.96	0.446
	26-30	12	1.23	2.20	0.97	0.224

The information displayed in the Table 5.13 above indicates that for decisions on two factors, the type of disciplinary problem and the behaviour characteristics of the offender, the members in the 6-10 years of teaching experience category had the highest estimated measures regarding the differences between the pre and post

disciplinary hearing decisions. The information on the table also indicates that on the other two factors, the effects of problem on disciplinary tone of the school and the effects of disciplinary problems on the victims, members in the category of 1-5 years of teaching experience had the highest estimated measures regarding the differences between the pre and post disciplinary hearing decisions.

In the four factors on which decisions were made, the panel members in the 26-30 years of teaching experience category had the least estimated measures regarding the differences between the pre and post disciplinary hearing decisions. The information in the table also indicates that the panel members in the category of 20-25 years of teaching experiences also had low estimated measures regarding the estimated differences between their pre and post disciplinary hearing decisions.

The information in the table 5.13 further indicates that, in the type of disciplinary problems and the behaviour characteristics of the offenders, the panel members in the category of 6-10 years of teaching experience, had the highest pre disciplinary hearing response score. Moreover, in the effects of problem on disciplinary tone of the school and the effects of disciplinary problem on the victim, the panel members in the category of 1-5 years of teaching experience, had the highest pre disciplinary hearing response scores. The information also indicates that for all the factors, the members of the 1-5, and 6-10 years of teaching experiences categories had the lowest post disciplinary hearing response scores.

The Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) statistical test was performed to test whether or not there were statistically significant differences between the pre and

post disciplinary hearing decisions among the panel members in the six categories of years of teaching experiences, (1-5, 6-10, 11-15, 16-20, 21-25 and 26-30 years) based on the four factors associated with the disciplinary problems treated. The MANOVA test results involve four commonly used multivariate tests namely the Pillai's trace test, Wilk's lambda test, Hotelling's, and Roy's largest root test which may give different results when used on the same set of data, although the resulting conclusion from each is often the same (Stevens, 1992). However, the Wilk's lambda test is the most preferred, because it is the strongest of the four multivariate tests (Howell, 2002).

The estimated shifts from the pre to post disciplinary hearing decision mean scores of the six years of teaching experiences categories of the participants were compared using the Multivariate ANOVA statistical test and the results presented in Table 5.14 below.

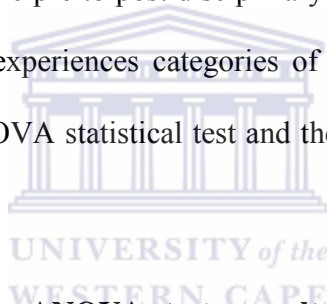


Table 5.14: Multivariate ANOVA tests results for shifts from pre to post disciplinary hearing decisions among panel members on the basis of categories of years of teaching experiences

Effect	Multivariate tests	Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.
Category of years of teaching experiences	Pillai's Trace test	0.857	3.92	20.00	288.00	0.000
	Wilk's Lambda test	0.282	5.33	20.00	230.00	0.000*
	Hotelling's Trace test	2.059	6.94	20.00	270.00	0.000
	Roy's Largest Root test	1.804	25.97	5.000	72.000	0.000

* $P < 0.05$

From the MANOVA results in the Table 5.14 above, there were statistically significant differences in the shifts from pre to post disciplinary hearing decisions, on the basis of the teaching experiences of members of the disciplinary panels of selected secondary schools (Wilk's Lambda (λ) test : $F(20, 230) = 5.33, P = 0.000, P < 0.05$). Hence, the null hypothesis which stated that there are no statistically significant differences, in the shifts from pre to post disciplinary hearing decisions, on the basis of the years of teaching experiences of members of the disciplinary panels of selected secondary schools was rejected. This means that there are differences in the shifts from pre to post disciplinary hearing decisions by members of the six categories of years of teaching experiences.

Further analysis to establish where the significant differences in the shifts in decisions lie, was performed by use of tests of between-subjects. The results presented in the Table 5.15 below.

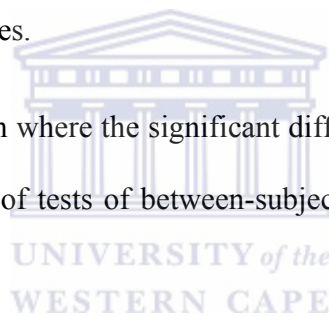


Table 5.15: Tests of between-subjects results for shifts in pre and post disciplinary hearing decisions among the panel members on the basis of teaching experiences

Source	Estimated measures regarding shifts in the pre and post disciplinary hearing decisions on the bases of factors associated with disciplinary problems	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected model	Type of the disciplinary problem	135.077	5	27.015	13.668	0.000
	Behaviour characteristics of the offender	191.960	5	38.392	12.942	0.000
	Effects of disciplinary problem on the victim	149.505	5	29.901	9.678	0.000
	Effect of the problem on disciplinary tone of the school	44.151	5	8.830	3.283	0.010
Intercept	Type of the disciplinary problem	469.376	1	469.376	237.480	0.000
	Behaviour characteristics of the offender	330.536	1	330.535	111.427	0.000
	Effects of disciplinary problem on the victim	502.608	1	502.608	162.683	0.000
	Effect of the problem on disciplinary tone of the school	375.153	1	375.153	139.488	0.000
Category of years of teaching experiences	Type of the disciplinary problem	135.077	5	27.015	13.668	0.000*
	Behaviour characteristics of the offender	191.960	5	38.392	12.942	0.000*
	Effects of disciplinary problem on the victim	149.505	5	29.901	9.678	0.000*
	Effect of the problem on disciplinary tone of the school	44.151	5	8.830	3.283	0.000*
Error	Type of the disciplinary problem	142.307	72	1.976		
	Behaviour characteristics of the offender	213.579	72	2.966		
	Effects of disciplinary problem on the victim	222.444	72	3.089		
	Effect of the problem on disciplinary tone of the school	193.644	72	2.689		
Total	Type of the disciplinary problem	1212.00	78			
	Behaviour characteristics of the offender	1144.00	78			
	Effects of disciplinary problem on the victim	1252.00	78			
	Effect of the problem on disciplinary tone of the school	964.00	78			
Corrected Total	Type of the disciplinary problem	277.385	77			
	Behaviour characteristics of the offender	405.538	77			
	Effects of disciplinary problem on the victim	371.949	77			
	Effect of the problem on disciplinary tone of the school	237.795	77			

*** $P < 0.05$**

The tests of between-subjects results presented in the Table 5.15 above, indicate that, statistically significant differences exist among the panel members of the six

categories of years of teaching experiences regarding the shifts from the pre to post disciplinary hearing decisions on all the four factors associated with disciplinary problems on which decisions were to be made including, the type of the problems [F (5, 72) = 13.66; $P = 0.000$, $P < 0.05$], the behaviour characteristics of the offender [F (5, 72) = 12.94; $P = 0.000$, $P < 0.05$], the effects of disciplinary problem on victim [F (5, 72) = 9.678; $P = 0.000$, $P < 0.05$] and the effect of problem on disciplinary tone of the school [F (5, 72) = 3.283; $P = 0.000$, $P < 0.05$].

Further analysis was carried out to locate exactly where the differences lie. To do this, the Scheffe's Post Hoc Multiple Comparisons test was used for the analysis.

Table 5.16 below presents the results of the Scheffe's Post Hoc Multiple Comparison test.



Table 5.16: Scheffe's Post Hoc test results on shifts in pre and post disciplinary hearing decisions on the basis of the categories of years of teaching experiences of the panel members

Dependent variable	(I)Years of teaching experiences	(J) Years of teaching experiences	Mean differences in shifts in decisions (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
The type of the disciplinary problem	1-5 years	6-10	0.39	0.562	0.456
		11-15	2.14	0.425	0.034*
		16-20	2.12	0.431	0.030*
		21-25	3.05	0.567	0.001*
		26-30	2.93	0.522	0.012*
The behavior characteristics of the offender	6-10 years	1-5	0.51	0.124	0.785
		11-15	1.61	0.452	0.050*
		16-20	2.20	0.476	0.002*
		21-25	2.78	0.458	0.001*
		26-30	3.45	0.652	0.000*
The effect of the problem on disciplinary tone of the school	11-15 years	1-5	1.82	0.472	0.035*
		6-10	1.92	0.469	0.030*
		16-20	0.86	0.362	0.754
		21-25	3.02	0.687	0.001*
		26-30	3.35	0.664	0.000*
The effects of disciplinary problem on the victim	16-20 years	1-5	1.00	0.243	0.050*
		6-10	1.02	0.321	0.045*
		11-15	0.75	0.352	0.875
		21-25	1.37	0.365	0.023*
		26-30	2.36	0.489	0.016*

* $P < 0.05$

The Scheffe's Post Hoc test results displayed in Table 5.16 indicate that, statistically significant differences exist among the disciplinary panel members of the six categories of years of teaching experiences regarding their shifts from pre to post disciplinary hearing decisions on the four factors associated with the disciplinary problems. The results indicate that panel members with less years of teaching experiences (1-5, 6-10 years) categories shifted significantly from their pre-

disciplinary hearing individual decisions to post-disciplinary hearing group decisions than members with more teaching experience categories (21-25, 26-30 years). The less experienced teachers were probably more influenced by the factors in dynamic interactions among panel members during disciplinary hearings. More experienced members were rather reluctant in yielding their original positions and were less influenced by the factors in the dynamic interactions among panel members during disciplinary hearings. Probably, more experienced members were able to persuade less experienced members to make the shifts in their decisions from pre-disciplinary to post-disciplinary hearing decisions. This could also mean that the older more experienced members of the panels may have better grasp of the issues being deliberated on than the younger less experienced members.

Therefore, the years of teaching experiences of the panel members could have been a factor that contributed to the differences in shifts from pre to post disciplinary hearing decisions. This has implications on the quality of decisions concerning student behaviour problems.

5.2: Influences of factors associated with disciplinary problems on the shifts from pre to post disciplinary hearing decisions.

Hypothesis 3

Factors such as the type of the disciplinary problem, behaviour characteristics of the offender, effects of disciplinary problem on the victim, and, effects of the problem on

disciplinary tone of the school, are not responsible for the shifts from pre to post disciplinary hearing decisions among the members of the school disciplinary panels

The aim of the hypothesis was to ascertain if the four factors associated with disciplinary problems on which decisions were made influenced the shifts in the panel members' decisions during the disciplinary hearing meetings. A Multiple Regression Analysis was conducted to examine the effects of each of the factors on the shifts from pre to post disciplinary hearing decisions among the panel members.

The multiple regression analysis is a statistical technique that allows us to predict an individual's score on one dependent component (estimated shifts from pre to post disciplinary hearing decision scores) on the basis of several scores of other predictor (independent) factors (Brace, Kemp & Snelger, 2003). The multiple regression analysis was interested in predicting the extent to which each of the predictor variables or the four factors associated with disciplinary problems (the type of the disciplinary problem, the behaviour characteristics of the offender, the effects of the problem on disciplinary tone of the school, and the effects of disciplinary problem on the victim) influenced the shifts from pre to post-disciplinary hearing decisions among the panel members.

To determine the extent of influence of each of the four factors on shifts from pre to post disciplinary hearing decisions, the stepwise multiple regression analysis was done. The results of the Multiple Regression Analysis are presented in the Table 5.17 below.

Table 5.17: Stepwise Multiple Regression Results: Predicting the influence of the four factors on which decisions were made in shifts from pre-disciplinary individual decisions to post-disciplinary hearing group decisions

Multiple Regression				
	0.82			
R Squared (R²)	0.68			
R Squared (Adjusted R²)	0.66			
Standard error	3.49			
				Sig. <i>P</i> = 0.029*
Variables in the equation	B	Standard error for B	t	Sig.
The type of the disciplinary problem	1.14	0.23	4.92	0.000*
The behavior characteristics of the offender	0.74	0.22	3.29	0.002*
The effect of the problem on disciplinary tone of the school	0.65	0.23	2.85	0.035*
The effect of disciplinary problem on the victim	0.42	0.23	1.85	0.067

****P* < 0.05**

The Table 5.17 above presents the results of regression of four factors on the shifts from pre to post disciplinary hearing decisions of the panel members. The results

indicate that only three factors associated with the disciplinary problems - the type of the disciplinary problem ($P = 0.000$, $P < 0.05$), the behaviour characteristics of the offender ($P = 0.002$, $P < 0.05$), and the effects of the problem on disciplinary tone of the school ($P = 0.035$, $P < 0.05$) significantly influenced the shifts from pre to post disciplinary hearing decisions. However, the effect of disciplinary problem on the victim ($P = 0.067$, $P > 0.05$) was not significant in its influence on the shifts from pre to post disciplinary hearing decisions.

The results also indicate that the value of Adjusted $R^2 = 0.668$. When the adjusted R^2 value is expressed in percentage, it becomes 66.8% or approximately 67%. This means that 67% of what explained the shifts in decisions can be accounted for by the four factors and the other 33% can be accounted for by other variables (factors that were not considered). However, if all the factors are entered into the equation, then this value would change. Therefore, the shifts in decisions from pre to post disciplinary hearing decisions can also be greatly attributed to the four factors associated with disciplinary problems, just as other factors.

Moreover, it was necessary to account for each of the factors that were entered in the equation, to ascertain the extent to which each of them influenced the shifts from pre to post disciplinary hearing decisions. The results from the size of Beta values (β) indicated that the behaviour characteristics of the offender remained the most significant factor influencing shifts in decisions among the panel members ($\beta = 1.143$), followed by the type of the problem ($\beta = 0.746$). The third was the effects of the problem on disciplinary tone of the school ($\beta = 0.655$), but the effects of disciplinary

problem on the victim had little significance ($\beta = 0.428$), in its influence on the shifts in decisions among the panel members.

5.3: Summary and Conclusion of the Chapter

This chapter presented the results of analyses of quantitative data collected for this study. The inferential statistical analyses were performed to test the research hypotheses advanced for this study. The results of the analyses indicate that there is evidence of shifts in decisions from pre to post-disciplinary hearing decisions, indicating that group polarization did occur when disciplinary panels deliberate on disciplinary problems.

Gender, age, teaching experiences and school affiliations of members of disciplinary panels were found to be possible factors which could influence the shifts from the pre to post disciplinary hearing decisions. The male members reported smaller estimated differences in the shifts from pre to post disciplinary hearing decisions while the females had bigger estimated differences in the shifts from the pre to post disciplinary hearing decisions. This could also mean that female panel members were more responsive to the dynamics in the disciplinary hearing meetings as compared with the male panel members. The younger panel members compared to older panel members had bigger estimated differences regarding the shifts from pre to post disciplinary hearing decisions. This could mean that generally, younger panel members were more willing to be persuaded to shift from their pre-disciplinary hearing individual decisions to post-disciplinary hearing decisions than the older panel members. The

panel members with few years of teaching experiences generally reported bigger differences in shifts from pre to post disciplinary hearing decisions while those with many years of teaching experiences had smaller estimated differences in the shifts. This could mean that members with less years of teaching experiences (or less experienced members) were more willing to shift in their decisions or probably that they responded more to the dynamics of disciplinary hearings than their more experienced counterparts. The differences in shifts in decisions on the basis of school affiliations were only statistically significant on the basis of the effect of problem on disciplinary tone of the school. The results could mean that disciplinary panels of all categories of schools were more concerned about protecting the disciplinary tone or the images of their respective schools.

Finally, the results on the influence of the factors associated with disciplinary problems indicated that, three factors - the type of disciplinary problems, the behaviour characteristics of the offending students or the effects of the disciplinary problems on the disciplinary tone of the school - significantly influenced the shifts from pre to post disciplinary hearing decision. The effects of behaviour problems treated on the victims were insignificant. This could mean that most disciplinary problems treated by the selected disciplinary panels may not have involved violation of rights or abuse of “supposed” victims of the disciplinary problems. On the other hand, it could mean that panel members were less concerned about the effects of disciplinary problems on victims as compared with other factors.

The next chapter presents the results of the qualitative component of the study. The results of the current chapter and the next chapter are integrated and discussed in chapter 7.



CHAPTER SIX

QUALITATIVE RESULTS

6.1: Introduction

This chapter presents the results of the qualitative data analysis of the study. In the previous chapter, the results of the quantitative data analysis were presented. Quantitative data collected was to ascertain whether or not group polarization did take place as a result of the factors in dynamic interactions among disciplinary panel members during disciplinary hearings. Quantitative data was also analyzed to ascertain the influences of the variables such as gender, age, teaching experiences and school affiliations of panel members on shifts from pre to post disciplinary hearing decisions. The participants were interviewed on how they experienced the dynamic interactions among them during disciplinary hearings. Participants expressed their opinions regarding meanings and interpretations they gave to their experiences of and to various factors in the dynamic interactions among them during the disciplinary hearings. Participants were asked to specifically indicate factors in the disciplinary hearing group processes which may have influenced the shifts from their pre-disciplinary hearing individually made decisions to the post-disciplinary hearing group decisions.

6.2: Results

The interview transcripts were thematically analyzed. The thematic framework was used to classify and organize data according to key themes or emergent categories

(Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). For this thematic framework, the researcher first became familiar with the data and also gained an overview of the data. This was done by reading and re-reading the interview transcript several times. The transcripts were then summarized, the emerging patterns then organized into categories or basic descriptive meaning units common to all the participants. From these meaning units, themes were derived. Measures were taken to ensure that these themes captured the essence of various aspects of participants' experiences of the dynamic interactions of the disciplinary hearing group processes. The emerging themes from the data analysis were with regard to the meanings and or the interpretations participants gave to their experiences of the dynamics of disciplinary hearings particularly in terms of factors in the disciplinary hearing group processes which might have influenced their decisions or the shifts from their pre disciplinary hearing decisions to their post disciplinary hearing decisions (group polarization). Data analysis also involved the establishment of links between the emerging themes or the relationships of one to the other for appropriate interpretive explanation before their integration into the findings of the study.

The main themes around which results were built include the persuasive arguments and social comparison, as these served as factors influencing group polarization. The results are "grounded" by use of quotations from interviewees in order to accurately describe participants' experiences of the dynamic interactions which took place in the disciplinary hearings in which they were involved. By using excerpts from interviews, the descriptions of the meanings and interpretations given to their experiences (including the factors that influenced these experiences leading to the

shifts in the participants' decisions), are able to be made in a way as if to almost see and hear the participants (Glaser & Straus, 1967; Straus & Corbin, 1994).

The results also took into consideration types of decisions – cautious or risky decisions (Sobel, 2006). Cautious decisions are made when there is a group tendency to exhibit greater restraint in risk taking relative to the proclivities of individuals in that group (Stoner, 1968). In other words, the group members making cautious decisions are attentive to examine probable effects and consequences of acts with a view to avoid causing harm to the offending student. Within the context of the current study, the post disciplinary hearing cautious decisions were made when it was necessary to probably warn the offender, or, when there was need to explore other better and more reformatory sanctions, or when it was considered that, it would be more appropriate to make parents responsible for addressing the behaviour problems of their children and finally when it was thought necessary to prevent the students from being exposed to risky behaviour (e.g. joining gangs) as a result of extreme sanction (or punishment) which could be destructive or counterproductive. Squelch (2000) and Joubert, *et al*, (2004) contend that discipline is not just about punishment, but also positive behaviour management aimed at promoting appropriate behaviour and developing self-discipline and self-control in learners.

Risky or extreme decisions were made when the group members adopt a course of action to sanction the offender (Stoner, 1968), or the tendency of group members to take very serious negative position on behaviour problems. With regards to the disciplinary hearing meetings, extreme decisions were made when panel members adhered very strictly or rigidly to the school policy as contained in the regulations, and

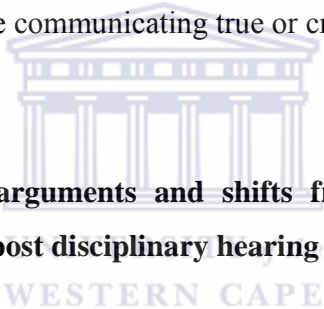
declared the behaviour problem unacceptable, or when the panel members felt that the offender was a habitual one. In other instances, risky decisions were made when the school disciplinary tone did not permit the offence, or, when it was necessary to use appropriate sanctions to deter the occurrences of certain offences, and finally, when it was clear that the offence has to be punished as was indicated in the school policy regarding such misbehaviour.

Disciplinary panel decisions indicate how students' behaviours are managed to ensure appropriate behaviour development. Disciplinary panels made decisions to ensure that students' behaviours do not constitute barriers to learning. Decisions are made to ensure that students' behaviours do not lead to unsafe or insecure school environment for teachers to teach and for learners to learn. Disciplinary panels also ensure that learners' behaviours do not constitute embarrassment to the school. That, students identified with a particular school reflect good image of the school. Disciplinary panels' decisions were also geared towards helping students with disciplinary behaviour problems to reform such behaviours such that they can maximize their time, learn and perform well and succeed in school and later in life.

6.2.1: Persuasive Arguments and shifts in decisions

Persuasive arguments are with regard to the nature of information which is an important factor in the dynamic interactions in a group process (El-Shinnawy & Vinze, 1998; Zhu, 2009). Depending on the nature of information shared during group meeting, group members' opinions about an issue being discussed can change or remain the same as before the group meeting. New or novel, true or credible,

original or valid information, or information supported by sense perceptions (seen, heard or witnessed), such types of information are more likely to influence group members' opinions causing them to change from their previously held position about an issue before group meeting to a new position (Johnson & Coolen, 1995; Sunstein, 1999). Moreover, apart from these factors associated with information shared during group meeting, are also factors associated with the communicator or presenter of information. If the presenter of information in a group meeting is perceived to be an expert or experienced in the issue being discussed, members can be persuaded to shift from their pre-group meeting decisions to new decisions as the expert or experienced member would be seen to be communicating true or credible information.



6.2.1.1: Persuasive arguments and shifts from pre disciplinary hearing cautious to post disciplinary hearing risky/extreme decisions

Persuasive arguments as a consequence of new information that was available to panel members at the disciplinary hearing can influence shifts in decisions during the disciplinary hearing meetings. A number of participants reported on their experiences of new information being shared during disciplinary hearings which resulted in the shifts from their original pre-disciplinary hearing decisions to new post-disciplinary hearing decisions, on the basis of the behaviour characteristics of the offending student. With regard to shifts from cautious pre-disciplinary hearing decisions to extreme or risky post-disciplinary hearing decisions, was the case of a school girl accused of unauthorized absence from school. Schools maintain zero tolerance policy on unauthorized absence from school as this may put the students in harms or expose

them to risk of violence outside of the school. Moreover, when students are seeing wondering about when they are supposed to be in the custody of the school and learning, such behaviour creates bad impression about the disciplinary tone of the school in the minds of the public.

During disciplinary hearing, new information available to members was that this misconduct of the girl has been reported several times as the housemaster offering information on the girl to the panel stated that, the girl had been given several warnings to desist from the misconduct. Thus, at the disciplinary hearing when panel members came to understand that the student was a habitual offender, they took a harsher position. Thus, many panel members who originally had decided to overlook the offence thinking it was a once-off affair changed their cautious decisions to more risky decisions in an apparent indication of the need to punish such behaviour as stipulated in the school policy. Since the school rules and regulations stipulate that unexcused absence from school or classroom should not be tolerated, members opted to implement the strict policy which makes the school to be seen as playing its monitoring and supervision role and one that does not tolerate indiscipline on the part of students.

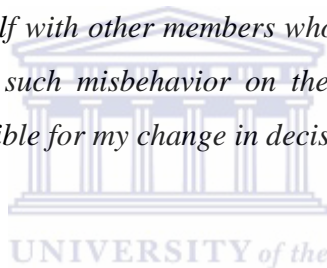
Three excerpts from interview transcripts reflecting the views of participants are as follows:

My decision about the disciplinary problem changed when it was revealed at the disciplinary hearing that the girl is a habitual offender. The girl is expected to stay within the school premise and not leave without permission, because this would ensure class attendance and also

prevent her from getting caught up in at-risk behaviour within the community. With this information it was clear that, leaving school is an offence which should not be tolerated as specified in the school rules and regulations.

The new information about the girl helped me to see her as rather very in-disciplined, and therefore I agreed with the other panel members that the misconduct was unacceptable and deserved to be punished.

I considered the information presented to be true especially coming from the housemaster who looked after the students. Moreover, I agreed with other members of the disciplinary panel that such misconduct should not be allowed in the school. I was persuaded by the new information and therefore aligned myself with other members who were concerned about the negative effect of such misbehavior on the discipline tone of the school. This is responsible for my change in decision about the problem.



Another disciplinary problem brought to disciplinary hearing which also resulted in the shifts from pre-disciplinary hearing cautious decisions to post-disciplinary hearing risky decision was that of a drunken student. According to schools' policies on alcohol or drug abuse, this is unacceptable because such behaviour makes school environment unsafe for both students and teachers. A drunken student is not only a danger to him or herself but to other students as he or she may engage in violent behaviour like fighting or physical assault, vandalism or damage to properties as well as other forms of abuse which can cause injuries, health problems or even death. Moreover, drunken students are unlikely to maintain regular school attendance, and therefore, perform rather very poorly academically.

The participants indicated that, prior to the disciplinary hearing meeting, when they were considering the misconduct individually, some panel members did not consider the problem as very serious that, probably it was an isolated case, on one of those little pranks students play and, therefore, decided that the boy only needed to be warned. At the disciplinary hearing meeting, the school security officer was invited to share more information on the student's misconduct. He provided new information to the effect that the boy was often seen to be extremely drunk, and incapable of controlling himself, as his walking was wobbling and fell several times. He also pointed out that the bruises on parts of the body of the boy were results from the falls. The boy was also reported to have been involved in fighting and making school environment unsafe for other students.

With the new information, the panel members were persuaded to change their previous decisions about the misconduct. The panel members shifted their opinions because the new evidences provided by an eye-witness during the disciplinary hearing indicated that, there was risk to life and properties and as such, the behaviour was unacceptable as it made school environment unsafe and hampered students learning. Moreover, such behaviour problem would interfere with the disciplinary tone of the school and even put the other students in harms' way. The consensus reached by the panel was that the offender needed to be punished. In this case, the panel members shifted from their pre-disciplinary hearing cautious decisions to post-disciplinary hearing risky decisions based on the new information provided during disciplinary hearing and because of the effects of the misconduct on other students (victims of misbehaviour) and the disciplinary tone of the school. However, the panel also

decided that there should be a general public education on alcohol abuse for all students organized by the school guidance and counseling department. The National Council of Anti-Drug Agency (NACADA) was also recommended to be invited to deliver such education.

Two excerpts from the interviews of the participants indicating this shift in decisions from pre-disciplinary hearing individual cautious decision to post-disciplinary hearing risky decisions are:

The new information that the security officer who witnessed the incident gave us in the disciplinary hearing made me to change my decision. From his statement, the boy was guilty of the two offences committed, that is, consuming alcohol in school and interfering with other students as well. My final decision after the meeting changed because I agreed with other members of the panel particularly regarding their concern for the negative impact of alcohol abuse on the school disciplinary tone.

Earlier on before the disciplinary hearing meeting, I did not consider the offence as serious. However, as more information on the offence was made available at the disciplinary hearing, I had to change my earlier decision on the problem. Key witness to the offence gave full information during the disciplinary hearing which is responsible for my change in decision. The evidence that the offending student had also made others to take part in the offence also contributed to my change in decision.

Oppositional behaviours leading to violent conflict between students and teachers was another common misconduct of students reported to have led to shifts from pre-disciplinary hearing cautious decisions to post-disciplinary hearing risky decisions

because of consideration for the negative impact on the disciplinary tone of the school and the victims of such misconduct. Assaulting teachers by students are unacceptable behaviour and attracts zero tolerance in the school rules and regulations.

Offering new information by eye-witnesses to misconduct was not the only way by which disciplinary panel members were encouraged or persuaded to shift from their pre-disciplinary hearing decisions to post-disciplinary hearing decisions. Expert opinions were reported to have been sought on disciplinary cases. Information provided to disciplinary hearings by experts was considered credible and persuasive enough to cause members to shift from pre-disciplinary hearing decisions to post-disciplinary hearing decisions.

Members reported on a case of bullying by a male student. Bullying being a violent behaviour is unacceptable behaviour, therefore, attracts zero tolerance by school policy. Bullying is considered a very serious misbehaviour as it causes harms either physically or emotionally (humiliates, destroys self-esteem or violates rights of the victims). Bullying also impacts negatively on the disciplinary tone of the school. Some panel members because of their many years of experiences in schools, dealing with disciplinary problems like bullying and also because of their high status positions in the school hierarchy were considered as experts in students' disciplinary problems. In the reported case, therefore, when a member of the panel of the level of Deputy Principal, offered information and making references to school records indicating that the male student brought for the disciplinary hearing was a repeat offender and had been suspended before for assault on students, such information was considered

credible, believable and persuasive enough to change members opinions on the disciplinary problem.

Excerpts from interview transcripts reflecting the views of two participants are as follows:

I had not thought of the offence to be very serious before, because I thought it could be the usual boy's excesses. However, my decision changed because of the information about the boy that was provided during disciplinary hearing by the Deputy Principal who had all past records of students regarding in-discipline. She informed the panel members that from her records, the boy had bullied other students before, and that the student had served a suspension earlier after having been warned several times even before this occurrence. So, my decision changed because the deputy as the expert gave us the accurate information from her records.

My decision before we met at the disciplinary hearing was that we could explore other ways of assisting the boy. My decision changed because the information that the deputy principal presented was true and reflected that the boy is adamant not wanting to change from his past mistakes. As the records from the Deputy who has information regarding the behavior tendencies of all students, there was need to deal with the offence at another level because such offences threaten the disciplinary tone of our school.

Credible information, on the basis of evidences regarding a disciplinary problem committed, influenced shifts in decisions among the panel members due to the negative effect of the problem on the disciplinary tone of the school, the fact that behaviours were unacceptable, and possible harm of the disciplinary behaviour on other students as well as resulting in unsafe environment of the school.

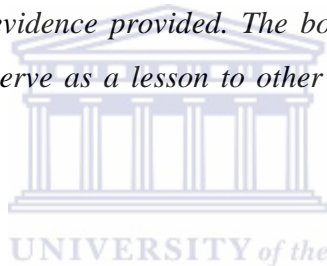
Fraudulent behaviour as in falsifying information by students was another case in which credible information by an expert persuaded disciplinary panel members to arrive at group decisions different from pre-disciplinary hearing individually made decisions. A case of forged bank deposit slip for payment of school fees was reported. The school bursar and a bank clerk testified to the effect that the deposit slip presented by the student as evidence of payment of school fees was forgery, as the two experts clearly showed how the slip had been cleverly altered. This information from the evidences produced, influenced the panel members to shift their decisions from the pre-disciplinary cautious to post-disciplinary risky decisions. The final panel decision was that the boy had to be sanctioned because it was considered that forging is a serious criminal offence that cannot be tolerated in school.

The excerpts from interview transcripts are as follows:

Information available to me before disciplinary hearing made me to think that the offence was not a serious one. However, I changed my decision at the disciplinary hearing when I saw the forged receipts. The information provided by the school bursar had enough evidence about the forgery, and so, it was true that the boy committed the offence. This made me to reconsider my earlier decision about the boy because all the allegations were confirmed at the meeting, that the student had

committed a very serious offence. We decided that the boy be sanctioned because the offence violated another student's rights and this would be as example to the other students not to do the same to their colleagues.

At first I thought, and decided that we could look for other means of handling the problem. However, my decision changed when the forged receipts were produced at the meeting and I confirmed that the boy was guilty of the offence after having seen the forged receipts brought by the bursar. I could not doubt it anymore because the evidence gave us proof that it was actually true that the forgery had been committed. I therefore, aligned my decision with those of the other panel members because of the credibility of the evidence provided. The boy had to be sent home because it needed to serve as a lesson to other students to desist from committing such vices.



From the results presented above, shifts from cautious pre-disciplinary hearing decisions to risky post-disciplinary hearing decisions occurred when the panel members felt that the new information revealed that not intervening to stop the misbehaviour immediately could badly damage the school's image. The new information also revealed that serious harm had been committed; it badly affected the victims and put the school in an unsafe environment for teaching and learning. The panel members also shifted to risky decisions because the new information influenced them to harden their position on the disciplinary problem. For example, when there was need for firm actions, especially, when new information revealed that offender was habitual, and when there was danger and possible harm to the offender or other students. Risky decisions were also made when the panel members felt that the

disciplinary problem should not be tolerated. For example, in instances when the behaviour problems were unacceptable, as indicated in the school's rules and regulations that students should not engage in such behaviours, like stealing, bullying, fighting, cheating, or violent acts like stabbing, and shooting. In such cases, the panel members tended to shift to risky decisions. Finally, the panel members shifted to risky decisions when the problem impacted negatively on the school disciplinary tone and can embarrass the school or seriously damage the school's image or reputation.

6.2.1.2: Persuasive arguments and shifts from pre-disciplinary hearing risky to post-disciplinary hearing cautious decisions

Persuasion as a consequence of new information may not always make panel members to shift from cautious pre-disciplinary hearing decisions to risky post disciplinary hearing decisions as previously discussed above. Sometimes, it could be the other way round. Data analysis revealed that in some disciplinary hearing cases, the panel members reported shifts from their original extreme or risky pre-disciplinary hearing decisions to cautious post-disciplinary hearing decisions. Schools' disciplinary panels have a responsibility of enhancing positive behaviour management aimed at promoting appropriate behaviour and developing self-discipline and self-control in students (Joubert, *et al*, 2004). In performing the above role, and depending on the behaviour problem presented during disciplinary hearing, panel members were persuaded to shift from their original risky pre-disciplinary hearing decisions to cautious post-disciplinary hearing decisions so that their role in the behaviour

development of students would not be counter-productive. Moreover, in these instances, the panel members made cautious decisions to prevent further damage to the students caught with behaviour problems.

Participants reported on a disciplinary problem presented at a disciplinary hearing which led to shift in decisions because of the type of disciplinary problem. A male student was accused of excessive aggressive behaviour leading to fighting with other students. In the school's rule and regulations, fighting is considered a violent behaviour with possibility for harming people and making the classroom learning environment less conducive. Aggressive behaviour also makes people fearful and impact negatively on the safety and security of the school. Severe consequence of fighting among students in schools includes interference with the normal learning activities of students. Weapon used for defensive purposes on school grounds, can cause serious injury to students resulting to medical expenses of treatment and absenteeism from school (Rudatsikira, Muula & Siziya, 2008). Fighting is therefore, regarded as a sign of poor behaviour development. Sanctions prescribed in the schools' rules and regulations for such related offences include suspension from school and in extreme cases of grievous bodily harm, this may even lead to expulsion from school. Therefore, it could be understood why members would take extreme position in their pre-disciplinary hearing opinions on fighting by students.

However, in the case reported on, during disciplinary hearing, the new information revealed several dimensions of the problem and particularly the circumstances which may have led to the problem. The new information made panel members gain better understanding of underlying circumstances responsible for the students' behaviour

problems. The panel members were informed that the boy had lost both parents in a road accident, a situation which would have affected his emotions. Panel members were generally sympathetic and were persuaded to shift from their original individual risky pre-disciplinary hearing decisions to cautious post-disciplinary hearing decisions to assist the offender to develop appropriate behaviour and values. The option of decision to send the student home was viewed by the panel members as counter-productive as this could destroy him completely. There did not appear to be a real home to send the student to as there was no parental support which could be sought in addressing the problem. Suspending the student was more likely to mean turning him loose into the streets for further risky behaviours. The panel therefore, resolved that the school has responsibility to play the role of the home here and therefore, took decisions to enable the school alone to manage the misbehaviour.

Excerpt from interview transcript regarding a participant's response is as follows:

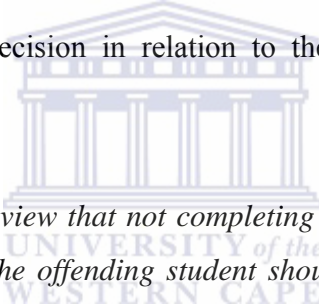
Initially, I decided that the boy would have been suspended as is indicated in the school policy. But my decision changed when we were informed that the student was an orphan having lost both his parents during a ghastly motor accident in which he was also involved. His aggressive behavior was perceived by panel members to possibly be as a consequence of the tragic loss of his parents. Some panel members offered opinions that what the student needed was understanding and sympathy. We therefore changed our earlier decisions to punish the student but instead recommended that he should be sent for counseling and referred to some NGO's for appropriate support.

Participants reported another case of a disciplinary hearing treated in which members shifted from their pre-disciplinary hearing risky decisions to post-disciplinary hearing cautious decisions again due to the circumstances surrounding the behaviour characteristics of the offending students. This was a case of a girl who was falling behind in her academic works. The student was accused of not keeping up with her school works by not completing her homework assignments and projects. She was blamed for her failure to purchase required textbooks and other learning materials. According to the school's policy on discipline, the students who commit such offences are supposed to be sent home to bring their parents to school.

At the disciplinary hearing meeting, new information was provided to the effect that the student was from a very poor family and that her parents could not afford to buy her the required learning materials for her to complete homework assignments and projects. Another persuasive information shared was with regard to the fact that her parents were not particularly enthusiastic about her education and being a girl, the traditional attitude to girl-child education is even likely to make her parents welcome her being sent away from school. It was also discovered that the girl was in school not by choice of her parents but hers. The disciplinary panel was also told that the School Board of Governors would not approve the panel's decision to send the girl home to her parents as a way of putting pressure on the latter to buy text books for their daughter. Moreover, it was noted that under Kenyan new constitution, no child should be denied education on account of poverty of his or her parents; therefore, sending the girl home to her parents could be tantamount to excluding her from her right to education. Based on these pieces of new information, the disciplinary panel

therefore resolved that the role to be played in this case should be that of provision of support to the student to assist her in her educational development. Therefore, the final decision was that the student should be assisted to secure a peer helper to assist with reading materials. Another suggestion was for the school to provide her with part-time job during the holidays to enable her earn money to pay for her textbooks and other educational materials. The final panel decision regarding the above treated behaviour problem was made with the consideration of the circumstances that surrounded the behaviour characteristics of the offending student.

Two excerpts regarding the shifts from risky pre-disciplinary decisions to cautious post-disciplinary hearing decision in relation to the above problem treated are as follows:



I was originally of the view that not completing assignments should not be tolerated and that the offending student should be sent home to her parents. However, during the disciplinary hearing meeting, we were told that sending the student home to her poor parents based on such offences is like destroying her life. We therefore decided on other ways to help her rather than punish the girl.

My earlier decision was that the girl should have been sent home to buy learning materials so that she could complete her assignments as others did. However my decision changed during the meeting when we realized that her parents were extremely poor and could not afford purchasing educational materials to help her complete her homework assignments. The overall opinion of the panel members was that the poor socio-economic condition of the parents may mean that they may consider their child's education as not important and may not care if the child is

kept out of school. We therefore changed our final decision to assist the student to reform in school rather than send her away which may even make her drop out of school.

Other cases of disciplinary problems leading to shifts in panel members' pre-disciplinary hearing risky decisions to post-disciplinary hearing cautious decisions involved possession and inappropriate uses of cellphone in the school premise. Possession and inappropriate uses of cellphone can interfere with learning and therefore, cause students to fail academically and not succeed later in life. In some extreme cases of misuse of cellphone, these can lead to serious harm in victims self-esteem or serious damage to school's disciplinary tone. However, participants' reports were that certain circumstances surrounding students' misbehaviours did not permit risky decisions if the role of the school in student behaviour development was not to be counter-productive. Some cases reported where shifts in decisions from risky pre-disciplinary hearing to post-disciplinary hearing cautious decisions because of new information shared that revealed the circumstances surrounding students' misbehaviours include: When students are new in the school and yet to fully know all the rules and regulations about behaviours, when students commit offence which may have been direct result of trying to avoid punishment or abuse from homes (for example, when a student cheated by altering exam marks in order to please parents), when a student was remorseful of offence committed and undertook not to indulge in the same; and when parents undertook to address the problem at home.

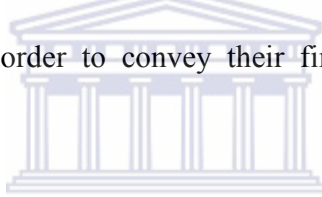
Shifts in decisions may occur as a consequence of new information providing better understanding of circumstances surrounding misbehaviours. In such cases, although school rules and regulations may stipulate zero tolerance, panel decisions may be otherwise in order to ensure that schools perform their role of student behaviour development more effectively. Risky panel decisions on behaviour problems as expected by school policy may serve to protect the school's image but destroy the students, whereas, cautious decisions taken to develop the students behaviourally may also eventually promote the school's image.

One problem behaviour case reported by participants that could have very negative impact on the school's disciplinary tone was that of arson. Before the disciplinary hearing, participants reported that they had made risky decisions on the case because they considered the boy involved to have deliberately caused interference to learning and have also incited other students to join in the destruction of school properties. The father of the offending student was invited to the disciplinary hearing and was informed about the seriousness of the alleged offence to the safety and security of the learning environment of the school and the image of the school. The father requested and was able to persuade the disciplinary panel members to allow the family to address the misbehaviour problem of the student. This influenced the panel members and made them shift to final cautious decisions. An excerpt from the descriptions of a participant is as follows:

My earlier decision before the meeting was that the boy needed to face adequate sanction because incitement is not tolerated by the school rules. I changed my decision when I realized that the father wanted to address the disciplinary problem within the family. He apologized to the

school for his son's behaviour and promised to take it upon himself to discipline the boy. We therefore changed our decision, and decided to leave the student at the disciplinary care of his father.

In certain instances, the new information from the offenders during the disciplinary hearing hardened the panel members' opinions and did not result in shifts in decisions. Considering the type of the problem committed by the offenders, the panel members stuck to decisions which they considered to be in keeping with zero tolerance policy of the school on such misbehaviours. For example, when the offenders were seen as not indicating willingness to reform from their misbehavior, the panel members tended to harden their positions, in order to convey their firmness on adopting appropriate behaviour as expected.



With regard to these experiences, excerpts from the descriptions of two participants' experiences in two disciplinary hearings are as follows:

My original decision was that the student needed to be punished accordingly. My decision did not change after the disciplinary hearing because even after being presented with evidences from the security officer who saw him jump over the fence, the boy adamantly refused to admit that he sneaked out of school without official permission.

I did not change my decision because the girl did not accept that she stole, even after having served her suspension for two weeks. The student may need more time to rethink over her mistakes so that she could be helped. She still insists that the offence was put on her by mistake.

Shifts from pre-disciplinary hearing risky decisions to post-disciplinary hearing cautious decisions were not only due to new information but also to information being perceived as credible. Reports of disciplinary hearings of one school studied indicated that credible information resulted in shifts on the bases of type of disciplinary problem, the behaviour characteristics of the offender and the effect of the disciplinary problem on the victim. For instance, a disciplinary problem involving a boy threatening other students with knives and other dangerous weapon was reported. Because this behaviour problem impacted negatively on the safety and security of the school, students were badly affected. The pre-disciplinary hearing decisions of many members were risky as the behaviour problem was considered criminal act and that the boy should be handed over to the police. At the disciplinary hearing, the offending student was observed to be abnormal in his behaviour. Rather than hand over the student to the police, the panel members decided to recommend him for psychiatric treatment when it was certain and based on the opinion of an expert that the boy would benefit from such treatment.

Excerpts from interview transcripts reflecting the views of a participant are as follows:

My decision before the panel meeting was that the boy should be suspended because I thought that the boy issued threats when in a normal state of mind. My decision changed during the disciplinary hearing when he was brought and the evidence clearly showed from his unique behavior and from expert's opinions of psychologist and psychiatrist that he was not fine. I was persuaded to change my decision

that the boy could not be punished but that he should be referred to as psychologist or psychiatrist.

Another problem behaviour case reported which expert opinions made panel members shift from pre disciplinary hearing risky decisions to post disciplinary hearing cautious decisions, was the case of a boy accused of assaulting a support staff. This problem behaviour was considered one with zero tolerance policy as specified in the school rules and regulations and the student is supposed to be suspended. The boarding master and the support staff who witnessed the incident were invited to the disciplinary hearing to provide further information about the disciplinary problem. The boarding master informed the panel members that from evidences given by the other students who witnessed the incident, it was another boy with a similar surname with the accused who committed the offence, and that it could have been a case of mistaken identity. The support staff also confirmed that it was another student who bullied and harassed her and not the accused and that the school captain had been given the real offender's details. The panel members were made aware that it was a case of mistaken identity as the real culprit had been found, and therefore the accused was not guilty of offence said to be committed. From the credible information provided by the boarding master, the accused had been wrongly named in the offence list because he had a similar surname to the real culprit and that he was ignorant of the alleged offence.

During interview, the participants indicated that when they were considering the disciplinary problem individually, they considered it serious enough in their pre

disciplinary decisions, but after having been provided with credible information about the behaviour pattern of the accused student by the boarding master who was regarded as an expert, the panel members shifted from their pre disciplinary hearing risky to post disciplinary hearing cautious decisions. That is, the information provided by the boarding master, who was perceived as the expert in the case made members of the panel to shift their decisions.

Excerpts from interview transcripts reflecting this view of participants are as follows:

I had earlier made my personal decision about the boy that he should be suspended from school. During the disciplinary hearing, the information presented by both the boarding master and the victim indicated that it was a case of mistaken identity and this made me to change my decision. My decision changed because I realized that we were about to punish the wrong person who knew nothing about the case, and therefore as an expert in this case i agreed with his opinion.

I earlier decided that the student who assaulted the school support staff should face the sanction as is indicated in the school rules. My decision later changed during the disciplinary hearing after getting information from the panel member who had enough knowledge about the case. The boarding master presented very accurate information about the case which made me to rethink my earlier decision about the offender. The accused student was very innocent as it emerged that the name of the actual offender had been found.

The participants of the study also reported sources of credible information as experts, eye witnesses, respected members of the school or public and even parents when they

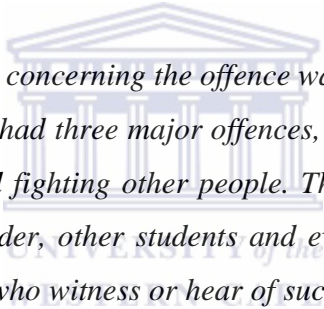
are perceived to be given true information and not necessarily to protect or defend their children.

Shifts in decisions were also reported to happen when the information givers at disciplinary hearings were older and more experienced in teaching. Older and more experienced panel members are respected for their ages. Older members from their wealth of experiences in treating disciplinary problems in schools are often seen to provide disciplinary panels with opinions which often lead to members shifting from their pre-disciplinary hearing decisions to post-disciplinary hearing decisions. Younger and less experienced members of disciplinary panels seek opinions of more experienced members and the former are often persuaded to align themselves with the opinions on the latter.

For instance, a boy accused of alcohol abuse and violent behaviour appeared before a school's disciplinary hearing. Before the disciplinary hearing, the panel members were of the opinion that alcohol abuse and violent behaviours like fighting are unacceptable behaviours as these make the learning environment of the school unsafe, negatively impact on the image of the school as well as having negative effects on the health and academic development of students. The pre-disciplinary hearing decisions were therefore risky or extreme as panel members saw it fit to uphold the zero tolerance of such behaviour. However, during disciplinary hearing, information was provided to the effect that the student involved was a final year student. Older members of the panel felt that applying extreme sanction on the student could completely destroy him as he might not be able to write the final examination and graduate from the school. The older members persuaded the panel members to opt

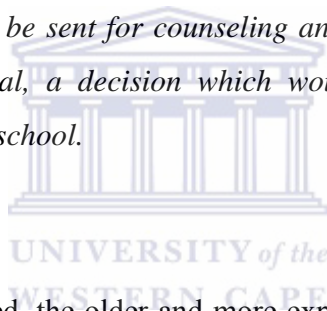
for a decision that will not lead the student jeopardizing the final examination, for example, holding on to his certificate until he has served punishment before releasing it. The student was also made to sign an undertaking to be of good behaviour while he was also reported to his parents. Considering this problem, the younger panel members reported that their decisions shifted when they were persuaded by the older members of the panel to adopt decisions that would not destroy the student but serve to reform him and give him another chance in life.

Two excerpts from interview transcripts reflecting the view of younger participants are as follows:



Earlier on, my decision concerning the offence was that the boy deserved suspension because he had three major offences, sneaking out of school, consuming alcohol and fighting other people. These offences have very bad effect on the offender, other students and even the school at large because even parents, who witness or hear of such, may not trust us with their children. My decision changed during the disciplinary hearing meeting because the older members indicated that the time was critical to the boy because he was to do his final examinations and therefore making him stay out of school due to suspension would even destroy his life completely, and that he may even decide to drop out of school and abandon exams altogether. I realized that the older members were of the opinion of sending the student for counseling and monitoring the student closely during the examinations period so that he could complete schooling and I regarded their decision as more wise in taking care of the students circumstances.

Prior to our meeting, I had decided that the boy should be suspended and even sit for his examinations from outside school. This was because the boy went out of school and consumed alcohol and engaged himself in fighting had committed serious offence according to the laid school rules and regulations. Later at the disciplinary hearing, I realized from senior members of the panel that suspending the boy would be detrimental to his whole future life because he could even abandon school and would even miss the final exams as well. I changed my decision and agreed with the more experienced panel members' opinions that suspending the boy may not contribute to reformation as was expected but that the student to be allowed to sit the final examinations and complete his schooling. My final decision supported those of the older members who suggested that the boy be sent for counseling and be supervised closely by the deputy principal, a decision which would enhance his future endeavours later after school.



In some other cases reported, the older and more experienced panel members did not easily shift from their pre-disciplinary hearing decisions during the panel deliberations, because they regarded the younger members as inaccurate and inexperienced. These senior members felt that they had to influence panel decisions because most of the younger members made risky decisions and that their opinions always proposed heavy sanctions instead of looking for ways of reforming the students.

Generally, older and more experienced panel members influenced the disciplinary decisions when, from their experiences, they gave opinions to the effect that, top-down control of adolescent behaviours could be counter-productive. At times, shifts also

occurred when older panel members gave opinions that in certain problem behaviour cases, flexibility in the application of sanction was more practicable and capable of impacting positively on behaviour development of students than strictly applying sanctions. In other instances, the older members considered cognitive humanistic behaviour modification strategies (reward or positive reinforcement) to strict punishment.

From the above findings, the shifts from pre-disciplinary hearing risky to post-disciplinary hearing cautious decisions occurred when the panel members felt that the nature of the disciplinary problem was not grievous, or when the members saw their role as not just dishing out punishment but also that of using decision to provide intervention in the form of support to reform the offender. The panel members also made cautious decisions when they felt that the new information led them to better understanding of the reason behind the offenders' behaviour patterns or misconducts, e.g. family background information.

Apart from the persuasive argument factors, the participants also reported the social comparison factors which were responsible for the shifts from pre-disciplinary hearing to post-disciplinary hearing decisions during the panel deliberations.

6.2.2: Social Comparison and shifts in decisions

Several factors account for change in decisions by members of small groups. The earlier factor considered was the nature of information shared among members during the group process. This nature of information could be in terms of its source, that is, if information shared during group process is presented by an expert or an eye-

witness. Another important factor which could be responsible for shifts in decisions by members of a small group is what is described as social comparison. By social comparison, it is meant that when members align with or support the opinions of other members of the group. Social comparison occurs when individual members feel the need for solidarity with other group members rather than be the odd one out. Baumeister and Leary (1995) and Grodzki (2011) state that group members are continuously concerned with their status in the group and are motivated to maintain approval of others. Therefore, an individual member of disciplinary panel would be considered to be influenced by social comparison when he or she does not want to hold contrary opinion different from other panel members, or when the member feels the need to support another members' opinion or when the member sees another member as like-minded (Suls & Wheeler, 2000).

In terms of social comparison, there are two directions of shifts in decisions (lateral or horizontal and upward) among group members. When during the group process a member compares his or her view or opinion about group task with that of another group member as a form of solidarity with or support for the other group member such shift is said to be due to lateral comparison. However, when a shift is as a result of comparison with other member who is respected for his or her age, position or experience, such shift is said to be upward comparison. Irrespective of the direction of shift, again there can be two types of shifts, first, from pre-disciplinary hearing original individually made risky decisions to post-disciplinary hearing cautious group decisions, and second, from pre-disciplinary hearing original individually made cautious decisions to post-disciplinary hearing risky group decisions.

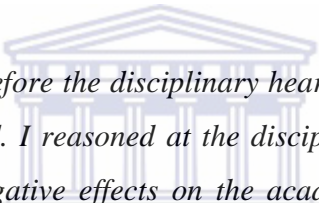
6.2.2.1: Social comparison and shifts from risky pre-disciplinary hearing to cautious post-disciplinary hearing decisions

Lateral comparison among the participants of the study influenced the shifts from risky pre-disciplinary hearing decisions to cautious post-disciplinary hearing decisions. Participants' reports on disciplinary hearings revealed shifts in decisions due to the behavioural characteristics of the offender and the effect of the disciplinary problem on the victim on the basis of social comparison. For instance, a disciplinary case of vandalism by a fourteen-year old grade 9 student was reported. According to the school rules and regulations, such type of behaviour problems are not tolerated because they violate the rights of other students and such offending students are supposed to be sanctioned to serve as a deterrent. Before the disciplinary hearing, some members of the disciplinary panel felt that the student whose books were destroyed would be psychologically and emotionally devastated and that her academic performance and social relationship may be negatively affected.

While making their individual pre-disciplinary decisions, panel members were aware of those behaviours not tolerated as well as the punishment for such behaviours as stipulated in the school's rules and regulations. Thus, according to school's rules and regulations, a student who destroys another student's books or educational materials should replace such. However, new information presented during disciplinary hearing indicated that the female student accused of destroying another student's book did not do so deliberately, but rather due to carelessness of the offending student. It was also revealed that the offending girl may not afford to replace the destroyed book because of her poor family background. The accused girl's records also showed that

she was generally of good behaviour. With different members expressing opinions that the offending students should not be punished as stipulated in the rules and regulations book, it was decided that the offender should tender a written apology to the victim and an undertaking not to repeat the same offence in future. The panel members therefore, shifted from their risky pre-disciplinary hearing decisions to cautious post-disciplinary hearing decisions after making comparisons with others.

Some excerpts from the interview transcripts to indicate how members shifted from their risky pre-disciplinary hearing decisions to their cautious post-disciplinary hearing decisions by comparing opinions of others are as follows:



My original decision before the disciplinary hearing was that vandalism should not be tolerated. I reasoned at the disciplinary hearing meeting that vandalism has negative effects on the academic performance and school success of the affected student. Vandalism also affects the safety and security of the learning environment of the school. However, many members of the panel felt that the offence was not deliberate and that the offending student was terribly sorry for her action. Moreover, it was further revealed that the girl was generally of good behaviour. With overwhelming opinions of members weighing heavily on not punishing the student, I therefore, aligned my decision with those of the other members of the panel that the offending student be reported to her parents.

While we noted that the victim, whose books were destroyed, must have felt very hurt, we realized that the offending girl was also very remorseful and had even gone to apologize to the offended girl and pleaded that it was a mistake. I agreed with another member that

suspending the offending girl may not necessarily lead to replacement of the destroyed books and that it may even make her drop out of school completely thereby disrupting her educational development. I also agreed with another member that a strongly worded letter be written to the offending girl's parents intimating them about the seriousness of the offence. The offended girl was to be apologized to and assisted in replacing her books.

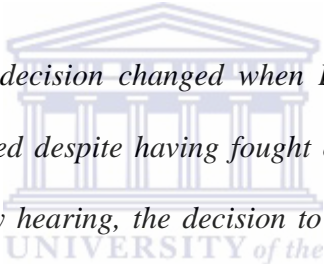
Upward comparison among the panel members influenced the shifts from risky pre-disciplinary hearing to cautious post-disciplinary hearing decisions, due to the type of disciplinary problem treated, and effect of the problem on the disciplinary tone of the school. This resulted from the social comparison with other panel members who were respected by virtue of their age, position in school or years of teaching experiences. Participants in one disciplinary panel treated a problem involving a girl who was accused of assaulting two other girls in class. It was also reported that the accused girl was in her final year of secondary school and was preparing for the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) examinations which were to begin in two weeks from the time of the incident. According to the school rules and regulations, assaulting other students is not tolerated because it harms the victims, instills fear in them and it also negatively affects the disciplinary tone of the school. The punishment indicated in the school policy on discipline was that the student was to be suspended from school and if the case was found to be so grievous, then her case could be forwarded to the School Board of Governors for expulsion.

The participants indicated that while making individual pre-disciplinary hearing decisions, they felt that the girl needed to be suspended from school and given sanctions as was indicated in the school's rule book. During the disciplinary hearing, older members of the panel offered the opinion of using disciplinary hearing decisions to reform, and not destroy the girl. One older member indicated that from his experience, suspension at such critical time would make the girl drop out of school and jeopardize her future. That, rather than suspend the girl, which could make her forfeit her chance to take the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education Examination, the student should be made to serve other punishment which may not negatively affect her future. Some participants indicated that they realigned their decisions with those of the more experienced members after being convinced by the opinions that the accused girl needed to be in school at the time of the incident, and so she was to be helped. The final decision was that rather than sanction the girl as was indicated in the school policy on misbehaviour, the girl was referred to the guidance and counseling teachers.

Two excerpts from the interview transcripts indicating the shifts from their risky pre-disciplinary hearing decisions to their cautious post-disciplinary hearing decisions among the panel members are as follows:

Initially, before the disciplinary hearing, my opinion was that the offence of assaulting other students could not be tolerated and that the offending student should have been suspended. I felt that the physically assaulted students were hurt and that such offences as violent attacks on another student have negative impacts on the image of our school. But, during

the disciplinary hearing, other panel members who had been in the teaching profession for a long time argued that suspending the girl when examinations were about to begin would make her drop out of school. The school governing body, the board of governors, would not support such sanction. The final decision was that the girl should be closely monitored in school to enable her sit for her examinations. After having heard their opinions, I realigned my decision to theirs that the student should not be sent out of school.



My earlier individual decision changed when I realized why the girl should not be suspended despite having fought other students in class. During the disciplinary hearing, the decision to make the girl undergo counseling in school came from older panel members who felt that the girl needed to be in school at this time that the offence was committed. Their reasoning was that it was more important to try and keep the girl in school during the examination period as her life would be completely destroyed if she is sent out of school. I finally felt that their argument was sound and this influenced me to change to their decision.

In certain instances, the social comparison made the participants at the disciplinary hearings to shift from initial pre-disciplinary hearing cautious to post-disciplinary hearing risky decisions.

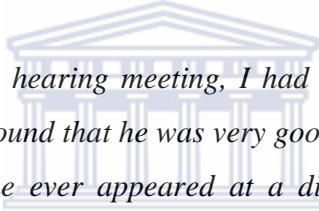
6.2.2.2: Social comparison and shifts from pre-disciplinary hearing cautious to post-disciplinary hearing risky decisions

Shifts from pre-disciplinary hearing cautious decisions to post-disciplinary hearing extreme decisions can occur when members make upward or hierarchical comparisons. Upward or hierarchical comparisons can occur because of members' consideration for the nature of the problem or the effect of the problem on the disciplinary tone or image of the school. In a case of a disciplinary problem brought before a disciplinary hearing, a boy was accused of violent behaviour of bullying younger students. This problem behaviour was considered as one that threatened the effective learning environment of the school. Bullying can also lead to harm to the victim and serious portray school in very negative image to the outside world as it paints the school as unsafe for children. Schools' zero tolerance policy on bullying indicates that it is unacceptable as it prevents the normal adjustment of students to school and negatively impact on school success.

Panel members considering this case individually before the disciplinary hearing, were rather cautious in their decisions on the problem behaviour as they did not know the extent or severity of the disciplinary problem. However, during the disciplinary hearing, it was reported that the bully beat up his victim, stole the latter's pocket money, leaving him badly shaken and depressed. The victim and parents were considering withdrawing from the school. Consequently, members of the panel thought the bully had gone too far that if no serious action was taken, this can seriously embarrass the school. Panel members therefore, decided to expel the bully.

The decision to expel the bully was taken after an older and more experienced member of the panel offered persuasive opinion that of protecting the image of the school, panel members, therefore, have no alternative than to get rid of the bully in order to let the general public know that the school was very serious about intolerable problem behaviour of students. Schools are supposed to be a safe place and to assure parents to be confident of the security of their children in the school, then, drastic decisions should be taken against the behaviour.

An excerpt from the interview transcripts indicating how the members shifted from their pre disciplinary hearing to their post disciplinary hearing decisions is as follows:



Before the disciplinary hearing meeting, I had looked at the offending students' records and found that he was very good academically and that it was the first time he ever appeared at a disciplinary hearing. My original decisions before the disciplinary hearing was therefore, that the boy should be warned seriously but allowed to remain in the school. I also thought he could simply be made to apologize to the victim by writing a letter. At the disciplinary hearing however, the chairperson who also is the deputy principal of the school insisted that since there is a growing case of senior boys bullying junior boys such should not be tolerated and that a strong warning be sent to other senior boys by suspending the offender.

Another member who has been in the panel for over 7 years also offered his opinion that since the school has an image of a safe environment for learning to protect, the offending boy must be sent home to his parents so that other parents can be told that they can be confident in the responsibility of the school to protect all students. I agreed with all their decisions.

Shifts from pre-disciplinary hearing cautious decisions to post-disciplinary hearing risky decisions also occurred as a result of lateral comparisons among the panel members. The shifts from pre to post-disciplinary hearing decisions among panel members regarding this problem were due to the type of problem committed by the offender and the information on behaviour characteristics of the offender. The case that was treated and reported by the participants of a school disciplinary panel involved a boy who was accused of sneaking out of school. Further information also indicated that the boy was found to be in possession of stolen uniforms of other students. The information contained in the school rules and regulations concerning such disciplinary problems were that, the offending student could be sanctioned or pardoned if it was realized that the magnitude of the offence was mild. Some participants reported that when they made individual pre-disciplinary hearing decisions, they did not view the disciplinary problem to be of such a big magnitude. Most individual decisions were that the offender could be warned, if the stolen property was found and returned to the victims.

During the disciplinary hearing meeting, the deputy principal reported to the panel members that the accused student had been found committing similar offences before and had even been warned earlier, and that the type of the problem committed was a serious offence according to the school rules and regulations. The participants indicated that when they were considering the problem individually before the disciplinary hearing, they had not seen the magnitude of the problem, but after comparing their opinions with those of the deputy principal, they shifted to extreme decisions.

Two excerpts from the interview transcripts indicating how the members shifted from their pre-disciplinary hearing cautious decisions to post-disciplinary hearing risky decisions due to lateral comparison are as follows:

Before the disciplinary hearing meeting, my decision was that the offence was probably a mere petty stealing that could be tolerated and the student be given a warning. I felt that, may be, the boy had stolen from one student or it is an isolated case and was not significant. During the disciplinary hearing, I realized that the deputy principal had already indicated that the student should be sanctioned because he had been caught in such offences before. My decision changed when I found out that I was going to be the only one sympathizing with the student when other panel members had decided that the law should take its course on the boy. I finally realigned my decision to conform to the opinions of other panel members to have the boy face sanctions for having stolen other students' school uniforms.

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My opinion before the disciplinary hearing was that the boy could have been forgiven because he owned up for having stolen and surrendered back the clothes. I reasoned that if he had accepted and admitted having stolen then that meant he could just have been given a mild punishment. My decision changed during the panel meeting when the deputy principal indicated that stealing could not be tolerated even if the offender had admitted committing the offence. We were only two members with a different opinion as compared to the rest of the panel members concerning the boy. I changed my decision finally when I found out that the other panel member had already changed his opinion.

In summary social comparison (vertical and lateral) among the participants influenced shifts from pre to post disciplinary hearing decisions. Both social comparison and persuasive argument mechanisms occurred in combination to produce shifts in decisions (Guadagno, *et al*, 2011) as was reflected from the participants' expressions from the interview transcripts.

6.3: Summary and Conclusion of the Chapter

The chapter presented the results of qualitative data analysis. Thematic analysis of transcribed interviews with participants on their experiences of disciplinary hearings revealed two main themes associated with factors responsible for the shifts from pre-disciplinary hearing individually made decisions to the post-disciplinary hearing group decisions. These themes are: persuasive arguments and social comparison. Each of these two themes has two dimensions. Thus, persuasive arguments arose from new or novel information presented during disciplinary hearings, and credible information presented during disciplinary hearings. In terms of credible information, further analysis revealed that this could be with regard to source of information-that is, if information provided during disciplinary hearing is from an expert, or from an older and more experienced panel member. The information could also be regarded as credible in terms of eye witness - somebody present when the offence was convicted.

Social comparison factors were with regard to some panel members shifting from pre to post-disciplinary hearing decisions as a consequence of comparing their opinions with those of other members of the disciplinary panel. Social comparison theme had

two dimensions, that is, social comparison due to lateral or horizontal comparisons and upward or hierarchical comparisons. Lateral comparisons arose when the panel members compared their decisions with those of their peers in the panel to support their opinions, or some wanted to be like rest of the panel members, while other members tended to agree with the rest of the panel members' reasoning because they were afraid of holding contrary opinions different from others. Upward or hierarchical comparisons occurred when the participants compared their opinions with those of the other panel members that they considered more senior to them and therefore, more knowledgeable (vertical/upward comparison) because of their positions, age and teaching experiences. In all these cases, shifts from pre to post-disciplinary hearing decisions depending on the panel members' willingness and perception of other members' opinions.

The next Chapter, (Chapter 7), integrates and discusses the findings from the quantitative data in chapter, 5 with the findings from the qualitative data obtained through interviews.

CHAPTER SEVEN

SUMMARY, DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1: Introduction

This chapter presents discussions on the results of this study. However, before the discussions are presented, a summary of the study, so far, is in order.

The study was based on the understanding that schools are set up to enhance the overall development of students or the development of “the whole person” (Bojuwoye, 1997) in every secondary school students. Secondary school students are adolescents being prepared for adulthood when they would be expected to contribute meaningfully to their local communities, their country and the world, in general. To ensure that they function adequately well in adulthood, schools provide educational or learning experiences that ensure that students develop in all aspects including cognitive, social, emotional, moral and behavioural competences as well as the psychological domains of ego maturity, efficacy and interpersonal conceptual growth (Sprinthal, 1980; Lee, 2011).

For “the whole person” development to be facilitated in every student, schools offer programme of services in the forms of curricular and co-curricular activities. The curricular activities are mainly geared towards cognitive or academic development while school guidance services, school rules and regulations as well as disciplinary panels are employed by schools to develop the moral values and behaviours of students. School rules and regulations stipulate behaviour expectations for students

while the school guidance services and the disciplinary panels manage student behaviours by addressing student behaviour problems through the decisions made at disciplinary hearings. The bases for which disciplinary panels make decisions further give insight to how they manage student behaviours by ensuring that student behaviours do not create negative teaching and learning environment, ensuring that school environment is safe and secure for all and that the school's positive image is well projected so that it is seen as appropriate agency for facilitating positive overall development of students.

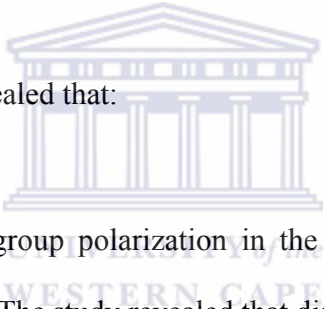
A School Disciplinary Panel is made up of a small group of teachers who are charged with the responsibility of making decisions for the management of student behaviours in school. Decision making by a group of teachers is not only meant to emphasize the role of teachers in student behaviour development but it is also based on the notion that decisions made by a group are superior to decisions made by an individual. Decisions for the management of student behaviour are not left with individual school's principal alone but with a small group of teachers who make up the school disciplinary panel which operates like a small social group. In this connection, the assumption of this study was that disciplinary panels are also characterized by dynamic interactions which could make for group polarization just like as exists in small social groups. The immediate concern of this study, therefore, was to investigate evidence of group polarization in disciplinary panel processes of disciplinary hearings. Moreover, since it is assumed that similar characteristic factors that ensure group polarization in small social groups might also exist in disciplinary panels, the study also investigated specific factors in disciplinary hearings which may

be responsible for the phenomenon of group polarization, if any, in the disciplinary panel processes of disciplinary hearings.

The study employed mixed methods approach and collected both quantitative and qualitative data. Factors in the disciplinary panel processes of disciplinary hearings, such as gender, age, teaching experiences and school affiliations, especially regarding their influences on disciplinary panel decisions were studied. Also investigated are factors with regard to the nature of information shared and the manner by which decisions are made, accepted and supported.

7.2: Summary of Results

The results of the study revealed that:

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- There is evidence of group polarization in the disciplinary panel processes of disciplinary hearings. The study revealed that disciplinary panel members shifted from their pre-disciplinary hearing individually made decisions to post-disciplinary hearing group decisions indicating the existence of group polarization.
 - Characteristic factors present in the dynamic processes of small social groups responsible for group polarization are also present in the disciplinary panel processes of disciplinary hearings. The study found that variables such as age, gender, experiences and school affiliations associated with panel members

influence the shifts from pre-disciplinary hearing individually made decisions of members of disciplinary panels to post-disciplinary hearing group decisions.

- The nature of information shared among members during disciplinary hearings including motivation for approval of others and the concern for members' status were found to feature prominently in the dynamic interactions among members of disciplinary panels during disciplinary hearings. That is, the study found evidences of persuasive arguments and social comparisons playing significant factors to influence the shifts from pre-disciplinary hearing individually made decisions to post-disciplinary hearing group decisions or group polarization.
- The study found that the bases for which disciplinary panels made decisions on student behaviours also served to influence group polarization in the disciplinary processes of disciplinary hearings. That is, disciplinary panels' considerations for standard behaviour expectations of students, ensuring that student behaviours promote safe and secure school environment for teaching and learning and that student behaviours project good image of the school, all served to influence the shifts from pre-disciplinary hearing individually made decisions to post-disciplinary hearing group decisions.
- Study findings also revealed that by the nature of disciplinary panel decisions, in terms of whether risky or cautious, panels' recommendations on student behaviour problems are much more than prescribing punishments to students for

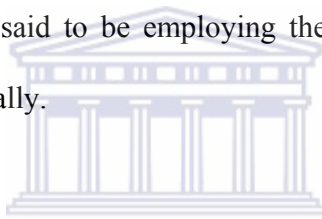
wrongful behaviours rather than, recommendations from disciplinary hearing decisions also serve to facilitate positive behavioural and moral development of students, or the development of “the whole person” in every student in the school.

7.3: Discussion of Findings

7.3.1: Group polarization or the shifts from pre-disciplinary hearing individually made decisions to post-disciplinary hearing group decisions

The study found that there is evidence of the existence of small group phenomenon of group polarization when disciplinary panels meet to deliberate of student behaviours in disciplinary hearings. The finding that group polarization phenomenon occur in small groups like committees (disciplinary panels) within educational settings is consistent with study findings by Bowman, (2005); Freedman (2007); Krizan & Baron (2007); Kinga, *et al*, (2010) and Keck, *et al*, (2011). Therefore, the dynamic interactions in the disciplinary panels helped individual members to understand better the issues associated with student behaviour problems. This in turn makes the disciplinary panels’ better school strategies for addressing student behaviour problems rather than leaving the decision to individual school principals. In this regard, studies by Conkie (2007), Gunnarsson (2010) and Proctor (2011) all revealed the benefits of group decisions over and above individual decisions, that there exists greater sum total of knowledge, greater number of approaches to the problem, greater number of

alternatives, increased acceptance of a decision, and better comprehension of a problem and decisions among people working on a group task. The fact that the disciplinary panel members made use of many sources of credible information to make issues better understood and that collective decisions have more acceptance than individual decisions, are all important for any school disciplinary panels whose decisions are employed to manage students behaviours to achieve some aspect of the school goals - that of student behaviour development. Therefore, the study seems to confirm that making use of disciplinary panels to make decisions on student behaviour management is a better method of managing student behaviour. In principle therefore, schools may be said to be employing the right mechanism of helping to develop students behaviourally.



7.3.2: The influence of Persuasive Arguments and Social Comparison factors on Group Polarization in Disciplinary hearings

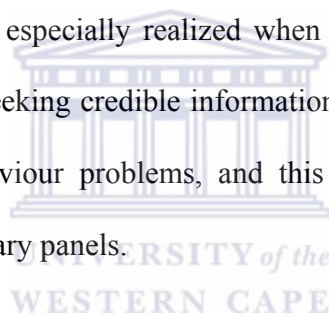
The study also found the presence of similar factors influencing group polarization in disciplinary panels. That is, persuasive arguments and social comparison factors were also responsible for group polarization. The persuasive arguments occur when new information is provided or when the person providing new or extra information is considered to be an expert and perceived to be providing valid or true information. The new or valid information helped the disciplinary panel members to arrive at decisions leading to intervention which is in the best interest of the student concerned and which can best address disciplinary problems and facilitate positive behavioural development. This finding is consistent with El-Shinnawy & Vinzes', (1998) finding

that, individuals share relevant and factual information during group discussions and that, the other group members offer information or opinions helping an individual to view a situation from completely a new perspective from the one the individual previously held. Similarly, Meyers' (1989); Zuber, *et al*, (1992); Tormala, *et al*, (2006); Tormala, *et al*, (2007); Wayne's (2011); Etienne, *et al*, (2011); Tajeddin, *et al*, (2012); Andiliou, *et al*, (2012); Li Lu & Poppy, (2012) and Albarracina, *et al*, (2012) all confirm that information shared in a group and perceived as novel or new, original, valid or if the information is perceived to be true and credible, is more likely to influence the opinions of group members about the issues being discussed in the group. From the persuasive arguments perspective, groups tend to bring up and repeat shared information (information that most members possess) at the expense of raising other potentially important hidden information that only a few members have. However, persuasive arguments may also make groups fall prey to information bias when confronting hidden profile situations, leading to more extreme (and often impaired) decisions (Kugler, *et al*, 2012). Negative effect of persuasive argument may be when a source of information or opinion considered to be persuasive over-emphasizes certain aspects of an issues being discussed by a group at the expense of other aspects. Group decisions emanating from such over-emphasis could be when group members are deeply involved in a cohesive in-group or when group members' striving for unanimity override their motivation to realistically appraise other aspects of issue being discussed by a group of alternative courses of action (Schoenfeld, 2011). Boateng (2012) described such phenomenon as "group think" a mode of action thinking in a group that happens when the desire for harmony in a decision

making overrides realistic appraisal of alternatives. Consequences of the psychological phenomenon of “group think” often results in group decisions which may not receive wide acceptance or support. Participants of this study reported cases where panel decisions were rejected when such decisions were considered as emanating from panel members desire for solidarity among themselves and not necessarily from critical assessment of issues around student behaviour problems involved. This, therefore, means that there should be some form of check and balance in the operations of school disciplinary panels in order to avoid inaccurate decisions that may occur from negative effects of persuasive arguments.

The social comparison is about a second opinion, support for one’s decisions, wide acceptance, belongingness and being in the collective - all these are important for decisions on students behaviours to be seen that they are managed well. The social comparison factors in the current study were observed to occur when some panel members reported seeking opinions and approval of others before making their own final decisions. During social comparison, group members are continuously concerned with their status or position in the group and are motivated by the approval of others. Other panel members also wanted to support other members’ opinions, some wanted to be like rest in their decisions, while others tended to agree with their colleagues’ reasoning or were afraid of holding contrary opinions different from others. Some panel members therefore, compared their decisions and decided to shift from their initial individual pre-group decisions to new post-group collective decisions after realizing that they were alone in their opinions. The panel members also compared their views with those of their peers or with those that were older or more

experienced, because they regarded their decisions as superior than their own. This tendency is consistent with assertion of Baumeister and Leary (1995) and Grodzki (2012) that group members are continuously concerned with their status or position in the group and are motivated by the approval of others. This finding is also consistent with reports of studies carried out by Abraham, *et al*, (2007); Hertel, *et al*, (2008); Kinga, *et al*, (2010); Lorenza, *et al*, (2011) and Trautmann & Vieiders (2011) that all found that social comparison factor influences group polarization. In as much as social comparison among panel members made them compare their opinions to arrive at quality decisions, in certain instances, social comparison had negative effects on the group process. This was especially realized when the panel members only sought others' approval without seeking credible information required to make well informed decisions on student behaviour problems, and this could have led to low quality decisions in some disciplinary panels.



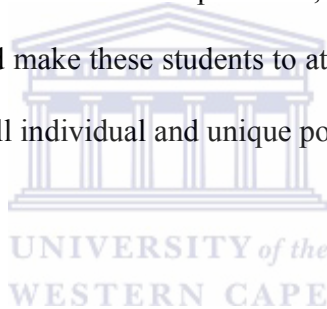
Therefore, the persuasive arguments and social comparison factors seem to systematically operate together during the disciplinary hearing deliberations and influence the panel members to make good quality group decisions. That is, while presenting persuasive arguments during disciplinary hearing, the panel members also relay their personal positions on the decision and thus exert social comparison factors. The school disciplinary panel members used persuasive arguments from other group members that support their position as a means of rational construction, and at the same time they engage in social comparison to make decisions concerning student behaviour problems. The decisions arrived at after social comparison and persuasive arguments could be of higher quality because the panel members have considered all

the factors associated with the disciplinary problems. The goal of the disciplinary panels is to enhance the behaviour development of students, and this can only be achieved through making good decisions. Good decisions regarding students' behaviours lead to good recommendations as to interventions in behaviour problem situations. The diversity in the members of panels contribute to richness in discussions and good quality decisions because there are a variety of ideas hence, the possibility of new information to bring better understanding or better comprehension and decision. Rokou, *et al*, (2011) note that group decisions make the most of the combined individual abilities, knowledge and expertise of the group members. It leads to greater group commitment to the results of the decision making process since they share the responsibility. In addition, when deciding as a group, biased opinions and restricted perspectives cannot easily prevail (Saaty & Shang, 2007; Saaty & Vargas, 2007). Moreover, being in a group also tends to motivate and inspire group members by enhancing their level of contribution (Borouhaki & Malczewski, 2010).

From the social comparison perspective, pool of alternative options gives the group members the opportunity for comparison with a view to choosing the best option and making the right decision. Such allows for objectivity and less bias, as may be the case with an individual making a decision. Social comparison highly affects one's perception since it enables an individual to improve on the quality of decision through subconscious imitation of the other group members' decisions, which creates a potential for improvement. Social comparison also makes the group members to provide social support, which is especially critical for the management of student behaviours in schools. However, at times the social support may only be geared

towards supporting the groups' accepted decision, something which can lead to worse group decisions. Therefore, social comparison among panel members during disciplinary hearing enables them to seek consensual information from other group members to validate their decisions, which could be a means to arrive at the best interventions concerning the students with behaviour problems.

Both the persuasive arguments and social comparison factors have effect on the quality of decisions that are made concerning the student behaviour problems in disciplinary panels. The quality decisions that emanate from the disciplinary hearings would best address the students' behaviour problems, to ensure that these problems are managed well. This would make these students to attain their overall development to enable them realize their full individual and unique potential over their lifetimes.



7.3.3: The significance of factors on which decisions were made

The findings of the study indicate that, the bases on which decisions are made also serve to influence shifts from pre to post-disciplinary hearings decisions or group polarization. The factors associated with disciplinary problems include the type of the disciplinary problem, the behaviour characteristics of the offender, and the effects of the problem on disciplinary tone of the school influenced group polarization. More specifically, the behaviour characteristics of the offender remained the most significant factor, followed by, the type of the behaviour problem, then the effects of the behaviour problem on disciplinary tone of the school, while the effect of disciplinary problem on the victim might be seen to be less, although the other three

factors also incorporate this indirectly. It often appears as if many student behaviour problems are not seen from the perspective of violating other students' rights. On the other hand, it is often also taken for granted that students' rights to safe and secure environment and to identify with school seen to be promoting good behaviour development are taken into consideration when school make rules and regulations about student behaviours and expectations of standards of socially acceptable behaviours. This notion is consistent with the Department of Education (2011) behaviour management policies, particularly the need to give students expectations of behaviour standards in school, as well as the need for building socially acceptable behaviours in students so that they can become better adults and good citizens, the need for ensuring that school environment is safe and secure for teaching and learning and finally, the need for projecting good image of an organization which one identifies with or belong to.

Bear's, (2008) study found that, schools differ in the manner in which they handle the same problems, the teachers may have different attitude and some may be unwilling to actively participate in making very harsh decisions and this equally affects how their opinions would polarize in favour of negative decisions. Chang's (2009) study indicated that, in disciplinary panels where such factors are not considered in making decisions, members would overlook the use of proactive strategies to cope with student misbehaviour. Graham, et al, (2010) also confirm that, these four aspects associated with disciplinary problems lead to decisions that are proactive to ensure that offending students would thus be coached towards the desired behaviours.

The conclusion that can be drawn from this study finding is that school disciplinary panels would be seen to be making good quality decisions when such decisions ensure safe and secure school environment for teaching and learning, when school students are seen to be assisted in displaying socially acceptable behaviours and when schools are seen as education agencies that the society can be confident in for promoting positive behaviour development in the students. Schools and school disciplinary panels have responsibility to assist students understand that people live by rule-guided behaviours, and for social harmony, that there are certain behaviours which are socially unacceptable. School Disciplinary Panels, therefore, exist to foster positive and healthy behaviours in students. By the decisions of school disciplinary panels, students are helped to develop healthy behaviours towards self, towards others and towards the school as a social organization, or organization which society have respect for, and confidence in, to provide safe and conducive environment for the promotion of positive development of all students (Department of Education, 2011).

7.3.4: Influence of gender, age, teaching experiences and school category on shifts from pre-disciplinary hearing individual decisions to post-disciplinary hearing group decisions among the panel members

7.3.4.1: Influence of gender on shifts from pre-disciplinary hearing individual decisions to post-disciplinary hearing group decisions

The findings of the current study revealed that gender influenced group polarization in decision making. Generally, the study has shown that the female panel members in

comparison to the male members of the panels made significant shifts from their pre to post disciplinary hearing decisions on the four factors associated with disciplinary problems on which decisions were to be made. This seems to suggest that, the female members tended to align with their male counterparts during disciplinary hearings. Male members probably influenced the female counterparts to shift in their decisions. Therefore, it could be assumed that male and female members of the disciplinary panels were not influenced the same way by the dynamics in the disciplinary hearings when deliberating on disciplinary problems. The results seem to suggest that female members of Kenyan disciplinary panels were probably more responsive to the dynamics within the disciplinary panel meetings more than men.

The results also indicate that the estimated pre-disciplinary hearing response scores of male members of the disciplinary panels were generally higher than those of their female counterparts in each of the four factors on which decisions were to be made. This would be seen to suggest that the male members made risky pre-disciplinary hearing decisions while the female counterparts made cautious pre-disciplinary hearing decisions. These differences in decisions between men and women could be interpreted on the basis of the incidence of gender - related social norms and stereotypes that are transmitted in the form of values, traditions, and behavioral expectations in the society (Asiyanbola, 2005). The gender differences could be due to socialization of the female teachers to conforming and to playing more dependent roles as expected in our society (Wamue-Ngare & Njoroge, 2011). This may make women to defer to male teachers at the point of final decision making despite the fact

that male and female members, have similar professional, educational qualifications and even years of teaching experiences.

The findings on the influences of gender on the differences in shifts from pre to post disciplinary decisions can be explained from the perspective that, Kenya is part of the traditional African patriarchal society. The patriarchy structure being a cultural factor, affects the gender roles in patterns of decision making, and could have been responsible for influencing the roles of males and females in the decision making in the disciplinary hearing meetings. The findings are consistent with Kramarae, (1992) and Aina, (1998) who all found that, there has been male supremacy and female subordination in decision making. Lupton (2000) asserts that decision making in traditional African societies is rarely inclusive of all family members, though not formally prohibited by rule. It is often presumed that women and children are represented by their husbands and fathers respectively. This therefore means that gender roles as determined by culture are maintained in occupations and organizations such as schools, and that these roles are reproduced. Other factors responsible for the difference in the performance of men and women, as revealed by the literature, are that, men are more assertive, controlling and aggressive, thus contributing more to group decisions and exercising more power than women (LePine, *et al*, 2002; Schneider & Cook, 1995; Carli, 2001; Karakowsky & Elangovan, 2001).

However, the findings of the study on the influence of gender were contrary to those reported by Maccoby, (1998) who refuted the commonly held belief that females are more easily influenced than are males in decision making. That is, females are not necessarily more easily influenced by others than are males, but that female to female

interactions might involve more conflict-avoidance style than male to male interactions. The implication here is to avoid composing panels mainly of women but rather ensure a balance of gender in the composition of panel members.

The conclusion that can be drawn from this study is that, gender is a significant factor in group polarization. This has implications for the quality of decisions made by the disciplinary panels. The fact that men make more risky decisions has the effect that, male dominated disciplinary panels may make decisions that may not help the offending students' reform in school. With male dominated panels tending towards making risky decisions, this may be placing too much focus on individual offenders than the problems and environmental factors responsible for the behaviour problems, as female dominated panels have tendencies of making cautious decisions. The implication therefore is to ensure a balance of gender to prevent the two extremes which may not make for good behaviour management.

7.3.4.2: Influence of age and teaching experiences on the shifts from pre-disciplinary hearing individual decisions to post-disciplinary hearing group decisions among the panel members

The findings of the study revealed that age and teaching experiences were factors in group polarization. The study found that older more experienced members of disciplinary panels made relatively little changes from their pre to post disciplinary hearing decisions, whereas younger and less experienced members made greater changes from their pre to post disciplinary hearing decisions. An interesting aspect

of the finding was also that, younger and less experienced panel members tended towards making risky and extreme decisions when compared to their old and more experienced counterparts who tended towards more cautious decisions. This may imply that the less experienced panel members were not as tolerant of certain students' behaviour tendencies or that they were probably more responsive to the dynamics of the panel group meetings, while the older more experienced members were more tolerant of the students' behaviour tendencies, or were not very responsive to the dynamics of the panel group meetings. Risky decisions are likely to lead to reactive decisions which may not benefit offending students, while cautious decisions, implies that, members evaluate the immediate and delayed benefits of each option they choose from. Too much liberality with students' behaviour problems can also result in anarchy and unsafe school environment.

This finding is consistent with Schlottmann, (2000); Harbaugh, *et al*, (2002) and Levin, *et al*, (2007) who all found out that young people make more risky decisions than adults. Manning, *et al*, (2004) study also found that the younger judges were least sympathetic in their decisions (made more extreme or risky decisions) while the older judges were the most sympathetic in their decisions (made more cautious decisions). Watanabe & Shibutani's, (2010) study, however, found that decision making among older people is characterized by a lack of flexibility and increased cautiousness as compared to the younger people. Lizarraga, *et al*, (2007), further attributes the significant differences in the decisions made by the young people compared to the older ones, to the fact that, youths feel significant pressure from emotional and social aspects in their decisions, and shift their decisions easily during

group discussions. Conkle, (2007) also found that older people have a lifetime of experience to draw from and that older people can bring their deliberative capacity to bear when it matters.

The finding of the current study on effects of teaching experiences on group polarization is consistent with Swanson, *et al*, (1990) study which found that, expert teachers have a well-established procedural plan for solving discipline problems and may therefore divert more of their attention to adequately defining the problem when compared to the novice teachers. Similarly, Westerman (1990) also found that, the more experienced teachers demonstrated an ability to combine or integrate new information, and they were constantly aware of behavioural cues of students unlike the novice teachers. Other similar findings are that, less experienced teachers are found to lack the self-efficacy (Rushton, 2000), doubt their capability (Onafowora, 2004), lack the knowledge (Almog & Shechtman, 2007), and are unaware of the necessary resources (De la Torre Cruz & Arias, 2007) to successfully manage their students problems, while more experienced teachers are found to have higher beliefs in their abilities to manage challenging student behaviours (Egyed & Short, 2006). Feiman-Nemser, (2003) add that, less experienced teachers lack the confidence, self-efficacy, and resources necessary for successfully dealing with student misbehaviour problems. Tsouloupas's, (2011) finding summarized that, more experienced teachers are likely to have higher beliefs in their abilities to manage challenging student behaviors, while less experienced teachers will likely feel ineffective in their ability to deal with student misbehaviour.

Based on these findings, teaching experience seems to be a significant factor when it comes to the task of managing student behaviour. This has implications on the quality of decisions concerning the offending students. As already indicated, dealing with student misbehaviour is a fundamental skill that experienced teachers manage efficiently, but, the less experienced teachers are found to struggle more. Therefore, the panel members with many experiences are more likely to make high quality decisions, as compared to less experienced ones.

The conclusion that can be drawn is that, age and teaching experiences of the panel members could have been factors that contributed to the quality of decisions concerning student behaviours. The younger and less experienced panel members made risky decisions, which means that, they were not as tolerant of the behaviour tendencies of students perceived to be problem behaviours or that they were probably more responsive to the dynamics of the panel group meetings. The older and more experienced members made cautious decisions, which mean that, they were probably more tolerant of the student behaviour tendencies perceived to be problem behaviours.

The finding has implications for the composition of disciplinary panels, in that schools should ensure appropriate balance in the composition of disciplinary panels with members of both young and old, less experienced and more experienced teachers.

7.3.4.3: School categories and disciplinary hearing decisions

The finding of this study did not support the notion that categories of schools or school affiliation of members significantly influence the decisions of the panels except

when it came to consideration with regard to schools' disciplinary tones. Co-educational schools seemed to differ significantly from the other two categories of schools (single-sex boys' only and girls' only schools). The differences could be in the nature of disciplinary or behaviour problems of students in the two categories of schools as compared with the Co-educational schools. Members of the two categories of the single-sex schools (boys only and girls only) tended to be more cautious in their decisions as compared with members of the co-educational school disciplinary panels who were more risky or extreme in their decisions. The tendency towards risky decisions by co-educational school panel members could be a reflection of over protective tendency of adolescents, especially female students who are seen as vulnerable to abuses related to their gender. Their risky decisions may also be to caution male adolescents prone to involving themselves in risky behaviours. Vulnerability to abuses be female gender may not be as pronounced when in all female schools as when with opposite gender as in co-educational schools. More cautious decisions in girls' only schools may also make the application of extreme measures to behaviour problems in that context to be counterproductive rather than reformative. In the boys' only schools, societies have tended to be more liberal about adolescent boys' behaviours and to allow them more freedom. Hill and Lynch (1983) assert that boys and girls are generally treated differently, with independence encouraged in male children and compliance in females. Explanation given for this tendency is that during adolescence, girls are perceived to be more vulnerable to all forms of abuse and mistreatment because of the nature and evolving characteristics of the female gender (Crouter, Manke & McHale, 1995).

This finding is also consistent with Bastick's (2000) study which found that coeducational schools most significantly lower adolescent males' anti-social behaviours, therefore, coeducational schools could help reduce socially disruptive and violent behaviours of both adolescent males and female students. Similarly, Donatelli & Schnees' (2010) study also found that, from a disciplinary aspect, students in single-sex classes seem to have more appropriate behaviour than coeducational classes, and the conclusion was that, single-sex schools do provide students with a better and healthier educational experience because they experience few disciplinary problems as compared with the co-educational schools.

The study found differences in decisions on the effects of student behaviour problems on school disciplinary tones among the three different categories of schools. The explanation offered for this by Hoy & Sabos (1998) is that schools treat student disciplinary problems differently depending on the school climate and how the teachers uphold the rules regarding disciplinary problems. Welsh (2000) also asserts that, schools differ considerably in the clarity of school rules and in the degree to which students have any influence on school policies, and that, schools are not at all identical in the rules, procedures, norms, and practices that make up school climate. Bojuwoye, (1997) notes that, educational institutions within the same country are not the same because, their students and the needs and problems that the students present differ from one institution to another. The unique characteristics of each institution will be brought to bear on the nature of the services provided to meet the needs of the students.

School climate generally offers significant potential for enhancing both the understanding and the prevention of student behavior problems as these affect how panel members make decisions regarding disciplinary or behaviour problem of students. It is important to indicate here that most of these findings that do not exist in previous studies within the Kenyan context, and they bring new knowledge about the effects of student behaviour problems on disciplinary tone of the school.

7.4: Summary and Conclusion of the Chapter

There is preponderance of bodies of knowledge indicating the phenomenon of group polarization as an important characteristic of small social groups. Small social groups exist in various aspects of life especially as committees, teams, or panels charged with the task of making decisions on matters affecting various organizations and institutions. The phenomenon of group polarization in these various settings especially such as in law and business have been widely studied. Studies on group polarization have also been carried out in educational settings where small groups have been constituted to make decisions on grade retention, promotion, or choices of academic programmes. However, no study has been conducted to establish the existence of the phenomenon of group polarization among small groups in educational settings tasked with making decisions on student behaviour management as in school disciplinary panels. Schools make policies on student behaviours and these policies are implemented by small group of teachers who form what is usually called school disciplinary panel.

The idea of using small group of teachers to make decisions on student behaviour problem is that, small group of teachers with the benefits of diversity of opinions, on better understanding of student behaviours and many approaches to student behaviour management from which to choose, is more likely to evolve better decisions to manage student behaviours than individual school principals. Small groups are also said to be characterized by making consensus decisions which are collective decisions that are widely accepted and supported and decisions which people tend to be more committed to than individually made decisions. On the bases of these characteristics of small group, the assumptions of this current study are that disciplinary panels are more likely to tend towards making consensus decisions. The study was therefore designed to prove this assumption by investigating the existence of the phenomenon of group polarization in decision making by disciplinary panels. With the possibility of evidence of group polarization, then the study was also designated to investigate the factors in the dynamics of disciplinary hearing processes which may account for the group polarization.

The study employed mixed method approach and collected quantitative and qualitative data with a view to establishing evidence of group polarization as well as better understanding of the factors which may have been responsible for group polarization in disciplinary hearings. Results of data analysis yielded evidence of group polarization in the decision making processes during disciplinary hearings of student behaviour problems. The study found out that panel members shifted from their pre-disciplinary hearing individually made decisions to post-disciplinary hearing group decisions. These shifts in decisions were found to be from risky decisions to cautious

decisions or vice versa depending on the kinds of disciplinary or behaviour problems presented to the panel members at disciplinary hearings. The shifts were also found to occur depending on the behaviour tendencies of students with disciplinary problems presented at disciplinary hearings, the effects of the problems on victim(s), if any, and the effects on the disciplinary tones of the schools. Factors which were due to the characteristics of disciplinary panel members which influenced the phenomenon of group polarization in decision making among school disciplinary panels include gender, age, teaching experiences and school affiliations of members of the panels. Factors in the dynamic interactions among panel members during disciplinary hearings thought to have influenced panel members to shift from pre-disciplinary hearing decisions to post-disciplinary hearing group decisions include persuasive argument (occasioned by presentation of new information to increase understanding of the problem behaviours and presentation of new information by members perceived as experts to increase belief and or trust in the information presented). Members were also persuaded to shift their decisions as a result of social comparison among them because of their concern for their status in the group and their motivation to seek approval from other members.

The finding that the phenomenon of group polarization is evident in school disciplinary panels is certainly a contribution to research on group polarization in educational setting. Factors found to have influenced group polarization in disciplinary processes of disciplinary hearings also speak to the significance of this study for providing useful information on policy decisions regarding behaviour management of student in schools particularly, with regard to ensuring fair balance of

gender, age and teaching experiences in the composition of disciplinary panels and provision of check and balance in the operations of disciplinary panels for good quality decisions which can make for effective student behaviour management in schools.

7.5: Limitations of the Study

A number of factors may have constituted limitations to the outcomes of this study and some of these are discussed briefly below:

7.5.1: Instruments

The researcher tried to adapt the Modified Choice Dilemma Questionnaire to the Kenyan context and, no doubt, yielded valuable information for the study. However, a wholly Kenyan constructed instrument probably would have yielded different information and by so doing improve the findings of the study. The researcher checked on this by interviewing other senior teachers who were also members of the disciplinary panels and by so doing, believed that the effects of adopting a foreign constructed instrument for data collection would have been minimized.

7.5.2: Some participants were reluctant to provide some information

Some participants were rather cautious in giving certain information, while others may not have completed or responded to the instrument appropriately. This was brought to the surface when conducting interviews with selected panel members, and some participants appeared to be restrained to disclose certain information concerning their

schools. This may have affected the information gathered for this study, but it is believed that assurance given of the confidentiality of information and the fact that participation was voluntary, may have resulted in most of the respondents providing valuable accurate information for the study.

7.5.3: Study Sample

Efforts were made to ensure that the sample selected for the study fairly represented the entire population of schools in Kenya. However, only one district was chosen. Schools outside the district probably may reflect other environmental characteristics which may not be present in Rongo district which may have influenced the characteristics of the participants and hence the outcomes of the study. However, most public schools in Kenya share similar characteristics in terms of their programmes, governance, student and teacher characteristics. The researcher's belief is that, this study provides valuable results which most schools in Kenya can identify with.

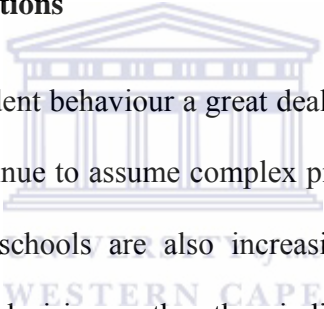
7.5.4: Challenges associated with Data Collection

While participants were willing to complete the first set of questionnaire before the disciplinary hearing meetings, some participants because of time constraint could not complete the questionnaires immediately after the disciplinary hearings. They completed the questionnaires much later and some had to take the questionnaire home and returned the following day. This time lag may have affected the data collected, especially for the post-disciplinary hearing decisions. This could also be of some

advantage as completing later allowed for thought and better reflection which could make for appropriate responses.

Despite the above study limitations, the findings are reasonably accurate and provide useful baseline information for future research and policy decisions. The study certainly indicates possible ways of improving behaviour management practices in Kenyan public schools especially regarding composition and the operation of Kenyan secondary schools disciplinary panels.

7.6: Specific Recommendations



For the management of student behaviour a great deal of decision making is involved. As student behaviours continue to assume complex proportion and requiring complex decision making process, schools are also increasingly utilizing small groups or committees to make these decisions rather than individual principal on who school authorities are concentrated. As literature indicates decision making by a group is far more advantageous than by an individual from the perspective that a group is characterized by accumulation of information, aggregate or a pool of knowledge not possessed by an individual (Lunenburg, 2010), greater number of approaches to problem solution than with individual (Bojuwoye, 2002), and decision making in a group is characterized by wide acceptance, support and commitment to implementation of decisions than with individual (Fan & Liu, 2010; Gunnarsson, 2010). Moreover, as asserted by Lunenberg, 2010) and Bonito, 2011) the increased complexity of decision making requires specialized knowledge and skills in numerous

areas usually not possessed by one person. Great deal of information and critical skills are needed to ensure that appropriate decisions are made for effective management of student behaviours. Appropriate decisions are necessary if students with behaviour problems in schools are to be helped to come out of their problems, concentrate on their academic work, develop appropriate social skills and succeed in schools and later in life. Students need meaningful learning experiences in school in order to develop behaviours, attitudes and values and to experience a sense of self-worth and fulfilment. An important institutional support structure for student behaviour development, therefore, is the school disciplinary panel. Based on the findings of this study it would seem the logical and sensible thing that schools continue to make use of small groups like disciplinary panels or committees to make decision for the effective management of student behaviours rather than leaving decisions in the hand of a single individual school principal. In view of this contention, the following recommendations emanating from the implications of this study's findings are made.

7.6.1. Training for School Disciplinary Panel members

Findings of this study revealed evidence of existence of the phenomenon of group polarization in disciplinary hearing processes of school disciplinary panels. However, members of the Kenyan school disciplinary panels who participated in this study revealed that they were not trained to prepare them for their roles in the disciplinary panels. For effective participation disciplinary panel members need education in

group procedures and how decisions are made in small groups. They need training and skills on how the dynamics of the group process work including understanding the group tasks, the roles that members have to play in order to accomplish the group tasks which include sourcing or seeking for and providing information or opinions in group, critically assessing and integrating information and understanding the nature of the other factors in the dynamic interactions among members of a group that ensures good quality decisions. Since teachers are made members of the school disciplinary panels because of their roles in student behaviour development, this training being suggested will need to be provided to all teachers. The implication of this suggestion is that while it would be necessary to provide immediate training for the teachers who have been appointed as members of the disciplinary panels, just before they assume duties in their disciplinary panels, all teachers also need to be trained in student behaviour management in their teacher education programmes. This recommendation is therefore for all teacher preparation programmes to feature group procedures and decision making processes in small groups as well as student behaviour management.

7.6.2. Ensuring balance in gender, age and teaching experience in the composition of School Disciplinary Panels.

Gender, age and teaching experiences were found to be significant factors in the disciplinary panels' decisions. Female, younger and less experienced members of the disciplinary panels were found to be more willing to be influenced by the factors in the dynamic interactions of the disciplinary panel group processes leading them to make greater shifts from pre-disciplinary hearing individual decisions to post disciplinary

hearing group decisions than the male, older and more experienced members of the disciplinary panels who were more reluctant to shift from their pre-disciplinary hearing individual decisions to post disciplinary hearing group decisions. There are also disparities between male and female, younger and older and less experienced and more experienced panel members as study found that female members tended to make cautious decisions in comparison with their male counterparts, younger and less experienced members tended to make risky or extreme decisions in comparison with their older and more experienced counterparts who tended to make more cautious decisions. There is, no doubt, as literature reveals, that some student behaviour problems would attract cautious decisions while others would attract extreme or risky decisions for their effective management. Therefore, to cater for the diverse nature of student behaviour problems and for effective management of the same, consideration would need to be given for the delicate balance of age, gender and teaching experiences in the composition of members of the school disciplinary panels. This balance can also serve as, one of the ways to bring check and balance into the operation of disciplinary panels in order to avoid a situation where one group of people dominate a disciplinary panel and bring their opinions and value to bear on decisions of the panel, thus causing the negative effects of persuasive arguments.

7.6.3. Need to give consideration to composition of broad based disciplinary panels

By broad base it is meant that members of a school disciplinary panel should reflect the demographic composition of all stakeholders. This is suggesting that teachers

should not be the only stakeholders making up a school disciplinary panel. While it is recognized that teachers are more in contact with student behaviour problems in schools, the school is not and cannot be the only place where solution to student behaviour problems should be procured. Moreover since the homes and communities also have stakes in what happen to students in schools members of homes and communities must also be allowed to have a say in what happens in school. Furthermore parental involvement is absolutely a *sine quo non* for effective behaviour management of student behaviours. Student members of the school should also be involved as decisions of school disciplinary panels are about students and therefore students' inputs are very essential. Other important benefits of having a broad base school disciplinary panel are the richness of information on different dimensions of student behaviours and variety of alternative solutions to student behaviour problems available to disciplinary panels. Decisions from such broad base panels are more likely to be perceived as more rational and fair and more likely to attract the confidence and acceptance of the general public. Some participants reported cases where parents openly expressed displeasure with decisions of their children's school disciplinary panels, especially where the parents perceived such decisions as rather too harsh and unfair. Such situations could be avoided by having parents as members of the disciplinary panels, be parts of the decision making and also implementation of the decisions. Broad – based disciplinary panels also make for check and balances and to avoid the adverse consequences of the psychological phenomenon of “group think” on disciplinary panel decisions.

7.6.4 Better education on Behaviour Management Practices of Schools.

As this study has revealed a great deal of student behaviour problems can be avoided if students are adequately informed about their school's behaviour management practices. Getting students and their parents well informed about student behaviour management practices of a school should not be limited to booklet of school rules and regulations. Different channels of communication must be explored to provide information about standard of behaviour expectations and consequences of mis-behaviours. It is also important for the school to educate students and their parents about resources students can lean on in schools for the development of acceptable behaviours and their own behaviour management as well as interventions through the school guidance and counselling services and means for providing information in group such as the National Council of Anti-drug Agency, NACADA, Kenyan Secondary School Student Council (KSSSC), as well as making students understand that forums like Baraza can also be avenue of tremendous opportunity for disseminating information on and providing guidance for socially acceptable behaviours. Other methods of information dissemination and helping students to be apprised on behaviour management could also be workshops to which experts and models can be invited. Such avenue not only serves to address challenges leading to behaviour problems for students but also assist students to build knowledge and skills for appropriate behaviour development.

7.7: Suggestions for Further Research

From the findings, limitations and conclusions of the study, suggestions are proposed for future research in order to improve upon the current findings:

- Since this study was only carried out within Rongo District of Kenya, and because Kenya has very limited research regarding group polarization in decision making as it pertains to decisions of small groups like committees or panels in educational settings, future research could be extended to include a bigger sample of schools within a bigger cultural, regional, and broader geographic area of the country as variables to be further examined in relation to group polarization. To achieve this, it would also be helpful to adopt a different empirical approach, such as using survey instrument to capture more comprehensive data.
- Future research could also look into the effects of cautious and risky decisions on behaviour of students who appear at disciplinary hearings.
- Other research could be aimed at investigating the phenomenon of group polarization as it affect male panel members when dealing with problems of girls and boys separately, or the female panel members when handling problems of male students.
- Apart from the four factors associated with disciplinary behaviours, future studies could focus on other factors related to the age of students and other personality characteristics as these relate to decisions of the school disciplinary panels.

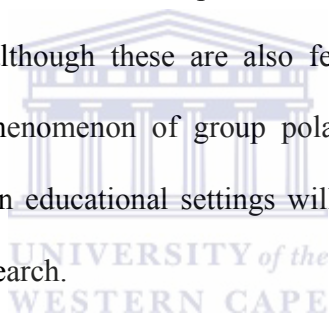
- Further research could also investigate the effectiveness of the counseling programmes in the Kenyan secondary schools in managing students' problems.

7.8: Summary and Conclusion of the Study

The study found evidence of group polarization phenomenon in disciplinary hearings as it occurs in small social groups. The study also found that characteristic factors such as age, gender, experiences and affiliations which are variables associated with group members play significant influence in disciplinary panels as they do in small social groups to affect group polarization. Persuasive arguments engendered by new, credible information and by experts or eye witnesses accounts, all of which create better understanding of group task leading to group polarization, also featured in disciplinary hearing process of the secondary school disciplinary panels. Similarly, social comparison resulting in the collective socially accepted and supported decisions also feature in the dynamic interactions between members of disciplinary panels during disciplinary hearings just as it happens in small social groups. The secondary school disciplinary panels were found to make decisions based on the type of disciplinary problems, behaviour characteristics of offending students, effects of disciplinary problems on the victims and effects of behaviour problems on the disciplinary tone or image of the school. The study also found that the panel members' decisions shifted from risky pre-disciplinary hearing individual decisions to cautious post-disciplinary hearing collective decisions and vice versa. Risky and cautious decisions seen in the disciplinary hearing process are much more than

punishment but as incorporating positive behaviour development process. This way, school disciplinary panels play their important role of facilitating behavioural and moral development of students, or the development of “the whole person” (Bojuwoye, 1997) in each of the secondary school students. Disciplinary panels that are equipped to make good quality decisions would thus promote the students’ development which includes emotional, cognitive, moral, social, and the behavioural competences (Lee, 2011).

To conclude, applications of the psychological knowledge of various phenomena in group dynamics have features rather more prominently in disciplines such as law and businesses or industries, although these are also featuring gradually in education. Extending the study of phenomenon of group polarization in decision making in various small groups within educational settings will certainly be an exciting future direction in educational research.



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APPENDIX A: DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

1. How many full years of teaching experience have you had?

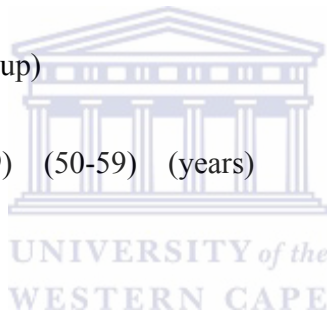
(i.e., if this is your first year of teaching then indicate 1)

(1-5) (6-10) (11-15) (16-20) (21-25) (26-30) (years)

2. What is your age?

(Place a tick on one age group)

(20-29) (30-39) (40-49) (50-59) (years)



3. What is your gender?

Please place an "X" in the box that applies

Male	
Female	

4. What is the gender of the learners in your current school?

Please place an “X” in the box that applies

Boys only school	
Girls only school	
Both boys and girls (Co-educational)	

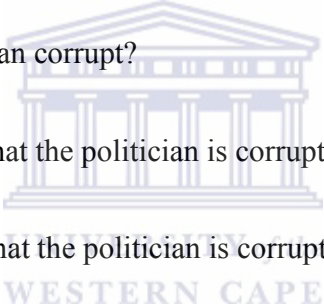


**APPENDIX B: INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE MODIFIED CHOICE
DILEMMA QUESTIONNAIRE**

DIRECTIONS FOR SESSIONS 1 & 2

Take this example:

The politician arrested by the police and taken to court was said to have committed an offence. By the nature of the offence committed would you consider that the politician is corrupt? Choose one of the options indicating levels of probability (from a-e) that in your decision is that politician corrupt?

- 
- a. The chances are 1 in 10 that the politician is corrupt. ____
- b. The chances are 3 in 10 that the politician is corrupt ____
- c. The chances are 5 in 10 that the politician is corrupt X
- d. The chances are 7 in 10 that the politician is corrupt ____
- e. The chances are 9 in 10 that the politician is corrupt ____

Selecting a 5 in 10 chance (c) would indicate that you view the politician as having at least a 50% chance of being corrupt and 50% not.

The following characteristics will guide you as indicated for the relevant question; nature of the problem at hand, the nature of the offender, the nature of the victim who has brought up the case and lastly, the nature of the school context.

APPENDIC C: MODIFIED CHOICE DILEMMA QUESTIONNAIRE

FOR BOTH SESSIONS 1 & 2

1. The student brought before your disciplinary panel is said to have committed an offence. In your own view of the problem would you consider by the nature of the problem that the student is in-disciplined? Choose one of the options indicating the levels of probability that the student is in-disciplined.

Please check one.

a. The chances are 1 in 10 that the student is in-disciplined. _____

b. The chances are 3 in 10 that the student is in-disciplined. _____

c. The chances are 5 in 10 that the student is in-disciplined. _____

d. The chances are 7 in 10 that the student is in-disciplined. _____

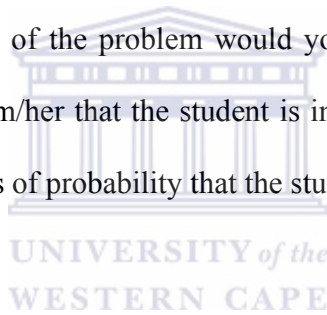
e. The chances are 9 in 10 that the student is in-disciplined. _____

2. The student brought before your disciplinary panel is said to have committed an offence. In your own view of the problem would you consider by the nature of the offender that the student is in-disciplined? Choose one of the options indicating the levels of probability that the student is in-disciplined.

Please check one.

- a. The chances are 1 in 10 that the student is in-disciplined. _____
- b. The chances are 3 in 10 that the student is in-disciplined. _____
- c. The chances are 5 in 10 that the student is in-disciplined. _____
- d. The chances are 7 in 10 that the student is in-disciplined. _____
- e. The chances are 9 in 10 that the student is in-disciplined. _____

3. The student brought before your disciplinary panel is said to have committed an offence. In your own view of the problem would you consider by the nature of the victim who has accused him/her that the student is in-disciplined? Choose one of the options indicating the levels of probability that the student is in-disciplined.



Please check one.

- a. The chances are 1 in 10 that the student is in-disciplined. _____
- b. The chances are 3 in 10 that the student is in-disciplined. _____
- c. The chances are 5 in 10 that the student is in-disciplined. _____
- d. The chances are 7 in 10 that the student is in-disciplined. _____
- e. The chances are 9 in 10 that the student is in-disciplined. _____

4. The student brought before your disciplinary panel is said to have committed an offence. In your own view of the problem would you consider by the nature of the school context that the student is in-disciplined? Choose one of the options indicating the levels of probability that the student is in-disciplined.

Please check one.

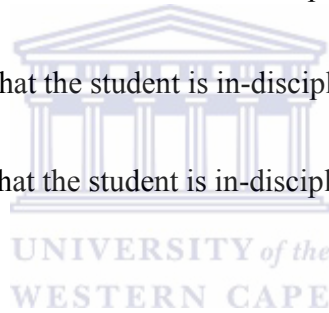
a. The chances are 1 in 10 that the student is in-disciplined. _____

b. The chances are 3 in 10 that the student is in-disciplined. _____

c. The chances are 5 in 10 that the student is in-disciplined. _____

d. The chances are 7 in 10 that the student is in-disciplined. _____

e. The chances are 9 in 10 that the student is in-disciplined. _____



APPENDIX D: FOLLOW UP QUESTIONNAIRE

(For session 2 only)

(Kindly circle one or tick from the 7 options given for each question)

1. How much do you feel that the other arguments that others brought up during the meeting about the students' discipline were weighty or superior to yours?

(To a little extent) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (To a great extent)

2. How much do you feel that you were fully engaged and that the comparisons of your ideas with other group members before making a decision played a role in your decision that you made about the students discipline?

(To a little extent) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (To a great extent)

3. How much do you feel that it was morally and ethically justifiable for the behavior of the learner to be exhibited in the school?

(To a little extent) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (To a great extent)

4. Do you feel that the other group members gave valid/true/credible information concerning the student that influenced your decision?

(To a little extent)1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (To a great extent)



APPENDIX E: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Please for each of the factors below; indicate how your decision during the group disciplinary meeting was influenced in your final decision about the student's case;

1. The context of the communication (did you exchange your views fully with others in the group meeting, did you compare your views with others, to what extent did you do this and how did it influence your decision?



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2. Does the school accept such behavior exhibited by the learner and how did this influenced your decision during the meeting?

3. To what extent did you consider other group members as persuasive in their arguments in influencing your decision? Did their personality influence your decision finally? Were they stronger than you?

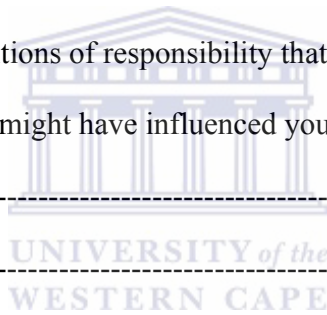
-----.

4. Expertise of the group members (do you consider the other group members to have given you the correct knowledge about the learner that you didn't have? do you see them as possessing what you didn't have at first?)

-----.

5. Do you feel that the positions of responsibility that other panel members hold in the school compared to yours might have influenced your decision during the meeting?

-----.



6. Were your decisions influenced by your past experiences with the student in the school before?

-----.

APPENDIX F: INFORMED CONSENT

I freely, voluntarily, and without element of force or coercion, consent to be a participant in the research project entitled **“Group polarization in decision making: a study of selected secondary schools disciplinary panels in Rongo District of Kenya.**

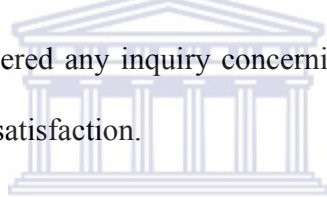
This research is being conducted by, PETER JAIRO O. ALOKA a Doctoral student in the Department of Educational Psychology at the University of the Western Cape, South Africa, and is supervised by PROFESSOR OLANIYI BOJUWOYE.

I understand the purpose of the research project is to better understand the processes of grade retention decision making. I understand that I will be expected to participate on two separate occasions, prior to and after the disciplinary panel meeting. I understand that if I participate in the research I will be asked to complete a demographic questionnaire and a modified choice dilemma questionnaire during the first session prior to the disciplinary panel meeting. At the end of disciplinary meeting, I understand that I will be asked to the complete modified choice dilemma questionnaire, follow up questionnaire and may participate in a one-on-one interview exercise if selected by the researcher, in which I will be asked to discuss my opinions and suggestions regarding factors that I considered in making my decisions about cases of in-disciplined learners presented at the disciplinary panel. I understand that my participation is completely voluntary, and that I may stop my participation at any time. All of my answers to the questionnaires will be kept confidential, to the extent

allowed by law, and identified by a subject code number. My name will not appear on any of the surveys or the results.

I understand that there is little known risk associated with my participation. If I have any questions about my rights as a participant in this study, or if I feel that I have been placed at risk because of my participation, I can opt out of the study. I understand there are benefits for participating in this research project is purposefully for research only.

I understand that this consent may be withdrawn at any time without prejudice, penalty, or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled. I have been given the right to ask and have answered any inquiry concerning this study. Questions, if any, have been answered to my satisfaction.



WESTERN CAPE

I have read and understood these conditions for participation in the study and I here by consent.

PARTICIPANT'S SIGNATURE

DATE

PETER JAIRO O. ALOKA

PROFESSOR O. BOJUWOYE

RESEARCHER

SUPERVISOR

APPENDIX G:

To the Chief Executive Officer,
National Council of Science and Technology,
P.O. Box, 30623- 00100
Nairobi
Kenya.
Dear Sir/Madam,

RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH STUDY.

I am a Doctoral candidate in the Department of Educational Psychology, Faculty of Education at the University of the Western Cape. My research is investigating the influences of group polarization in decision making among selected secondary school teachers in disciplinary procedures in Rongo District of Kenya.

The research will encompass interviewing the teachers who are members of the selected secondary schools disciplinary panels. My supervisor for this research is Prof. Olaniyi Bojuwoye of the Faculty of Education at the University of the Western Cape. As I have completed my literature review, I will be starting my empirical study and I would like to obtain permission to carry out this study.

I hope my request will meet your approval.

Yours faithfully,

PETER JAIRO O. ALOKA.

APPENDIX H

The Principal,

Dear Sir/madam,

RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH STUDY.

I am a Doctoral candidate in the Department of Educational Psychology, Faculty of Education at the University of the Western Cape. My research is investigating the influences of group polarization in decision making among selected secondary school teachers in disciplinary procedures in Rongo District of Kenya.

The research will encompass interviewing the teachers who are members of the disciplinary panel in your school. My supervisor for this research is Prof. Olaniyi Bojuwoye of the Faculty of Education at the University of the Western Cape. As I have completed my literature review, I will be starting my empirical study and I would like to obtain permission to carry out this study.

I hope my request will meet your approval.

Yours faithfully,

PETER JAIRO O. ALOKA